Repairing Computers and (Re)producing Hierarchy:
An Ethnography of Support Work and Status

by

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We [as ethnographers] must remember that if our subjects write back to construct us as mere fictions, so, too, do our secretaries.

- Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*

For Jason who endured the writing of this dissertation with good cheer,
Elizabeth and Mark for being amazing mentors,
the IT support workers and secretaries who shared their time and insights,
and especially the staff ladies who loiter under the trees outside LSA
and have always welcomed my company and treated me kindly

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Abstract

Though there are at least two non-academic staff for each faculty member at major colleges and universities, scholars know almost nothing about them. This impoverishes our understanding of recent changes in the university structure, variously termed managerialism, marketization, and neo-liberalization. I examine the generally ignored experience of university support staff, showing how their roles maintaining both the infrastructure and the status hierarchy of the organization provide a unique vantage point on organizational change. Based on over 200 hours of non-participant observation at an IT Help Desk in a health care and research college at a large university supplemented by 30 hours at a professional school and interviews with 17 women and 12 men employed as IT Support Staff in 20 other departments, all on the same campus, I show how the mundane work of IT Support plays a pivotal role in the reorganization of the status order of modern universities. The first chapter examines the modern university as a workplace, analyzing how staff is represented in higher education research, including ignoral, recognition, and scapegoating. Chapter 2 details my field site, the workers, and users. Chapter 3 discusses the sociological concept of status and develops the concept of "support work" to highlight the interdependence of core/professional and support work. The next three chapters examine distinct empirical examples of the interactional reproduction of organizational status: help seeking, waiting and queuing, and responses to refusal. Each chapter shows how high status users reproduce their organizational dominance through modes of interaction that construct faculty and staff as diffuse statuses. Chapter 7 details the emotional labor engaged in by IT support workers,

showing how they function as both shock troops of rationalization, implementing new policies, and shock absorbers, assuaging faculty anger at new policies and dissipating their own frustration through backstage human. I conclude with a discussion of how attention to staff can help researchers, theorists, and practitioners. To fully understand the contemporary university's organizational structure, researchers need to take seriously the staff whose interactions with faculty and among themselves (re)produce the organizational infrastructure on a daily basis.

Chapter 1: Introduction: Fixing Computers in the Neoliberal University

The office is still. A slight hum from the fluorescents and the clack of fingers on keyboards drift in from the offices near Isaac's seat at the Help Desk. The only noise coming from Isaac is the scratch of his mouse across the desk as he clicks through screens, searching for a request.

The quiet is broken as a woman rushes in and heaves her laptop onto the counter in front of Isaac. She's out of breath as she pushes her glasses up on the bridge of her nose with one hand and shoves another in the pocket of her white coat, fishing for her ID card. Isaac looks up at her, and once their eyes meet she begins immediately, no formalities: "I can't get into the system; my password isn't working; I have a patient I need to see now." Isaac nods his head and even before he begins to speak, he starts clicking through screens to reach the appropriate website. This isn't his first password reset of the day, and it won't be his last.

He asks her when her password last worked, which causes her to scrunch her face as she tries to remember. She shakes her head, saying "I don't know. I was on vacation. I got back to work yesterday." Isaac: "But it worked before you left?" She nods and then quickly says, "Can you just tell me my password? I've got to get upstairs now." Isaac explains that isn't possible and beckons with one hand for her to come around the desk, sliding his chair left to allow her access to his keyboard. The woman sighs, grumbling about having to learn a new password, saying she doesn't understand why they have to change them all the time. Isaac sympathizes, telling her those are the rules and he can't change them no matter how annoying. He watches as the woman tries twice to create a password the system is happy with.

On the second try, her new password is accepted. Isaac announces that she's successfully completed her password reset, responding "No, you're all set" when she asks if she needs to do anything else. She then asks, "So I can get in [the system] upstairs," causing Isaac to repeat himself. She moves back to the front of the help desk and simultaneously tells Isaac "Great … wonderful" and gathers her laptop. She says thank you as she departs, the last syllables leaving her mouth as she exits the Help Desk office. He replies, "You're welcome, that's what we're here for," though she's already out the door, unlikely to have heard him.

The office goes quiet again, though now Isaac adds to the chorus of clacking keys as he records the interaction in the appropriate database: Dr. Fisher, password reset, request completed. He returns his attention to his earlier concerns, waiting for another break to the stillness.

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In *The Uses of the University*, Clark Kerr asserts, "In a very real sense, the faculty is the university—its most productive element, its source of distinction" (1995[1963], 75). Though faculty may indeed be the most celebrated members of the university, the public face higher education workforces, they rarely constitute the majority of university employees. A count of university faculty compared to general or non-academic staff reveals that staff often account for two-thirds to three-quarters of total employment in research-intensive universities. From 75 percent[1] at my own institution, the University of Michigan, to 71 percent[2] for Colorado State University to 72 percent[3] at Columbia, there are typically at least two staff members for each faculty member at major research universities. Faculty may be the iconic university employees, but they are a minority compared to the legions of administrative assistants, Human Resources personnel, custodians, and undergraduate advisors that keep higher education institutions functioning.

Despite general and non-academic staff forming a majority of university employees, researchers know very little about them as a group distinct from faculty.[4] The research on universities as workplaces pales compared to what we know about it as an educational institution (Stevens, Armstrong, and Arum 2008, Aronowitz 2000). What we do know about universities as workplaces focuses mostly on the experiences of faculty and administrators, though scattered research exists on staffers like college admissions counselors (Stevens 2007), custodians (Waldinger et al. 1997), and librarians (Carmichael 1996). The scholarship on academics

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[1] http://hr.umich.edu/humancapital/Final%202014%20HCR%20for%20website%20.pdf. For 2013, University of Michigan – Ann Arbor (excluding the hospital) had 3440 faculty and 10104 staff, for a total 13544 employees.
[2] http://www.colostate.edu/features/facts-figures.aspx. For 2014, Colorado State University had 1950 faculty, 4775 staff, for a total 6725 employees.
[3] http://www.columbia.edu/cu/opir/abstract/opir_faculty_history_1.htm. For 2014, Columbia University (excluding the medical campus) had 2399 faculty and 6085 staff, for a total of 8484 employees.
[4] For simplicity's sake, I will refer to all academic faculty engaged in research and teaching as faculty, general or non-academic staff will be identified simply as staff, and upper-level administrators that serve a management function in the university will be referred to as administrators.

examines them as researchers (Fenstermaker and Jones 2011, Latour 1986, Owen-Smith 2001), pedagogues (Fisher 2001, Krais 1996, Oliver and Kettley 2010), members of awards committees (Lamont 2009), and overworked and stressed professionals (Bailyn 2006, Tuchman 2009, Rhoades 1998). Their contentious relationships with administrators have been explored (Favero 2003) and attention given to the problem of discrimination, especially by race and gender (Perez 2004, West and Fenstermaker 2002). Upper-level administrators and policy makers have also been studied (Bastedo 2012, Deem 2006), most notably Michael Cohen and James March's *Leadership and Ambiguity* (1986) on university presidents. In all of these, staff make only cameos—an administrative assistant mentioned in passing, a chart enumerating *all* university employees, a lab assistant washing beakers.

This blindness to the experiences of the majority of its employees impoverishes our ability to comprehend the transformation of the contemporary university. Much ink has been spilled on what has been variously termed the corporatization, marketization, or neo-liberalization of the university and the deprofessionalization of the professoriate (Rhoades 1998, Slaughter and Rhoades 2004, Loss 2012, Szerkes 2004, Parker 2014, Tuchman 2009). Underlying these debates is a clear sense that the status order of the university is shifting, faculty's power diminishing as administrative oversight increases (Smart 2002, Kolsaker 2008). The administrative apparatus of the university is regarded with suspicion by scholars, though critics concern themselves only with top administrators, at best ignoring and at worst criticizing the lower-level workers tasked with the mundane maintenance of the university infrastructure (Deem 2006, Smith and Rust 2011, Allen-Collinson 2009). For example, Gary Rhoades' otherwise perceptive analysis of unionized faculty looks at instructional technology and deskilling from the top down and as a result perceives "support professionals … in computing

and technology" as a threat to faculty's professional status, pawns in higher education's deprofessionalization, not workers in their own right (1998, 171-174). Research on the "McDonaldization" of higher education takes a similar perspective, constructing IT Support as abetting managerialism and the deskilling of the professoriate (Persell 2002, 79). In these texts, staff are metonymic for the neoliberal, or free-market driven, policies, like accountability, returns on investment, and the deprofessionalization of professors, all of which threaten the traditional[5] status of faculty.

A much smaller literature speaks positively (albeit briefly) about staff and their indispensability to higher education. Mitchell Stevens' *Creating a Class* (2007) is one of these exceptions. He notes that staff like admissions counselors and receptionists are the first university employees with whom prospective students and parents interact, making them a fundamental part of a school's first impression (2007, 30 & 89). Similar remarks are scattered throughout writings on higher education, though they are almost never central to the narrative (see Allen-Collinson 2003, 2004, 2006, 2009 and Barley and Bechky 1994 for exceptions). As a result, the experiences and insights of staff remain obscured.

Ultimately, scholars' insufficient attention to non-academic university staff has led to an incomplete understanding of how faculty's status in the university has and has not changed as market logics have taken root in higher education. By adopting a micro-sociological approach (Hallet 2007, 2010, Powell and Colyvas 2008, Goffman 1959, 1963, Fine 1991) that looks closely at the on-the-ground experiences of IT support (ITS) workers, I show how faculty maintain their high organizational status through interactional styles that (re)produce their

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[5] I am typically loathe to use the word "traditional" because it is usually abetting ahistorical analysis and essentializing theories. However, given the longevity of faculty's control of university governance compared to new managerialist regimes (Ginsberg 2011, Kerr 1995[1963]), I consider it apropos.

dominance over staff. Though professors may feel beleaguered by administrators' increasing control and slashed budgets, they are typically unreflexive about having higher status, greater power, and more privilege than staff. This blinds faculty from realizing that they share a common interest with staff in stemming the influences of market logics on the university, limiting faculty's power to pose a real challenge to the marketization and managerialism that threaten higher education as a whole.

The Changing Landscape of Higher Education Employment

Both sociologists and education scholars have asserted that over the last several decades there has been a sea change in the logics that structure institutions of higher education (Bastedo 2012, Stevens, Armstrong, and Arum 2008, Rhoades 1998, Loss 2012, Fisher 2007, Gumport 2000). As Tanya Fitzgerald asserts in her analysis of contemporary universities, "In a relatively short period of time, academic work and academic identity has shifted from being largely autonomous, self-governing, with particular privileges and public duties, to a profession that has been modernized, rationalized, re-organized, and intensely scrutinized" (2012c, 2). Cloistered sites for teaching (English model) or research (German model) have given way to the "multiversity," where teaching, housing and caring for students, research, publishing, industry partnerships, extension programs for local communities, and medical care are just some of the demands stakeholders make on institutions of higher education (Kerr 1995[1963]). Once buffered from the vagaries of the capitalist free market, not only has state and federal funding decreased, but policy makers and politicians have lambasted universities for "wasteful" spending. Non-academic critics have demanded that colleges and universities become more "efficient" and "accountable" (Tuchman 2009). With these new logics, the teaching and

research missions of the university can be diluted as administrators seek income over knowledge, treating students more like customers and less like learners (Clawson and Page 2011).

An array of terms have been borrowed from organizational theory and sociology to describe different ways market logics have displaced teaching and research as the primary missions of the university. To avoid confusion, I provide definitions for each term as used in this dissertation. Marketization is a catchall term to describe the importation of business-based logics into the university, covering phenomena ranging from the organizational pursuit of efficiency and profitability to hiring individuals from private industry for administrator positions (Hayes and Wynyard 2002, Ritzer 2002, Henkel 2009, Hoffman 2011). Marketization is more expansive than the related concept commodification; marketization refers to a spectrum of logics derived from for-profit organizations, while commodification refers to the social construction of education as a saleable product (Berman 2012, Armstrong and Masse 2014). Managerialism[6] describes the increased control of non-academic managers[7] over faculty and other university affairs (Kolsaker 2008). As Tuchman describes it, administrators "try to govern [faculty] rather than govern with them" (2009, 21). Managerialism, especially by non-academics, is considered responsible for swaying administrators away from the teaching and research missions of the university (Ginsberg 2011).

Closely related to managerialism is deprofessionalization (Johnson 2012). A profession is defined as an occupation in which governance (e.g., education, licensing) is controlled by

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[6]Managerialism as used here is distinct from Berle and Means' concept of managerialism, which focuses on ownership versus managerial control (Mizruchi 2004).

[7]This is a comment more frequently made than supported, as almost no percentages of academic versus non-academic managers are provided by critics. Only Ginsberg's text tries to ground this claim in empirical data, and he is unsuccessful in this attempt (2011, 21-23). He says of current university presidents that three-fourths have PhDs and two-thirds are faculty but does not provide numbers for any other time period. He admits that Vice-Presidents have frequently come from private industry and that almost all Provosts are academics, providing no historical data for either. No information is given about the lineage of Deans as academic or not; he just laments their numbers. No other authors provide any more convincing evidence for this often repeated statement.

members of the occupation (Abbott 1988), while deprofessionalization refers to the process by which professionals are stripped of their autonomy and self-governance and placed under the control of managers from outside the profession (Johnson 2013, Rhoades 1998). The relocation of doctors from private practice, where they had autonomy, to hospitals and HMOs, where they are treated as the employees of non-doctor managers, is a paradigmatic example (Ritzer and Walczak 1988). For faculty, deprofessionalization occurs when non-academic administrators dictate organizational policy, especially as regards the classroom and curriculum (Ginsberg 2011). "Unbundling" refers to an extreme form of deprofessionalization (also known as deskilling), in which the faculty role is no longer filled by a single academic with a doctorate but by PhD-less "content specialists, pedagogical specialists, technical specialists, and assessment specialist working together as a team to produce curricular materials" (Persell 2002, 79). In such a scenario, faculty no longer control the classroom experience of their students but instead are paid a one-time fee to create lesson plans and teaching materials that the university can endlessly profit from in online education course.

Rationalization is defined as the importation of business-derived logics meant to "measure and formalize" organizational activity so as to "ostensibly to improve accountability and efficiency" (Hwang and Powell 2009). Drawn from the managerialist logic of scientific management (Taylor 1911), rationalization tries to induce calculability and predictability into processes, often through standardization of processes. Centralization is one strategy for rationalization of organizational support services. Often called the "shared services" model, centralization removes support workers from individual departments and relocates them into a single space to be take advantage of economies of scale.

Whither Art Thou Staff?

The absence of staff is not apparent from a cursory inspection of paper and book titles.[8] Many writers ostensibly examine "university employees," though upon closer examination, these texts almost always limit their attention to faculty (Enders and Teichler 1997, Wang et al. 2011, Bryson 2004, Smeenk et al. 2006, Ylijoki and Mäntylä 2003, Davies and Thomas 2002, Baldry and Barnes 2012, Garvey and Inkeles 2012). A few authors acknowledge their narrow focus and inattention to staff (Parker 2014, Parker and Jary 1995); almost none consider what this means for their conclusions. Sociology is not exempt from this—indeed the absence of staff from sociological consideration is so great that I had to turn to a couple librarians to confirm the lacuna[9]. In the following section, I briefly detail three major ways staff are dealt with in the literature on the marketized university: ignored, acknowledged, and scapegoated. As I show, almost no scholars give staff the consideration they deserve, let alone attention in proportion to their numbers.

Staff Ignored

Hidden away in the "ivory basement" and considered peripheral to student experience/teaching mission, staff are habitually ignored in even the most critical writings on the marketized university (Fitzgerald 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). For example, Stanley Aronowitz's Marxist analysis in *The Knowledge Factory* makes one brief mention of staff, noting that universities are often the largest employers in their communities, providing health care benefits and steady, if not well-paid, work (2000, 11). This observation is never returned to and staff are

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[8] In contrast, staff make frequent appearances in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, both in articles on and/or by staff (Brainard, Fain, Masterson 2009; Grassmuck 1990, Krebs 2003, Lesboprof 2009, Masterson 2009, Munger 2010, Schmidt 2003, Young 2002) and in Letters to the Editor criticizing slights and derisive comments, like describing staff as "Other" (Hicks 2000, Inman, Klaphaak, and Nelson 2009, Toor 2000, Weiss 2015).

[9] Thank you to both Susan Turkel and Karen Downing at the University of Michigan Libraries for their assistance in preserving my sanity.

absent from Arnowitz's overall argument. Similarly, Shelia Slaugter and Gary Rhoades's

Academic Capitalism and the New Economy (2004) avoids nearly any mention of staff and does

not include them in the analysis. These and many other texts that purport to examine the

university fail to consider them (see Henkel 2009 for a corroborating appraisal of the literature).

   This absence is not always obvious. When academic researchers refer to "faculty and

staff," they sometimes collapse the two groups together and emphasize their mutual

subordinance to the administrators; at other times, they collapse administrators and staff together

so as to emphasize their own disempowered position. Researchers almost never call attention to

staff as a unique group, which ultimately leaves most of the analyses incomplete (Baker and

Boland 2011, Sorenson and Lawson 2011). For example, two different studies of the quality of

interactions between LGBTQ students and "faculty and staff" make no distinction between the

two groups or their different structural relationships to students (Garvey and Inkelas 2012, Ryan

et al. 2013). In Garvey and Inkelas, classroom, dorm, and transportation experiences are

muddled, making the sources of LGBTQ students' satisfaction unclear (2012). Similarly, Ryan

and colleagues examine LGBTQ students' interactions with "faculty and staff" involved in an

Allies student group, though at no point do they raise the possibility of faculty and staff having

different relationships with the students given their different statuses in the university (2013).

More complete analyses would have questioned whether or not staff versus faculty status has a

significant impact on how LGBTQ students perceive the interactions, which in turn would allow

more tailored advice for how each group of employees could improve the climate for sexual

minority students. Overall, inattention to staff as a distinct group limits the utility of scholars to

provide a realistic vision of how the university does and/or should operate.

Staff Acknowledged

Attention to staff is more common outside the United States, where disinvestment in higher education and increased managerialism has been more extensive (Pick, Teo, and Yeung 2012, Strachan et al. 2013, Szekeres 2004, Dobson and Conway 2003). Australian authors emphasize the power imbalance within the faculty and staff relationship, criticizing staff's low status and lack of organizational authority. Sue Wohlmuther calls attention to this imbalance by titling her essay on friction and conflict in staff-faculty relationships "Sleeping with the Enemy" (2008). Ian Dobson depicts the faculty and staff relationship as an antagonistic us-them dynamic that is detrimental to the university as a whole (2000). In general, these authors show that staff are ignored by researchers, causing researchers to overestimate the harmony between faculty and staff and obscure their tensions (Szekeres 2006). Scholars in the United Kingdom make similar arguments (Whitchurch 2008, Fisher 2007, Allen-Collinson 2006, Smith and Rust 2011, Deem 2006), showing how the faculty/staff distinction is maintained through intensive boundary maintenance that obscures overlap in the skills and responsibilities (though not rewards) of faculty and staff.

Compared to the attention given to staff internationally, few American scholars have taken staff seriously, particularly as regards status and power inequality. Michael Messner (2000) provides an insightful meditation on staff in his essay "White Guy Habitus in the Classroom," which touches on the faculty-staff relationship. Messner describes a class exercise meant to illustrate to students the "gender/race/class dynamics at play in who does what on our campus" in which one assignment is to ask professors if they know the full names of the staff who work for them, citing the tendency for mailboxes to have full faculty names but only staff first names (465). Messner hints at a major disconnect between the two groups when he says, "I

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ask them to go knock on faculty doors and ask each faculty member if he or she knows the full name of the office staff workers, some of whom they may have been working with for years, even decades. What does it mean when certain workers appear to have no last names?" (465). He does not, however, comment on how status inequalities impact staff-faculty interactions or asks staff for their view of professors.

While Messner talks about staff from his own vantage point, others have ventured into the ivory basement to examine staff's experiences first hand. Research on lab technicians by Barley and Bechky (1994, see also British author Allen-Collinson [2007, 2009]) shows that some academic researchers are inclined to see low status staff as unintelligent simply for lacking a doctoral degree. Wise faculty learn quickly that they dismiss the knowledge of technicians at their own peril, as lab staff typically are the most skilled with equipment and testing procedures. Importantly, these authors document how technicians' indispensability to scientific research is made invisible. Staff are rarely recognized for their contributions, reproducing their low status vis-a-vis faculty and administrators. Elizabeth Bell and Linda Forbes (1994) emphasize the friction that can arise between faculty and staff through a content analysis of staff-circulated cartoons and texts. These documents provide a particularly unique look at the tensions between faculty and staff, as humor, parody, and satire are used to safely critique the power system and excesses of superiors' demands. Custodians as a unique, subordinate group have been examined, though primarily within the context of "Justice for Janitors" movements at universities and existing literature on the stigmatization of "dirty work" (Schlaerth and Murphy 2009, Waldinger et al. 1997, Soni-Sinha and Yates 2013, Hood 1988). Outside of sociology, historians have written on pink collar unionization in higher education, describing how clerical and secretarial workers at major universities like Harvard formed labor unions to collectively protest poor pay

and conditions (Fuller et al. 2006, Hoerr 1997, Goldberg 1983, Prasad 1991). Finally, Zabusky (1997, discussed further below) provides a glimpse at the early experiences of university computer support, showing how the early-1990s were marked by uncertainty over the status of microcomputer support technicians as autonomous professionals or subordinated staff. Taken as a whole, these authors make clear the need to further examine staff as a unique group compared to faculty, as different locations in the university's status hierarchy lead to dissimilar experiences and outcomes.

Staff Scapegoated

Staff's most frequent role in writings on marketization of higher education is as a scapegoat for the myriad problems the university. Indeed, they have become metonymic for the ills of neoliberal logics, staff bloat becoming representative of all the problems faced by the contemporary university.[10] For example, Michael Bastedo's "Organizing Higher Education: A Manifesto" blames increased college costs on an increasingly large personnel and support apparatus as a whole, collapsing poorly paid support staff and well-remunerated elite administrators into a monolith (2012, 12). By doing so, critics obscure the real contributions made by staff to the operation of the university and inflate their cost.

A commonly cited article (and uncited statistic) from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* discusses the explosion of staff numbers between 1987 and 2007 (Brainard, Fain, and Masterson 2009). While "Support-Staff Jobs Double in 20 Years, Outpacing Enrollment" makes for catchy headline and the claim that managers and support personnel have been added "at a steady, vigorous clip over the past 20 years … far outpacing the growth in student enrollment and

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[10]The primary exceptions are collegiate athletics and their corps of staffers, who are rarely subject to the same critiques.

instructors" is a great hook, the article places much of the blame for institutional budgetary

concerns on "unproductive spending" on a ballooning support staff without providing sufficient

evidence (Brainard et al. 2009, 1). Specifically, the authors rely on absolute numbers of faculty

versus staff and managers rather than actual budgetary costs, which greatly obscures the different

pay and benefits received by each group.

The authors are correct to note that most of the new instructional hires are poorly paid

adjuncts, not tenure-track faculty (Brainard et al. 2009, 3). They fail to mention, however, that

many staff are also part-time, ignoring that university administrations have subjected both groups

to casualization, or the increase in "flexible," part-time work without benefits or long-term

contracts. The impression they give, instead, is that faculty are suffering from casualization

while staff are not, though this is untrue. Increased numbers of staff are blamed on increasing

reporting requirements arising from federal and state policies, like equal opportunity

employment and NCAA eligibility requirements; on students and parents' demands for an

expansive array of extracurricular programs and activities, like career counseling and clubs; and

the need for staff in university hospitals. A very brief mention is made of university's research

mission. Unfortunately, the overall focus of the authors on the teaching function of the

university in comparison to "non-teaching work force" marginalizes the indispensible role staff

play in laboratory science, let alone the return on investment of paying low wages to lab

technicians who work on projects that bring in millions in patent fees. Although the authors

cover all sides of their story by quoting administrators and policy makers that recognize staff's

value, these alternative viewpoints do little to sway them from their overall thesis that staff are

the source of a multitude of ills in higher education (4). A few Letters to the Editor critiqued

Brainard and colleagues' myopia as regards the indispensability of staff (Inman, Klaapak, and

Stephens 2009), though many more have taken the article at face value, perpetuating its disregard for staff.

Even more dismissive of staff is Benjamin Ginsberg's *The Fall of the Faculty*, who patronizingly refers to a Vice-President's staffers as "helpers" (2011, 23). Unable to distinguish between staff and administrators, he demonizes university staff, like counselors, auditors, human resources staffers: "These 'other professionals' are not administrators, but they work for the administration and serve as its arms, legs, eyes, ears, and mouthpieces. Administrative staffers do not work for or, in many cases, even share information with the faculty" (2011, 25). Ginsberg's vitriol stems from a misinterpretation of faculty and staff as substitutable rather than complementary: "Before they employed an army of staffers, administrators were forced to rely on the cooperation of the faculty to carry out tasks ranging from admissions through planning. … Today, its army of staffers makes the administration 'relatively autonomous' [from faculty governance] … and marginalizes the faculty" (2011, 25). His solution for all of the university's ills is for faculty to retake administrative and governance positions.

The problems with his analysis are legion. First, Ginsberg ignores the history of university staff, erasing from memory the legions of academic secretaries that once typed faculty's papers and the lab technicians that still perform the experiments upon which academics make their careers. Second, he wrongly constructs staff as opposed to the educational mission of the university, erasing the dedication many staff have to supporting research and teaching. He overlooks the high percentage of staff that are either alums of the university in which they are employed and that many staffers either have or are currently pursuing advanced degrees. Third, like Brainard and colleagues' (2009) focus on numbers of staff rather than costs, Ginsberg

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ignores the reality that if professors were employed to do all the administrative work of the university, the cost of "staff bloat" would be far more astronomical. Fourth, he homogenizes administrators as anti-faculty, dismissing the faculty in such positions as failed academics or distinguishing between careerist administrators and faculty that occupy administrative positions only temporarily. Fifth, he ignores how indispensible staff are for freeing faculty to fulfill ever increasing administrative responsibilities and disciplinary pressures to publish. Faculty are already pressed for time do their own research due to service commitments, student advising, and paperwork, but Ginsberg does not even hint that restructuring the reward structure of academia would be necessary for faculty to take on the type of administrative work done currently by administrative staffers. Thus, by scapegoating staff and not distinguishing between staff and administrators, Ginsberg inflates staff's status and pay vis-à-vis faculty and does not acknowledge how staff's responsibility for administrative tasks makes the professional success of faculty possible. Most detrimental, however, is that Ginsberg reproduces an us/them rhetoric as regards faculty and staff that ignores the shared interest of both groups in stemming the marketization of higher education.

Ultimately, when commentators on the marketized university, like Ginsberg (2011), Rhoades (1998), and Tuchman (2009), uncritically equate increases in staff numbers with faculty's increasing subordination, they ignore faculty's continued higher status, more power, and greater privileges than staff. By not seriously considering how staff are essential to the success of institutions of higher education and scapegoating them for faculty's threatened status, critics are diverted from developing holistic strategies to stem marketization and managerialism.

Staff as They Are: My Empirical Investigation

Based on over two hundred hours of ethnographic observation at an IT Help Desk in a health care and research school at a large university and supplemented by thirty hours at a professional school in the same university and interviews with seventeen women and twelve men employed as IT Support Staff in 20 different departments on the same campus, I show how the mundane work of IT Support provides a window into the shifting status order of modern universities. I argue that support staff are central to how organizational logics derived from business are translated into the higher education context. Budget cuts and new "rationalized" ways of organizing work may be initiated by presidents and deans, but staff are the employees tasked with making these changes real in the lives of faculty and others.

In context of university restructuring, staff are on the frontlines of such processes and have an on the ground view of their impact on the university. My research unintentionally coincided with a massive restructuring of the university's entire IT support system in an effort to cut costs. During the 2000s, IT Support was provided through a decentralized model in which each department was assigned their own ITS staff that resided within the department and dealt only with that department's needs. The size of the staff varied with the number of users in the department, from one person handling a couple small units in the same building to four people handling the Psychology Department's dozens of labs. During interviews, the ITS workers I encountered identified as members of the department in which they were located, such as Sociology or Chemistry, of instead with the university's central IT unit.

In 2012, this decentralized model gave way to a process of "centralization and rationalization" in which ITS were moved from individual departments to units within the university's central IT structure, reframing them as employees of university IT, not individual

departments. Some employees were assigned to a general pool of ITS workers that provided support to users regardless of department, for example helping any university member with their email password and maintaining of general use computer labs and printers. Others were moved to ITS units that consolidated ITS workers from physically nearby departments into one single group with shared responsibility for those once disparate departments. Rather than each individual identifying with a separate unit or department, the group as a whole identified with the users within a geographic area, like three science buildings on the east edge of the central quad, which contained five different departments. Though the severing of personal ties was less in the multi-department units than the centralized general unit, the sense of identification of ITS workers with specific departments was diminished.

This centralization and rationalization process is heavily criticized by users for the layers of bureaucracy it injected between themselves and the IT support workers. When IT support was decentralized, users often made requests for assistance through direct contact with their department's IT support, which included email, phone calls, and physically going to an ITS worker's office to speak with them in person. All of these allowed for a fairly immediate response, even if the fix was longer in coming. When ITS workers were removed from individual departments, users had to contact a central help number or website and make their request for assistance. This typically resulted some period of waiting on the part of the user, as they would be serviced in the order their requests were received, rather than with the immediacy that resulted from direct contact. Any more than a minimal wait was regarded negatively, causing irritation at a lack of responsiveness typically understood by the users as an individual slight, regardless of its origins in bureaucratic efforts to rationalize support provision.

At my field site, a large health care and research professional school within the university (referred to as the H-School in this text), "rationalization" had been instituted, though centralization had been only partial. The H-School still had its own IT unit, and only a few responsibilities had been absorbed by university's new Central IT group. Rationalization took the form of enforced use of a ticketing system that organized service requests, which replaced a more ad hoc system of requests. This threatened the university's traditional status structure by denying preferential treatment to faculty and giving it instead to "classrooms and clinics," meaning a customer-centered service logic of putting paying customers (not high status employees) first.   This threat was made visible in the interaction of faculty users and IT, as conflict occasionally arose when faculty contested being asked to wait or being told "no" to a non-standard request. While low status staffers would grumble some but ultimately accept the new rationalized protocol, high status faculty frequently expressed their displeasure in obvious ways. The end result was the loss of some entitlement by faculty but no fundamental disruption of their higher status and power over low status staff.

My encounters with IT support staff revealed many of the oversights, exaggerations, and inaccuracies of the existing literature on managerialism and rationalization in higher education. Faculty and staff interests are not fundamentally at odds; staff can be just as passionate about the research and teaching mission of the university as faculty. As I show, schisms between the two groups of employees originate in the organizational and interactional (re)production of the faculty/staff binary as status hierarchy, not just increasing numbers of non-academic staff.

Structure of this Dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation consists of six chapters. Chapter 2, "Observing IT while Female" details my methods and the setting for my research. Chapter 3, "Support Work

and Status," is a theoretical consideration of support staff as a distinctive group of laborers. It examines how organizational status structures workplace interactions and how support staff are disappeared from narratives of professional achievement despite their indispensability. Chapter 4, "Help-Seeking, Face-Saving, and Status," is an empirical consideration of help-seeking behaviors as status-based interactions that (re)produce faculty's greater organizational status than staff. Chapter 5, "'Unreasonably Impatient': Waiting, Queuing and the (Re)production of Organizational Status," examines waiting and queuing, showing how status-based reactions to being asked to wait further (re)produce faculty's high status. Chapter 6, "'Sometimes "Yes" Is Not the Best Answer': Service Work and Status (Re)production Despite Refusal," examines refusals of service and shows how faculty (re)produce their high status despite being told "no." Chapter 7, "Emotional Labor: IT Support at the Shock Troops and Shock Absorbers of the Rationalizing University," focuses on the emotional labor performed by IT support workers, documenting how they are both the shock troops and shock absorbers of the importation of market logics into the university. This dissertation concludes with a discussion of why staff and faculty should come to see each other as fellow university employees with shared interests in limiting managerialist incursions on the teaching and research missions of higher education.

Conclusion: Staff as They Could Be

By examining the experience of university ITS workers, I have located a valuable vantage point on the changing structure of the contemporary university as well as empirical evidence of organizational status as an active production. To truly understand the contemporary university's organizational structure, researchers need to take seriously the staff whose interactions with faculty and among themselves (re)produce the organizational infrastructure on a daily basis. Changes to professors' status as autonomous professionals is effected not just in

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shifting rights (Rhoades 1997) but in their interactions with the university staffers that make up the majority of university employees. As I show, inattention to staff allows critics to misperceive the contemporary power structure of the university. Faculty may be subordinated by an increasingly managerialist administration, but they retain their dominance over staff. When faculty are not reflexive about their status, they do not see how they are likely to engage in precisely the kind of managerialism that critics bemoan.

What I provide in this dissertation is a more fundamental consideration of the power structures and modes of management that shape the university as workplace. Rescuing contemporary higher education from the deleterious influence of market-based logics will require redefining the division of labor in higher education in a way that acknowledges that faculty and university success, especially with diminished budgets, depends on "non-academic" staff. Returning to an all-faculty labor force in higher education is not feasible, and calls to trim staff "bloat" ignore how staff support is necessary for faculty to meet heightened expectations for teaching, publishing, and service. Only when faculty and staff realize their fates are entwined can they see their shared interests in ending managerialism and the marketization of the university.

Chapter 2: Methods: Observing IT Support While Female

Harry and I sit quietly at the Help Desk, both of us typing on our respective keyboards. He works at the actual desk, parked in front of a computer and phone, surrounded by the flotsam and jetsam of IT support: cords of every color, keyboards waiting for pickup, notes with user names and problems scrawled on them, a laptop running a virus scan, dust bunnies. I sit off to the side, perched on a stool, netbook on lap. Wordlessly, Harry gets out of his chair and slips into the kitchenette adjoining the Help Desk, leaving me alone. The day has been slow; both of us stifle yawns all afternoon, regardless of how much coffee we drink.

I watch Harry leave, then turn my attention to the posters on internet security tacked to the opposite wall, reading yet again the suggestions for a strong password: letters and numbers, no words, change every six month, include characters, mix lower- and upper-case. I'm startled as a man's voice cuts through my contemplation, and coming out of my reverie, I find Dr. Karbon thrusting toward me a black gadget I do not recognize as he launches into a detailed description of the problem he is having with said device. I smile with as much friendliness as I can muster and interrupt his monologue, holding my hand up in a weak "halt" gesture and saying "Hold on a sec – let me get you an actual IT person." His face goes slack momentarily, unsure why I, sitting at a desk reserved for IT staff, cannot help him, but he just nods as I slip off my stool and make a beeline for the back.

I find Harry in the back offices standing at Isaac's desk, the two puzzling together over a recent request. I interrupt them, telling Harry that someone needs to be helped, and then quickly return to the front to let Dr. Karbon know someone is coming. He looks at me questioningly, so I tell him I am "just a social scientist doing observation." Dr. Karbon replies, "Ah …", then returns to waiting silently. After about half a minute, Harry saunters out, having wrapped up his conversation with Isaac. He beams at the professor, who starts anew his explanation of his problem, this time to someone who can really help.

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When I began my fieldwork on Information Technology Support (ITS), I anticipated that

the labor of ITS workers would be highly gendered and that the gender identities of the ITS

worker and the user would inflect the interaction in significant and obvious ways. Research on

gender and work shows clearly that gender undergirds the social construction of occupations,

professions, and organizations (Ferguson 1984, Acker 1990, Davies 1996, Witz 1992, Sargent 2009, Irvine and Vermilya 2010), resulting in the sex segregation of the labor market (Reskin and Roos 1990, Williams 1995, Murray 1996, Salzinger 2003, Jacobsen 2007) and the unequal remuneration of jobs dominated by women versus men (Blum 1991, England 1992, Lupton 2000, Paap 2006, Turco 2010). Scholarship on front-line service work shows care work and emotional labor are coded as feminine and devalued (Williams 1995, England 2005, Simpson 2005, Truss 2013), noting that men are at a disadvantage in the labor market for interactive service work (Simpson 2009, Nixon 2009, Kelan 2007). Studies of gender and technology document the social construction of technology as masculine (Hacker 1990, Henwood 1998, Kvande 1999, Frehill 2004, Ranson 2005, Faulkner 2007, Wajcman 2010, Margolis and Fisher 2002) and how women are marginalized within STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) occupations (Wright 1996, Kelan 2008, Powell, Bagilhole, and Dainty 2008, Foor and Walden 2009). More abstractly, Celia Ridgeway's (2011) framing theory identifies gender as a primary "frame" through which interactants understand each other and make decisions about task-oriented behavior. Gender is most salient to how tasks are divided and leaders arise when employees are engaged in mixed-gender interactions or engaged in activities associated with a particular gender (e.g., technology as masculine). Before entering the field, I hypothesized that gender would be of major if not paramount importance to the work of IT support, that men and women ITS workers would have different interaction styles, that users would treat men and women ITS workers unequally, and that a masculinist "nerd" culture (Kendall 1999, 2000; though see Bury 2011 for a discussion of women and nerd culture) would dominate. I pondered whether the university context might curb particularly egregious sexism and daydreamed about

observing women ITS workers' resistance strategies against uncivil users. In brief, I entered the field with my sights set on gender.

What I found was the unexpected (Enloe 2004).   I had not anticipated that only one of the men ITS workers would fit the nerd stereotype, that "brusque" would become my go-to word for describing one of the women ITS workers, or that both men and women ITS workers would be more patient with their users than I could ever be. My imaginings never included women faculty being rude, men staff being obsequious, or me being invisible to faculty until they learned I was a doctoral student doing research. I certainly never predicted that from the first day I would be mistaken for IT support again and again, that my seat behind the Help Desk was enough for users think I worked there and launch them into an explanation of their problems before I could stop them, or that my second research site would prove frustrating because there was no way to prevent users from hailing me as IT support and becoming annoyed when I could not help. This constant misrecognition made me revisit my original hypotheses, made me ask what else besides gender played a primary force in structuring the work lives of the ITS workers and their users. I began to think more intersectionally, attentive to the multiplicity of identities structuring workplace interactions (Crenshaw 1991, Collins 1990, Solari 2006).

My ultimate answer is positional status. Status refers to an individual's location within a hierarchical array of comparable others based on qualities other than class, like race, gender, or age (Weber 1946[1914], Podolny 2008, Ridgeway 2014). Positional status refers an individual's location within a formal organizational hierarchy (King 2005, Welch 1997). The inequality of power and authority inherent to organizational hierarchy is so naturalized as to be generally unremarkable (for exceptions, see Hughes 1956, Freidson 1976, Strauss 1985, Corbin and Strauss 1993, Allen 2000, Khurana 2007); scholarly attention is focused more often on race,

gender, and other categorical identities that have been shown to structure inequalities in the distribution of individuals into jobs as well as the ensuing rewards (Ong 2005, Schilt 2006, Pager, Western, and Bonikowski 2009, Acker 2009). In organizational communication and psychology studies, organizational status is frequently deployed as a categorical variable, though its structuring function for the organization and meaning for workers is omitted given the quantitative survey and experimental methods employed (Kassing and Armstrong 2001). Race, gender, and similar identities were not irrelevant to the experience of the university ITS workers that I observed and were always available as a resource for making decisions and explaining behavior, but they were eclipsed by ITS workers' conceptual bifurcation of users into two unequal groups: dominant faculty and subordinate staff. The ITS workers were defined by the university and understood by themselves as part of the low-status corps of non-academic staff. In this chapter, I detail my methods of non-participant observation and qualitative interviews and then go on to describe in detail the primary site of my research, the individuals populating it, and its basic functioning. Overall, the micro-level vantage point of ethnography allowed me to see staffs' bifurcation of their world into faculty versus staff, which have been far less obvious otherwise. In turn, the unexpected centrality of the staff/faculty binary allowed me to see that organizational analyses of the restructuring of higher education are marred by overemphasis on faculty's new organizational subordination to professional, non-faculty managers and inattention to their greater power and status than staff. This chapter focuses on the people and methods that brought me to this realization.

Settings

The Help Desk at the H-School

My primary research site was an ITS subunit (called the Help Desk) that provided IT

support services for a large professional school at a major state university. I engaged in 200

hours of observation from March through July of 2013. The professional school, which I will

refer to henceforth as the H-School, was a health care and research college that trained medical

professionals and academics as well as providing paid services to a substantial patient

population. The H-School had more than 800 users and 1500 computers, all of which were

managed by the H-School's internal ITS department. The H-School's internal ITS department

had three units: (Web) Design, Business Applications, and Support Services (my site). While

(Web) Design and Business Applications were in charge of creating, programming, and

maintaining the major applications and websites used by the H-School, Support Services was

tasked with making sure users could fully utilize the computing resources provided to them,

including purchase, service, and maintenance of all computers and peripherals owned by the H-

School; servicing of classroom computers and projectors; maintenance of the H-School's

computer network; and insuring users' ability to access the H-School's programs, servers, and

email. Support Services was divided into two subunits, Systems Administration (server support)

and the Help Desk, both housed in the same suite of offices and overseen by the same manager.

Systems Administration worked largely backstage, managing the servers and having minimal

interaction with users. The Help Desk, in contrast, did most of the interacting with users, helping

with problems ranging from jammed printers to forgotten passwords to crashing applications.

The H-School Help Desk was open 8 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday. The Help Desk

workers are central to the analysis I present and discussed at length later in this chapter. While

members of Systems Administration figure in my narrative when their duties overlap with the

Help Desk staff, my analysis does not deal with the System Administration's unique functions or

users.

Help Desk at the P-School

Complementing my observations at the H-School was a second, much briefer stint (11

days, roughly 45 hours) at the ITS Help Desk in a non-health care related professional school

(henceforth P-School) on the same campus. There were 1100 computers under their care, and

the P-School Help Desk stayed open on evenings and weekends to service the faculty and

students who used the building to meet and study. They were open a total of 100 hours a week.

The P-School Help Desk consisted of 6 staff, which included only one woman; all were white.

The men at the P-School Help Desk had all made careers of ITS and all but one embraced some

variant of masculinist nerd culture. The woman had moved from a clerical position through the

encouragement of a previous boss. With a structure and function similar to their peer unit at the

H-School, the P-School differed by requiring some contact with undergraduate users to solve

wireless internet and printing issues, but did not involve managing sensitive health data or

financial transactions. Problems with classroom technology were handled by a separate unit of

the P-School's IT unit and were not included in my study. Like the H-School, the ITS workers

divided their time between sitting at a physical desk taking requests by email, phone, or face-to-

face interaction and working on requests in their shared office space. The most notable

difference between the sites was a sense of simmering discontent at the P-School resulting from

the management's failure to support the ITS workers in their efforts to adhere to established

policies and protocols, which undermined the ITS workers' professional autonomy and morale.

My aim was comparative, a means of assessing the uniqueness of the H-School Help Desk. The

P-School is not central to the narrative of this dissertation, but it appears in this analysis as evidence of how generic (or not) the status processes observed in the H-School might be.

Methods

Ethnography and Shadowing

Sociologists have long relied on ethnographic methods to provide new and unexpected knowledge about workplace structures and operations (Reinharz 1992, Smith 2005, Burawoy 1991). Melville Dalton's *Men Who Manage* (1956) empirically demonstrated the possibility of disconnect between formal and informal authority structures within an organization; Rosabeth Moss Kanter's *Men and Women of the Corporation* (1977) documented the importance of organizational structures of power, authority, and responsibility for seemingly gender-based work styles; Michael Burawoy's *Manufacturing Consent* (1979) showed how factory workers may consent to their own subordination by management rather than just be subjected to coercion; and Arlie Hochschild's *The Managed Heart* (1983) introduced the concept of emotional labor as distinct from physical labor. More recent ethnographies have examined waitresses (Erickson 2009), luxury hotel staff (Sherman 2007), fashion modeling (Mears 2011), resort staff (Adler and Adler 2004) welfare case workers (Watkins-Hayes 2009a, 2009b), meteorologists (Fine 2007), blackjack dealers (Sallaz 2009), and elementary school teachers and administration (Hallett 2007). Ethnography is indispensable because it allows researchers to capture taken for granted behavior, especially mundane, unconscious, and/or unflattering occurrences, that are unlikely to be reported during an interview (Fletcher 1999, Orr 1996, Neyland 2008). Both Arlie Hochschild (1989) and Christopher Carrington (2002) document how interviewees' accounts of their of families' domestic divisions of labor can contrast sharply with how domestic tasks were actually apportioned in those couples. In both studies,

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ethnography reveals interviewees' responses to be more reflective of cultural norms about gender and fairness than subjects' actual behavior. Similarly, my work examines the mundane as a way to understand the structural. I show how the centrality of the staff/faculty binary to staff's understanding of their world might allow scholars to transcend a myopic focus on faculty's subordination to non-faculty management and see the status and power structures of the university more clearly.

For some ethnographers, deep and sustained observation of workers in their workplaces may be accompanied by actual engagement in the tasks at hand (Adler and Adler 1987), whether selling sweaters to China's *nouveau riche* (Hanser 2008) or planning a countercultural arts festival (Chen 2009). Although comfortable with computers and technology, I am not skilled enough to be anything but an impediment to Help Desk employees trying to get harried users back to work. As a result, I engaged in shadowing, or non-participant observation (McDonald 2005, Quinlan 2008, Fletcher 1999, Orr 1996), watching carefully and taking detailed notes, occasionally asking for explanations or clarifications of things I observed, like the identity of a user or the established protocol for a task (Monahan and Fisher 2010). My observation excluded concern with the actual technical details of their work (e.g., *how* to reset an expired password or update a program) and focused on the service work interaction along with the individual and collective meanings ITS workers gave to their work. In contrast, I participated fully in the informal culture and socializing of the department, attending unit meetings and farewell luncheons, hanging out in the offices as ITS workers puzzled over computers, and joking around with staff from other units and departments. I never attempted to achieve insider status (Holyfield and Jonas 2003), but I did immerse myself in the daily life of the unit as best I could. Though I could not provide any monetary compensation to the Help Desk workers, I made a

regular practice of bringing them food, alternating between homemade cakes and cookies and purchased bagels. The frequency of my offerings was noted by the manager Alice, who laughingly said that I was welcome to observe even without snacks. I joked back I was trying to make them slower so following them in the halls was easier, though really I considered it a way to give something back for their support. My presence eventually became naturalized to both the ITS workers and the users with whom they interacted the most, as exemplified during my second month by a visit to a Lab to deal with network issues. As I and the Help Desk employee I was trailing entered the room, Lynette, a staff member assisting with new student orientation, cheerily said hello, directed Isaac to some nearby students, and then suggested I help users on the far side of the room. Before I could even finish stammering, unsure of what to say, Lynette laughed, apologized, and then joked "You're just part of the family now" (FN0423).[11]

I was not entirely inactive while at the Help Desk. As suggested by the opening vignette, ITS workers often used my presence at the Help Desk to provide coverage so they could take a quick break, complete an errand, or confer with other staff. I never answered the phone when left alone, the Help Desk employees preferring I carry the phone unanswered it to whomever was working the back offices that day. Sometimes I was an extra pair of arms to hold a computer or legs to run back to the Help Desk for forgotten supplies. On a few occasions I shared bits of my field notes when ITS workers were unsure about the accuracy of remembered details or where a colleague had disappeared to. (Otherwise, my notes were kept to myself, with the exception of one set of abridged notes provided to the Support Services unit so they could get a sense of what I was doing during my observation.) During service calls with more gregarious users, I was

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[11] Direct quotes from my field notes are labeled with FN followed by the month and day of observation, like (FN0325). Direct quotes from interviews are attributed to the particular speaker. Reconstructed vignettes, like the one that opens this dissertation or within chapters, are distinguishable for their lack of a parenthetical with the date.

often engaged by the user in small talk. While my default behavior was to remain silent and out of the way, some users transferred their attentions to me once the ITS worker became quiet and focused on the task at hand. Though not intentional, it did benefit the ITS workers by allowing them focus on their work rather than being drawn into conversation. My participation was always non-technical tasks aimed at easing the ITS worker's burden, so shadowing meant my experience of the trials and tribulations of trying to solve computer problems and help users were primarily vicarious. This proved a boon as regards my ability to take detailed notes on the interaction between the ITS worker(s) and the user. Instead of concentrating on the arcana of technical problem solving, I could focus on how they worked together to identify and resolve problems. Conversations with users allowed a deeper understanding of how people engaged with technology and the ITS workers. The few instances of help I provided, like sharing knowledge about obscure PowerPoint functions, gave me a sense of the possibilities for frustration and success when working with users. These experiences were deepened by my own experience as a support worker, three years spent working as a secretary between undergraduate and graduate school, which allowed for an empathetic understanding of the ITS workers' interactions with users.

My formal access to the H-School Help Desk came through the manager of the Support Services unit, whom I interviewed during the early stages of my project, and bore the enthusiastic approval of the H-School's Chief Information Officer (CIO). Both women were sensitive to gender issues and supported my feminist motivations; the ITS workers acclimated quickly to my presence and were consistently helpful and accommodating. In turn, the Support Services manager facilitated my entry into the P-School, as she had worked there prior to assuming her position at the H-School and remained friends with the P-School CIO. Irrespective

of point of entry, my ability to connect with the ITS workers and experience their world was possible because of my identity as a graduate student. I do not believe this project would have been feasible had I been faculty. Graduate students occupy a liminal space in the status hierarchy of the university. Though in training to be professors, graduate students have little institutional status or power, thus sharing staff's subordinate status vis-à-vis the faculty and administration of the university. Lacking any organizational status or power over my subjects and sharing their organizational experience of subordinance rendered me fairly non-threatening. (This was not total, of course, as my experience with a reticent phone interviewee who retracted his consent suggests some did see my intentions as less than benign.) Once I presented myself as truly interested in their opinions and not engaged in surveillance for the university, I could be considered an ally–not necessarily staff, but certainly not faculty with power over them or their jobs. (Never asking them to work on my computer – even the day I dropped it and the back fell off in the middle of the suite – also endeared me to them, as I did not add to their work loads.)

The staff I encountered were willing to speak their minds as long as I refrained from reacting defensively or otherwise invalidating their feelings by criticizing their occasionally negative evaluations of users and aspects of the university. Only two staff users encountered during my observation reacted negatively to my note-taking, both administrative assistants: one of whom made a nervous joke about my working for the National Security Administration but accepted my assertion that all my research was confidential and a second who was not pacified by my promise of confidentiality, which led me to stop taking notes during that interaction. Otherwise, the ITS workers at the H-School were committed to being themselves around me and not suppressing snark or less than flattering evaluations of users. This was highlighted when a new employee joined the group, as I heard her be explicitly instructed to not worry about my

presence. They assured her she could "act naturally," that I was not there to judge them. Tensions between the P-School CIO and Help Desk employees meant I was not welcomed as warmly or assimilated as quickly, as they were more suspicious that I was surveilling them on behalf of the administration. The P-School Help Desk manager and most of his staff seemed to trust me very little. While a few ITS workers spoke candidly, others gave evidence of not believing my notes were not shared with the CIO or others. For example, the Help Desk manager once remarked passive-aggressively as he prepared to walk a student to a printer that I should be sure to write his actions down so his good customer service was on record. Though he was in part sarcastically reprising an earlier confessed concern about his rocky relationship with the CIO, his word choice laid bare the difficulty of my developing rapport with the unit.

My time in the field was split between sitting at the Help Desk with the unit member tasked with handling walk-ins and phone calls at that time and going with ITS workers on service calls to aid users with specific problems. One of the Help Desk employees was always stationed to sit at the front desk to greet users and coordinate inquiries, while the others worked at their desks, went on service calls, or were otherwise occupied. Assignment to the physical Help Desk was rotated among the ITS workers, each person taking on average one morning and one afternoon block during the week. (On one occasion I observed three one-hour new student orientations held by the H-School Help Desk to ensure all new graduate students had their email accounts created and access to the internet; two similar orientations were observed in the P-School. These were valuable for how explicitly they laid out the rights and responsibilities of the users.) The room that housed the Help Desk was a large rectangle cut neatly into two eight-foot by eight-foot sections; the double-doors in the lower left of the rectangle opened onto waiting area for users (which doubled as a breezeway to the back offices in the suite as well as the

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meeting room/kitchenette). This reception area was separated from the Help Desk proper by means of a six-foot long desk flanked by a chest height ledge. The manager's office was immediately to the left of the main entrance to the Help Desk, her door parallel to the desk itself. A walkway went between the desk and far wall to allow individuals behind the desk, while a small recess existed at the other end of the desk. The ITS worker at the Help Desk sat in front of a computer and telephone array at the end of the desk closest to the entry point to the desk. I perched on a stool a few feet from where the ITS worker was sitting, well within earshot of the phone. During my time at the Help Desk, I used my netbook to take detailed notes on the interactions among ITS workers, users, and other visitors, capturing nearly verbatim large chunks of conversation, including opening and departing salutations, and brief descriptions of people's appearance, movement, and demeanor. My notes stop short of the absolute fidelity of video or audio recordings used by conversation analysis (Kitzinger 2000), though any omissions were more than made up for by the embodied experience of interacting with ITS workers and users. I listened to phone calls and recorded as much as I could, filling in details with the ITS worker afterwards.

As suggested by the vignette, I was frequently mistaken for a Help Desk employee by users, which resulting in having to do a fair amount of interactional smoothing over, like a woman faculty member who snapped at me "So you're not going to help me with my classroom problem" when I tried to politely ask for her to wait until Andre got off the phone to help her. Sitting behind the Help Desk seemed enough to signal ITS worker identity for users, and nearly all users addressed their request to me as well as the Help Desk employee on duty at the front desk.   On far less frequent occasions I was mistaken for someone being assisted.

When I went on service calls with Help Desk employees, I left my netbook at the desk and took notes with pen and paper. The length of service calls ranged widely. Sometimes we were gone only the five minutes necessary to travel two floors up, be told the clinic printer had begun working again before we arrived, and return to the Help Desk. At the other extreme, service calls on particularly recalcitrant machines could take upwards of two hours, much of it spent waiting patiently for programs to install or a virus scan to complete. On some occasions, service calls were nested, the ITS worker starting a virus scan in one department, going to a different office to install a program for twenty minutes, quickly pickup a monitor from a third location, and then return to the first office to finish the virus removal. A typical service call took us away from the desk for at least twenty minutes but less than an hour, including the time to travel elsewhere in the labyrinthine building. On some occasions I asked to go on service calls arising from requests I observed being placed by walk-ins or phone calls; at other times, the ITS workers invited me to accompany them, especially when they were faced with a unique situation (e.g., cleaning up after a water pipe burst) or notable user (e.g., an administrator they considered particularly difficult). My requests to shadow were almost always granted, the only exceptions being instances where they knew the user would not be present and thus there would be nothing for me to see. While the Help Desk employees grew accustomed to my tagging along, they never totally understood my interest in the mundane and profane. Only in the last couple weeks of my observation did they stop apologizing for taking me on uneventful calls, perhaps convinced by my repeated insistence that the eventful has meaning in only comparison to that considered boring.

The H-School ITS workers had been issued blue coats identifying them as ITS, but they very rarely wore them as they were well enough known throughout the school to not require

constant symbolic identification. This was confirmed by how often both the faculty and staff we encountered in the halls greeted the ITS workers by name as well as the unquestioned right of way we were granted through locked offices and medical spaces where patients were being treated. I was never asked to wear a coat or anything else meant to identify me to users or patients. Instead, I wore my usual grad student gear: slacks, t-shirts, skirts with leggings, and dresses, all somber colors and plain shapes; no makeup; minimal jewelry; long hair swept back into a bun; flats or non-athletic sneakers. As mentioned above, my modal behavior was to remain silent and as out of the way as I could, not engaging with the users unless they talked to me first. Whether or not I was introduced to the users depended on whom I was trailing. Some ITS workers communicated my researcher identity to users, formally introducing me to the user as a social scientist there to observe the Help Desk. This often led to brief small talk and pleasantries before the user turned their attention to the ITS worker servicing their computer. I was occasionally asked about the details of my project, which I answered with a brief overview of how neglected ITS workers are in the research literature and my desire to rectify this. I elided mention of my interest in user behavior vis-à-vis the ITS workers. Users frequently capitalized on this type of exchange to compliment the Help Desk staff. Other Help Desk employees did not remark upon my identity or non-ITS status unless specifically asked by users. In some instances my existence was not remarked upon during the entire visit. My presence was only remarked upon when I was separated from the ITS worker I was following, as I was suspected of being a lost patient in need of help. Once I made clear that I was accompanying the ITS worker, often just through a quick gesture to the Help Desk employee engaged in a repair, I became invisible again.

How I was regarded by the people we encountered as we travelled through the building was highly instructive of the intense role of organizational status in structuring interactions between ITS workers and users. The staff we encountered generally treated me warmly, asking who I was and praising the Help Desk. Some offered me seats, which I almost always declined in favor of a standing position with a good vantage point on the ITS worker and user. On more than a few occasions I was mistaken for a Help Desk trainee. One service call to remove a virus from an administrative assistant's computer was particularly telling of the collegial relationship between Help Desk workers and staff. Immediately upon entering her office, the ITS worker and the administrative assistant began to joke around, the admin teasing the ITS worker that he was always assigned to service their computers because he liked them so much and the ITS worker playing along, telling her in a tone of mock gruffness that he tried to get someone else to take the call before dissolving in a peal of laughter. All joking stopped, though, when she spied me. The ITS worker caught her questioning look and introduced me as a researcher, causing a wave of relief to come over the administrative assistant's face. She then welcomed me in the same jocular tone, asking how I was enjoying myself, no longer worried that she had committed the *faux pas* of not remembering who was on the Help Desk staff.

Faculty, in contrast, ignored me almost completely. Because the ITS workers were so well known to users, faculty who encountered us but were not the user needing assistance gave the ITS worker a quick glance and then turned back to their work. On multiple occasions we serviced computers or hooked up a conference phone without the faculty ever looking up before the ITS worker announced they were done and leaving. Even eye contact was fleeting; I could stand in a busy corridor for an hour dividing my attention between watching a Help Desk employee on a service call and surveying the wider scene and never be acknowledged with a

glance or nod.   Never once did a faculty user on a service call draw me into conversation without being aware that I was a PhD student, meaning that I was engaged with as a fellow academic, not as staff. They would ask about my project and offer insights. For example, one professor remarked to me multiple times in one visit that I would be amused to know that his laptop called the track pad a "human interface device" (FN 0404), engaging with me through my identity as a sociologist interested in the social construction of technology, not an ITS worker. Imagined to be staff, I could be ignored; known to be a scholar, I was treated as a colleague[12]. Power dynamics between faculty and staff were made startling clear in two instances of (non-sexual) touching by senior men faculty in which they physically guided my body out of their way when I was loitering in a walkway, watching the ITS worker. While certainly gendered in that such behavior was not observed by women faculty, it was also status driven as men staff did not engage in such behavior and men ITS workers were subjected to the same asymmetry of contact as I (Kang 2010). All of these occasions made clear the relative status accorded faculty and staff and how it structured interaction.

For all interactions, ITS workers provided me with details and clarification about things I did not understand or could not hear, like computer jargon or the identity of a caller. Some Help Desk employees were proactive about giving details, others waited for me to ask. The manager and other Support Services employees made themselves consistently available to me and graciously answered my many questions about the department's policies and history. At night I fleshed out the skeletal field notes I took during the day, expanding strings of dialogue and abbreviated descriptions into detailed narratives of interactions (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw

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[12] Ehinger (2014) makes a similar observation in her online article for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

1995). The next day I clarified any uncertainties with the staff members involved, updating my field notes either during lulls or that evening. I employed these same methods at the P-School.

At my primary site, the H-School Help Desk, I observed more than 350 discrete interactions between users and ITS workers plus myriad interactions among the staff in formal and informal settings. I spent an average of three days a week, four hours at a time, over the course of fifty-three observation days spread across five months. Early in my observation, I either arrived at the H-School Help Desk at 8 am to observe opening procedures and then stayed through noon or arrived at 1 pm to be present when the Help Desk was closed at 5 pm. After a few weeks, the temporal patterning of user requests came into focus, causing me to concentrate my observation times on the busiest hours. Most problems were reported between 8:30am and 3pm, spiking early in the morning when people discovered problems upon booting up their computers for the day but then tapering off as the afternoon progressed. Users were inclined to wait until the next morning to contact the Help Desk for problems discovered near quitting time, adding to the early morning spike. Late afternoons tended to be extremely slow, allowing Help Desk employees time to engage in less pressing service requests and routine maintenance. The last couple hours of the day were so quiet that I often found myself researching boredom at work in a bid to stay awake (Charlton 1989, Molstad 1986). Most days ended uneventfully, although ITS workers told stories of staying one to four hours late to help a user solve a time-sensitive problem, like a web browser failure six hours before a grant proposal must be submitted. I did not experience any such occasions, though one such occurrence was reported to me the next day.

Interviews

My observation data is complemented by qualitative interviews conducted with men and women ITS workers at the same university. Though the university was subdivided into a number

of schools and colleges (e.g., College of Engineering, Medical School, Liberal Arts and Sciences), all IT Support was supervised to some degree by the university's Central IT Department. As discussed in the introduction, IT support at the University underwent rationalization and centralization during my data collection. These changes brought into relief many aspects of the formal and informal operation of IT support at the university, resulting in much analytic clarity among the interviewees about ITS services at the university. All had stories about users angry at the changes, each one illuminating the status structure of the university a little more. (Importantly, the changes initiated by the Central IT Department had minimal bearing on the H-School's organizational structure and function, as the unique requirements of the H-School [discussed below] meant that it remained a standalone department dedicated only to the H-School, relying minimally on the Central IT Department to aid them and not servicing users outside the H-School. Centralization, however, was a major topic of conversation among the H-School ITS workers, and they were aware of their uniqueness in not being restructured.)

    Interview subjects who were not recruited through the ethnographic portion of my study were located through use of three publically available directories for the university. At the start of my project in Fall 2012, I identified 39 women and 167 men (206 total) as IT Support Staff. This lists remained my sample universe throughout the project, even after restructuring began, as my questions pertained to their time as IT Support Staff, not necessarily their position after the reorganization, which could be quite different. For example, a woman ITS worker moved from the History Department to a Central IT unit that handled university-wide software licensing; my interview with her dealt only with her time spent supporting History. Women at my site comprised 19 percent of all ITS employees, lower than the national average of 27 percent for

women ITS workers. I attempted to make contact with each of the 39 women, managing to

reach all but ten women by phone or email. I said I was examining the experiences of ITS

workers and had called based on their job classification; I mentioned my interest in gender but

did not make that central to my project description unless asked. Unexpectedly, multiple women

engaged me in enthusiastic conversations about gender and ITS, contradicting claims that

women in STEM resist any discussion of gender (Dryburgh 1999, Kelan 2007). Nineteen of the

29 women I made contact agreed to an interview, a rate of 66% percent; however four women

did not actually meet with me, meaning my acceptance rate was officially 38 percent. Users all

cited being too busy as their reason to not agree to an interview; being sick or having issues with

their children were given as reasons for not following through on a scheduled meeting. Once

these interviews were underway, I identified men ITS workers who resembled the women in

terms of job titles, tenure as indicated by salary, and responsibilities, which created a quasi-

matched pairs sample. I tried to reach 50 of the total 167 men ITS workers at the university and

made contact with 28; of these, 14 accepted for a 50 percent agreement rate. My final response

rate, however, was 32 percent, as more than one-third of the men who agreed to talk failed to

keep their appointments. As a whole, 42 percent of the women and men who were asked

ultimately completed an interview.

While the rates of acceptance between men and women ITS workers were roughly equal,

men ITS workers were much more likely to not keep their meeting with me than the women ITS

employees (35 percent for men, 21 percent for women). Gender differences also existed in how

men and women rejected my interview request. Although individuals of both genders usually

cited a lack of time as the reason for not interviewing and engaged in normative methods of

polite refusal, only men ITS workers were explicitly critical or impolite in their method of saying

no. One afternoon of cold calling men ITS left me in tears, as a string of terse rejections was capped by a potential subject telling me that my project was a terrible idea and "not interesting." (Only one subject during my observation, a younger man from the P-School, was explicitly dismissive of my project's sociological perspective.) This suggests a not insignificant degree of self-selection into my interview pool. Specifically, it is likely that I interviewed some of the most gregarious ITS workers, suggesting that I undersampled ITS employees with a different approach to interaction and by extension customer service style. Thus, the results are likely skewed by the overrepresentation of extroverts and an underrepresentation of ITS workers that fit the nerd archetype of being non-relational.

Interviewees ranged in age from 21 to 61, with women being slightly older on average (47 for women, 40 for men). One man and four women self-identified as homosexual. Ten women and 6 men had children. Subjects were white except for 4 Latinas, 1 Latino, and 3 Black men. Their job titles ranged from the lowest to highest ITS classifications at the university, including managers of ITS departments, and were drawn from all parts of the university. Their tenures at the university spanned from four to thirty-four years. Women had longer tenures on average, 15 years at the university (median 15 years) compared to 9 years for men (median 12.5). ITS workers' educations spanned from high school diplomas to a Master in Economics; a Bachelor's in a computing-related field was the modal degree for men, while women were more likely to have liberal arts degrees.

Interviews were qualitative and consisted of an open-ended interview schedule (see Appendix A) that began with demographic questions about age, identity, and tenure at the university. I then asked the interviewee their highest level of education, how they came to work in IT, how they came to their current position, and what their job involved. Though my

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interview schedule (see Appendix A) contained four pages of questions, I let the interviewee guide our conversation as much as possible. Probes were employed to insure coverage of topic areas like definitions of good and bad customer service, gender, what it takes to be successful at ITS, and the reorganization of the university's Central IT. Because ITS workers' days are so varied, I eschewed asking them to walk me through a typical day. Interviews were conducted in person in a place chosen by the respondent, which included their offices, office space loaned by the university, and off-campus restaurants. Their offices, wherever they were located, whatever gender inhabited it, bore a striking resemblance to each other: desks littered with paper and disassembled electronics, dusty tables with knots of cords and stacks of laptops, a few books on leadership or programming on a floating shelf, piles of disks in spindles and white envelopes with arcane numbers scrawled on them, visual representations of nerd culture and/or family (pictures of their children dressed as superheroes for Halloween spanned the two), dingy white walls, and powerful fluorescent lighting. Lasting between 45 minutes and 1 ½ hours, the interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. I used HyperResearch to code and analyze the interviews, relying on inductive methods inspired by grounded theory (Charmaz 2006).

Observing the H-School Help Desk

Shortly before I began my fieldwork, the founding member of the ITS Department at the H-School, Wallace, retired after more than thirty years of service. Thankfully he consented to an interview, providing valuable information about the history of the department. Wallace had been hired in the late 1970s to work in the television studio in the H-School but slowly took the lead in IT Support, starting in the late 1980s with one desktop and the first networked Apple computers on campus. As faculty and administrators began to adopt personal machines and rely

less on the university's central mainframe, more and more computers found their way into the H-School and under his purview. Within a few years, desktop computers were ubiquitous, used by faculty and staff. Wallace combined support of the H-School's Apple computers and networks with his duties as a video engineer until the television studio was shuttered. The ITS Department slowly coalesced around Wallace, developing organically as the needs and expectations of users grew, like hiring Windows ITS experts to complement Wallace's expertise with Apple computers and shifting from an Apple-only network to general access Ethernet. Wallace stopped being the *de facto* head of IT in the late-1990s when the position of IT manager was officially created and someone from outside the H-School was brought in to coordinate the increasing number of ITS workers and develop standards of service. Wallace continued to support Apples in the H-School, only being formally absorbed into the H-School's IT Department once the video studio dissolved in the early 2000s. The department configuration I observed was roughly ten years old, established when the position of CIO was created and the department shifted from one general IT manager supervising one multipurpose unit to the CIO overseeing three distinct subunits, each with their own manager.

Fundamental to the H-School Help Desk's operations was the need to abide by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA, pronounced hip-ah), a federal law enacted in 1996 meant to insure the absolute privacy of medical patients' health information, including financial transactions. HIPAA's mandates required an additional layer of network security and thus additional headaches for both the ITS workers and the users. Specifically, the H-School operated two networks: a general use network used for email and non-sensitive information and a restricted access network that housed all private health information. The restricted access network required extra effort on the part of users and ITS workers. First, users were required to

change their passwords every three months. Users who forgot to change their passwords before their expiration date were locked out of their accounts, including being kicked off the network in the middle of a session. Changing their password once expired required the assistance of the ITS staff, thus necessitating an in-person visit to the Help Desk. User frustration at frequent password changes and unexpected lockouts was often palpable, though the ITS staff did their best to explain the reasons for such stiff security, making clear that no exceptions were made to this policy, not even for the Dean of the college. Second, firm rules banned any computer not bought with H-School funds from accessing the secure network. This sometimes resulted in conflict between a user and the ITS worker when requested access was denied based on the origins of a computer. Conflicting claims required extensive detective work by the ITS workers, like looking into old purchase orders and examining histories of operating system installation. How users navigated this impasse was influenced by organizational status and will be discussed at length in Chapter 4.

IT Support was also structured by economic considerations, specifically the limited resources of the IT Unit. The need for computer help is infinite, so there were always more claimants on the ITS workers' time than actual availability. With at most five ITS workers to service the entire H-School and lacking budget approval for more workers, not every request could be fulfilled. Thus, procedures had been instituted to circumscribe the workload of the ITS staff, including relinquishing responsibility for computer labs to the Central ITS staffers and not being allowed to do any work on computers not purchased with H-School funds other than insuring access to the network and university email. University cost-saving efforts had resulted in a preferred vendor agreements signed with major technology companies, which limited the types of purchasable computers to a few brands, and restricted the use of university software

licenses on personal computers. This sometimes provoked conflict when the preferred vendor

agreement contradicted a user's preferences and threatened their autonomous control over their

methods of work. ITS workers were also a target for user anger when informing users that the

H-School would not provide them with software for their personal machines, which if done

would violate the campus-wide software agreements upon which discounted pricing was based,

or with the Mac dongles necessary to connect a laptop to the network, which the Help Desk

considered a departmental or individual responsibility akin to the purchase of a machine and not

a cost they could bear. For both, users were told to purchase the necessary software and

peripherals from the campus computer center, which provided discounted prices through the

same vendor agreements. Both of these resulted in complaints from users that the H-School was

not providing them with the tools they needed to do their jobs, but the ITS would not budge on

Mac dongles or software on personal machines and only rarely budged in regards to the preferred

vendor agreements. As I discuss in Chapter 6, how users reactions to these refusals were sites

for (re)producing organizational status.

Cast of Characters

H-School Help Desk Staff

The H-School Help Desk was run by Alice, a 48 year-old white lesbian (married, no

children) from an upper-middle class background, with more than twenty years of experience in

Information Technology. Working in private industry after graduating with a Bachelor's degree

in Psychology and Biology, she had been at the university for eight and a half years, three and a

half in other departments, five at the H-School. Alice reported to the Chief Information Officer

(CIO), Sabrina, a white, straight woman in her early 60s. Sabrina had moved into the CIO role

from a faculty position at the H-School. Alice was a hands-off manager who aimed to empower

her employees as autonomous professionals, consistently supporting her staff in disagreements with users about protocol but taking control of issues with recalcitrant individuals irresolvable by the Help Desk workers. She was well liked by her employees. Identifying as a feminist, she was very supportive of my project, and we often discussed my findings, her providing valuable supplemental information about department history and procedure. Importantly, Alice's identity as a feminist both subtly and explicitly shaped the local culture of the H-School Systems Support Unit. Not only was Alice explicitly dedicated to increasing the number of women ITS workers in her unit, but she also created a woman- and queer-friendly, racially-diverse space that contradicted the dominant construction of computing as a white men's occupation. Her efforts combined with the equal opportunity rhetoric of the university likely diminished egregious sexism among her employees and some users, tempering the importance of gender for her ITS workers and limiting the generalizability of my analysis. However, my interviewees and P-School observation show that the staff/faculty binary was fundamental to how all of the university ITS workers understood their jobs, suggesting that any unique dimensions of the H-School Help Desk did not overshadow its commonality with other ITS units on campus. Moreover, the status processes illuminated by the H-School Help Desk have value for understanding status generally, as discussed in Chapter 3.

There were four System Administrators (referred to as Sys Admins by the ITS workers) that were charged with the maintenance of the H-School's networks and servers.   The Sys Admins were one occupational rung above the Help Desk workers, with higher status and pay. All were straight men in their mid-40s or older with at least one child under the age of five. One of the men was black, while the others were white. Ian, Dwayne, and Jake, the three lower-ranking System Administrators, shared an office that opened onto the Help Desk waiting area.

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Theo was the Senior System Administrator and had an office to himself behind the Help Desk. The Sys Admins took very few walk-ins; most of their user communications was via email. They routinely worked with the Help Desk to solve user problem, and no tensions existed between the two subunits. The Sys Admins were slightly more identified with masculinist nerd culture than the Help Desk employees and were responsible for the H-School's servers being named after James Bond villains.

Six individuals were employed by the Help Desk during my observation period:

- **Jim**: 23, white, male, straight (dating, no children), upper-middle class background, Biosciences major, temporary employee. The son of a high ranking administrative assistant at the H-School and the CIO of a different university department, Jim had worked as a temporary employee for the H-School Help Desk for four years, first as part-time during summers home from another state college and then as a full-time employee between receiving his undergraduate degree and entering AmeriCorps. He left during my second month of observation; I was unable to interview him before his departure. Trained on the job, Jim did not intend to do ITS for a living and was the most blunt and least customer-service oriented of the Help Desk employees. He engaged me in extensive conversations about sociology while sitting at the desk.

- **Andre**: 21, white, male, gay (dating, no children), working class background, film arts major, temporary employee. A student at the university, Andre had worked in ITS at the university for three years, two of those in the H-School. He chose ITS for his student employment so as to build the necessary skills for work in IT after graduating, using his actual classroom time to learn about liberal arts subjects that interested him. We bonded over a shared interest in queer theory and developed a friendly connection. Andre left for a fulltime job during my fourth month at the H-School Help Desk.

- **Harry**: 27, white, male, straight (married, one child) working class background, full time. The most identified with technology of all the Help Desk staff, Harry held a Bachelor's in Computer Science and intended to make his career in IT. He took a job with the H-School's Help Desk immediately after graduation and had been there three years. The only one of the Help Desk staff to identify with the computer geek subculture, his desk was decorated with a mix of pictures of his family and images of Star Wars characters. He left the Help Desk shortly after my observation ended, taking a position that did not involve user support. I was unable to interview Harry, as our planned meeting was disrupted by a service emergency, and then he passively rejected my interview request by not responding to two emails I sent trying to set a meeting time. While friendly and frank with me, Harry and I did not develop much of a connection during our time together.

- **Isaac**: 43, Kenyan, male, straight (married, one child), very poor background, full time. Originally an athlete, Isaac studied computer systems after immigrating to the United States, earning a Bachelor's in Computers and Information Systems. He was working on a Master's in Computer Security during my observation period. Short and soft-spoken, Isaac often joked around with users, lessening their frustration through jocular suggestions to throw broken equipment out the window. He was considered by all to be the "nicest" H-School ITS worker and well liked by the users. We developed a very friendly connection, and he was consistently informative and open about his opinions.

- **Sue**: 52, white, female, closeted (married, no children), fulltime employee. With a Master's in Social Work, she had been a social worker for more than twenty years. She shifted to ITS when the facility in which she worked was shuttered. She came to work at the H-School Help Desk through a mutual acquaintance of Alice and had been there four years, first as a temp then fulltime. Though she had worked with computer databases during her time as a social worker, her ITS training was entirely on the job. Sue did not cultivate a feminine appearance, dressing mostly in functional, comfortable clothing like jeans and sweaters and eschewing makeup. Sue was very quiet and not prone to small talk; she engaged with me the least while at the desk, focusing on her work. She was very productive, described by both herself and others as loathe to waste time. Although she held no supervisory power over the other Help Desk workers, Sue did manage the online system (i.e., the ticket queue, discussed below) that organized and assigned users' requests for help and general System Support activities.

- **Lola**: 45, Venezuelan, female, straight (single, no kids), full time. She had been employed exclusively in ITS since completing her Bachelor's in Computer Science in her natal country; she earned a Master's in Computing after moving to America to be with her sister. Hired during the time I was observing, Lola came to the H-School from private industry. Lola quickly adjusted to the appearance norms of the university by stopping wearing noticeable makeup after only a few weeks. While I stayed away from the H-School during her first couple days out of respect for how nerve-wrecking a new job can be *without* an ethnographer present, I did observe much of her training, both formal and informal, which often made explicit the implicit norms of the unit. Lola was very friendly with me, though I tried to deflect any of her questions about department procedures to actual Help Desk employees, as I sought to minimize my influence on her behavior.

H-School Users of IT Support Services

Although the ITS workers understood their users through the binary of faculty/staff, I

noted six groups of users, each with distinct rights and responsibilities vis-à-vis the ITS,

including amount of resources and time dedicated to solving a problem, speed of service, level of

network access, ability to authorize others' network access, and facility for finding loopholes in

the H-School Help Desk's policies and procedures. They are listed below in descending order of

organizational status, with rights to service and ability to finagle rules positively correlated with

status, phenomena that will be discussed in detail starting with Chapter 4:

1) Highest level administrators (e.g., Deans, CIO, Head of Pediatrics)

2) Faculty and high-level administrators not in Tier 1 (e.g. Associate Professor of Pediatrics, editor of the alumni magazine)

3) Graduate students in both the general program and postgraduate specialty programs (though sometimes graduate students functioned as proxies for Tier 2 faculty, making requests for ITS on behalf of their superiors; in such instances, faculty are considered the end user)

4) General staff (e.g., secretaries, staff of business office, dispensary workers)

5) Non-H-School instructors using the H-School's classrooms

6) Patients who found themselves lost and turned to the IT Help Desk for directions

As a professional school specializing in health care services, the H-School had no

undergraduate students of its own. This meant ITS workers rarely interacted with

undergraduates except as members of classrooms they were servicing, so undergraduates do not

appear in my analysis. (Though other ITS units interacted with undergraduates to varying

degrees, they typically formed such a small percentage of users and were mostly interacted with

via faculty or en masse in computer labs that they were of marginal importance to the Help Desk

employees' daily lives.)

Ticket Queue

The H-School Ticket Queue

At the H-School, organizing service requests was handled by a computer program

referred to by the staff as the "ticket queue," which allowed the ITS workers to compile and

coordinate all work tasks. In this section, I will discuss the formal operation of the queue; how

the queue interacted with the status structure of the university will be examined in the Chapter 5.

The ticket queue was a database used only by the ITS workers. Some work requests were

gathered from users' service requests, which were submitted through email and phone or during

face-to-face meetings. Others were input by the ITS workers themselves, like upgrading

operating systems when new versions were introduced. There were four major parts to the ticket

queue form:

1) Identification and Categorization: Gave an official (automated) number to the request, assigned a priority (discussed below), and noted whether the ticket was still being worked on (open) or completed (closed)

2) User Information: Used to record the name, department, room, and other contact information for the user whose machine was being serviced

3) Problem Details: Recorded the details of the task, including a description of the service request, who originated the request, and how it was solved. Space is included to append email or voicemail communications with the user.

4) Assignment and Notification: Allowed the service request to be delegated to particular ITS worker(s) and provided a means for the assigned ITS worker to email users to update them on the progress of their service request.

The ticket system had been built by the H-School unit itself, customizing the fields to

their particular needs.   Some parts of the form were self-evident, like contact information for a

user, but the overall operation of the computerized ticket queue was a social rather than technical

process (Sismondo 2004). Shared norms guided both what counted as a ticket (resetting a

password, yes, telling someone to go to central IT for their general password reset, no) as well as

how the tickets were filled out and utilized in practice. For instance, Andre suggested that the

new employee Lola overestimate the amount of time the repair required in the system and thus in

the email sent to the user. This way, the user would not be upset if the fix took longer than

average due to unexpected problems and grateful if done earlier than stated. Similarly, Lola was instructed on how tickets originating from service requests were assigned: Regardless of the person who interacted with the user when the request was placed, the ITS worker who took the first stab at repairing a given problem was assigned ownership over the ticket and responsibility for seeing the problem through to its resolution. As an example, when sitting at the front desk, an ITS worker would assign to themselves a ticket about a password reset they saw through to completion, while a service call to a clinic to deal with network connection issues would be assigned to the individual who went to said clinic. Usually each Help Desk employee filled out their own tickets, though the person sitting at the Help Desk often opened a ticket for the person dispatched, creating a record with basic information but leaving the person handling the call to fill in the details. The queue's social aspects are further evinced by how it did not operate autonomously. Instead, it was managed by Sue who insured that tickets were input according to unit norms, that requests were completed in a timely manner, and that the workload was distributed as fairly as possible within the H-School's Support Services unit.

A key part of organizing the work requests was to triage the numerous claims on the ITS workers' time, an iterative process in which each new request is compared to the existing array of requests and assigned a level of priority indicating its place in intended order of request completion, which has a ripple effect on the overall ordering of tickets, as older, lower priority requests are delayed so that new, higher priority requests can be completed (White 2008). (As I discuss extensively in Chapter 5, this was a process saturated with status; I focus here only on the queue's practical operation.) This triage process distinguished among requests in multiple ways.

Foremost was assigning a "level" from one to three, where the ITS worker indicated the priority a problem should be given. Level 1 consisted issues that needed immediate attention and

included classrooms, clinics, and "anyone unable to work." The most pressing of these problems were only input into the system after they had been resolved, as the ITS worker did not want to make incapacitated users wait. Level 2 were issues that did not need to be attended to immediately, like upgrading operating systems or installing new software that was not needed right away. Level 3 were long term projects, like the conversion of a lab classroom from wired to wireless. Level 3 requests eventually became Level 2 requests when the unit turned from planning to executing said plan, like the upgrade of Windows machines to 7 once Microsoft stopped supporting XP. They were assigned to Level 1 when the relevant deadline loomed, like the day a warranty expired.

This categorization by level was only the first step of distinguishing among requests. Pretty much everyone who came to the Help Desk reported a problem they were currently having. A very small number came in anticipation of problems, a handful showed up expressly to thank the ITS workers for successfully solving their problems, and no one ever contacted the desk to inform them that a problem was solved. (More than once ITS workers made explicit reference to this last phenomenon, as a regular response to another ITS worker's query about a problem was "It must be working—she hasn't called back.") Thus, nearly everyone could be considered Level 1, making it less than useful for assigning priority. To allow for greater distinction among requests, tickets in each level were divided into "incidents" and "repair requests."

"Incidents" were matters demanding immediate attention, such as a network outage or malfunctioning projector during class. Nested in the formal categories of "incidents" was an informal distinction made between "clinics and classrooms," which were given immediate attention, and others. Clinics, which provided health care services to paying customers, were

considered priority because all involved knew that patients wanted their service performed during their appointment slot and that delays could frustrate patients and set off a chain reaction of delayed appointments, making the ITS workers a target for the faculty's frustration. Classrooms were similar in that any instructional time lost to an IT delay is gone forever. In a class that is only 80 minutes, fifteen minutes to call an IT help desk, have the ITS arrive and repair the problem, and then get the class restarted eats up a substantial percentage of the period. These same temporal pressures did not exist for users in other settings, resulting in the slightly lower priority assigned those not in clinics and classrooms.

Unlike the air of emergency implied by "incidents," "repair requests" were not constructed as necessitating immediate attention. These were people experiencing problems that made work difficult but did not render the user unproductive, like a problem using advanced word processing functions or the frequent request to look at "slow" computers. Rather than needing to be addressed immediately, these people could be asked to wait until an ITS worker was available or be scheduled for a service call at a later time. "Repair Requests" were sometimes anticipatory, like a department secretary requesting system access for an incoming student or a professor working with the ITS unit ahead of a big presentation, and occasionally a matter of want rather than need, like upgrading Java or reconfiguring a monitor array. These were tasks given low priority, meaning they were worked on once other Level 1 incidents were cleared.

For Levels 2 and 3, the same dichotomy of "incident" and "repair requests" was utilized, albeit in a slightly different manner and with less bearing on the overall triage project. "Incidents" referred to user-reported issues, while "Repair Requests" were initiated by the ITS

workers. Regardless of origin, Level 2 and 3 tickets were tackled only once Level 1 tickets were cleared or upon being reclassified as Level 1.

During the time a particular work request was being undertaken, the ITS worker amended the ticket accordingly, including the ITS worker's evolving understanding of the problem, notes about what fixes had been attempted, and communications with the user. Tickets with the same problem could be linked to each other to help ITS workers identify more fundamental problems and devise general fixes. Tickets could also be reassigned from one ITS worker to another in the instance that responsibility for the problem was passed to someone else, like the System Administrators. Once completed, a ticket had its status changed from "open" to "closed" and was archived. ITS workers used these archived tickets to compare their current technical conundrum with previous problems as well as trace the history of a particular machine or problem.

Ticket Queues in Other ITS Units

Ticket queue systems like the H-School's were utilized in both the P-School and by most of the interviewees. Although ticket queues were not necessary in ITS units with only one ITS worker, they were indispensible to departments where multiple ITS workers required deliberate coordination to insure all service requests were completed. Despite their ubiquity, each department had local norms about how the queue should operate, reflecting and engendering differences in service and the department's functioning. The P-School is instructive in this regard. Whereas the H-School had well-established norms about what counted as a ticket and a non-supervisory worker that oversaw the assignment of requests to insure a fair distribution of the workload and that all requests were attended to in a timely manner, the P-School lacked agreement as to what counted as a ticket (e.g., for some directing a user to Central IT for

password help was recorded as an incident, for others not) as well as any means of oversight of the queue to insure that all tickets were assigned to an ITS worker and completed. The collegial teasing endured by one of the P-School Help Desk employees for having a low threshold for what counted as a ticket belied real discontent among the ITS workers. Without agreement on what counted as a ticket, no one to oversee an equal distribution of the work load, and no mechanism to insure tickets were completed, there was no way to insure that each Help Desk employee was shouldering their fair share of the department's burden. As a result, each P-School Help Desk employee could believe they were the hardest worker, doing everything while others did little, as nearly each one complained to me more than once. Had the P-School ITS workers fully utilized the coordination function of the ticket queue, the tensions among them caused by ignorance of each one's real contribution to the group would likely have been lower.

Among my interviewees, the "paper trail" of communication between the user and the ITS worker that the ticket queue created was a valuable tool in their interactions with disgruntled users. Nathalie, whose ITS unit served the Departments of Math and Psychology, told about once experiencing the ire of a professor whose research assistants tried to blame the ITS Help Desk for their failure to complete an assignment while the professor was out of town. The graduate students claimed they had a computer problem that kept them from working and that Nathalie's unit had ignored their requests for assistance. The ticket queue, however, showed otherwise – no request for service had ever been made by anyone in his group. Based on this evidence, the students admitted to their subterfuge and the professor apologized to Nathalie for accusing her of a dereliction of duty. Similarly, the ticket queue documented when users did not respond to ITS workers' (repeated) emails and phone calls to schedule service calls or get the information necessary to complete a repair. These logs were indispensible when the ITS workers

found themselves on the defensive against users complaining about a lack of service or communication, particularly if the user chose to complain to their superior.

Conclusion

By directly observing the experiences of ITS workers, particularly their distinctive ways of interacting with faculty users compared to staff, I am able to provide a much needed corrective to literature on staff that substitute polemics for fact. Fieldwork in two different locations and interviews with ITS workers in a variety of departments allowed for a more realistic, holistic understanding of the university than studies that marginalize staff and focuses only of faculty and/or administrators.

Chapter 3: Theorizing Support Work and Organizational Status

Once things slow, I remark to Jim that I can't imagine the men being so apologetic. Jim counters that he hasn't really observed a gender difference between rudeness and apologetic. He says the biggest difference is faculty versus staff. The staff are usually understanding, apologetic, and talk about how they don't know anything. He says those are the ones you really want to help. In contrast, faculty feel like they know more than they do and get in trouble by fiddling with things they shouldn't. He says it's not gender specific when it comes to nightmare users. He says the male staff are awesome. Every staff member is usually cool - it's a pretty genial work environment. He suggests that looking at gender gets skewed because so much of the staff are women (FN0319).

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

I was only a few weeks into my observation when Jim made his brash pronouncement about the faculty/staff binary overshadowing gender in his experience as IT Support (ITS) at the H-School's Help Desk. There to observe gender (as discussed in Chapter 2), I was not readily convinced by a privileged man in his early 20s arguing against an analysis of IT Support that centered gender. Over time, though, I came to see the truth in Jim's statement, my own experiences as an observer giving credence to his supposition and the narratives of my interviewees corroborating us both when ITS workers across campus utilized the faculty/staff binary trope *in vivo*. Gender was not absent from the experiences of university ITS workers, as I heard stories about old men professors refusing to acknowledge women ITS workers and about an all-women administrative unit's blatant preference for men ITS workers, but neither was gender the primary frame through which ITS workers understood their users. The faculty/staff

binary was much more central to how H-School Help Desk employees understood and navigated their work worlds.

When used in daily practice, the faculty/staff binary was not simply a way of distinguishing among occupational groups but encapsulated the ITS workers' cognizance of staff's location at the bottom of the university's status hierarchy. As discussed in Chapter 1, faculty commentators feel besieged by the increased managerialism of the university and usually focus their ire on non-academic administrators demanding accountability, returns on investment, and efficiency (Ginsberg 2011, Tuchman 2009, Rhoades 1998, Slaughter and Rhoades 2004). When not ignored, staff are depicted as pawns of the administration, critics rarely distinguishing them from upper-level administrators (Allen-Collinson 2004, 2006; Wohlmuther 2008). Focusing on professors' decreased power and status resulting from the incursion of professional management from outside academia obscures staff's subordinance to both faculty and administrators. Faculty's asymmetrical relationship with staff vanishes from consideration, leaving faculty unable to see their own privilege, status, and power; their dependence upon staff for professional accomplishments; and their sometimes uncivil treatment of staff. These omissions are reinforced by theories of the division of labor that naturalize the subordinance of non-professional and/or non-core employees.

This oversight can be rectified by attention to the sociological processes by which both organizational infrastructures and their attendant status hierarchies are (re)produced on a daily basis through the labor of support workers, using ITS workers as evidence. This chapter serves as the theoretical background for the three empirical chapters that follow. First, I outline sociological theories of status, focusing on how organizational status is distinct from other hierarchies, like rank or power. I argue that faculty and staff are not merely occupational

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categories wrought by a bureaucratic division of labor but constitute an organizational status

hierarchy with very real effects on the operation of the university. Second, I provide a brief

overview of the history of computing in universities as related to bureaucratic divisions of labor.

Third, I discuss problems with existing conceptual apparati for understanding ITS workers' place

in bureaucratic divisions of labor, focusing on status and how the interdependence of support

workers and core employees is disappeared by existing theories. I develop the concept of

support work, which has been named but not theorized by sociologists of work, to demarcate a

subset of interactive service work in which the reproduction of organizational infrastructure and

status hierarchies are accomplished simultaneously. As I show, support work as a concept

permits a more accurate understanding of the interdependence of professional or core employees

and the non-professionals that not only make their work possible but also help secure their high

organizational status. Applied to the relationship between faculty and staff, it suggests that as

long as faculty has greater organizational status than support workers, faculty's subordinance to

professional administrators will be cushioned by their dominance over staff.

Status and Organizations

After [the white woman administrative assistant of middling rank] leaves, Jim comments, "Those are the ones I can't stand. They get really exasperated before they come down here. Can't wait for something to be fixed. There are 1500 computers in the building. That one is just for a student temp doing paper filing. That's what he does, data entry. He's an undergrad. He would be here <waves hand a few inches above desktop [located in a subbasement office]> on a totem pole that goes to the fourth floor." He continues, "One of the most delicate parts is explaining to people that they aren't important. They don't like hearing that. You have to make it palatable." (FN 03262013)

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When Jim remarked upon the exit of Linda, a white administrative assistant, that her

student worker and by extension her request for IT help were not important, he was unambiguous

about the salience of organizational status for the distribution of Help Desk support. Though often an unspoken part of conversations with their users, organizational hierarchies were an important consideration when workers triaged, or assigned priority to, requests. Who a user was mattered for the priority assigned a ticket or type of task the ITS workers were willing to undertake for a user. Hard drive backups are an obvious example: CIOs and Deans got all of their files backed up, regardless of the amount of time it took; professors got offered partial backups, with pictures and media files the user's responsibility; and staff got a shortcut on their desktop and a personal tutorial on how to save to the server rather than their local hard drive. Of course, status is not a simple matter read from an organizational chart. At the university, it was an interactive process in which fine-grained distinctions among spheres of competence and positions (e.g., Assistant Dean versus Full Professor, Bookkeeper versus Senior Secretary) were collapsed into the simple binary of subordinate staff/dominant faculty that shaped interactions for all organizational members. In this section I detail sociological theories on status, focusing on organizational status as a structuring force distinct from other categorical identities or organizational hierarchies.

Contemporary sociological definitions of status can be traced to Max Weber's foundational juxtaposition of "class" and "status," which defined class as economic stratification while status referred to all "positive or negative estimations of social honor" based on qualities other than class (1946[1914], 186). Weber emphasized that class and status are not identical, though each provides resources that enable the pursuit of the other, like wealth providing access to elite schools, which in turn facilitates prestigious positions in business networks from which further profits may be pursued. The basics of this definition have held over the last hundred years, adapted to meet a given theorist's level of analysis. Jeffrey Lucas and Jo Phelan's social

psychological work defines status as "a position in a group based in esteem and respect" (2012, 311). At a macro level, Joel Podolny shows how status processes of relative valuation operate similarly for any group of actors, market competitors as well as individuals (2008). For this dissertation, I rely on Cecilia Ridgeway's micro-interactional formulation of status in Expectation States and Framing Theory, which defines status as cultural beliefs about categorical superiority and inferiority. Like Weber, Ridgeway emphasizes the distinct yet reciprocal relationship between status beliefs and material (power and resource) inequalities (2014, 3), though she pushes beyond Weber to argue that differences only become statuses when reinforced by power and resource inequalities.

Gender, race, and age are the three major statuses that structure interaction among individuals in contemporary American society (Ridgeway 2011). However, any difference between identities (e.g., beauty, religion, ability, occupation), can become a status difference (2011, Lucas and Phelan 2012). Variation in skill or traits becomes status differences only once unequal "esteem, social worth, respect, and honor" are assigned to the individuals that possess them (Webster and Hysom 1998, 353). Structural inequalities are reproduced when status differences become "diffuse." Scholars draw a distinction between "specific" status characteristics that have "performance expectations of limited scope" and "diffuse" status characteristic with "performance expectations without explicit limit" (Webster and Hysom 1998, 353). Gender is a prime example. Cultural beliefs about men and women that endow them with opposing mental capacities, a facility with numbers and words respectively, is not sufficient to create gender inequality. A specific status difference arises when men are thought to be better at solving math problems than women and these expectations are ascribed to individual men regardless of their actual skill, which again is necessary but not sufficient to reproduce general

gender inequality. Only once gender becomes a diffuse characteristic, meaning that a belief

about men's skill at math is extrapolated to connote being more "rational, more dependable,

stronger, more orderly, [and] better at running machinery," which in turn is used to justify men's

monopoly of high status and high paying jobs requiring math skills (Webster and Hysom 1998,

353), can it become a basis for social inequality. Judgments are made not about particular

qualities but the total person (Piazza and Castelluci 2014). This same process holds for all

differences; were the reader to substitute white or beautiful for men and black or unattractive for

women in the sentences above, the argument would still hold. As Piazza and Castelluci

succinctly put it, Status is how "the societal hierarchy of values is translated in practice to form

the actual social order by means of status-organizing process" (2014, 290).

Organizational status, sometimes called positional status, refers to meso level processes

within particular organizations in which formal organizational rank is transmuted into diffuse

status characteristics (Piazza and Castelluci 2014, 296-297). Whereas occupational status refers

to cultural beliefs about the general esteem a given type of work receives relative to other types

of work, like the general esteem of Supreme Court justices and disesteem of sanitation workers

(for research on "dirty work," see Hughes 1962, Duffy 2007, McMurray and Ward 2014),

organizational status is localized within one organization. Within an organization, position and

rank can signal not just particular spheres of competence or spans of authority but privileges and

esteem unrelated to ability and performance – that is, diffuse status differences. Status signals

the rights and duties of an individual and efficiently communicates how people are supposed to

treat and be treated by others (Sauder 2005). Status differences are a foundational assumption of

scientific management, as the manual laborer/cerebral manager dyad is based on Frederick

Taylor's (1911) elitist presumptions. Manual labors do the dirty work while managers keep their

white collars clean (Hughes 1962). Organizational status is subject to intersectional influences (Chen et al. 2012). Sometimes gender and organizational status are tightly interwoven, like when surgeons, celebrated for their masculinist individualism and grueling hours, are esteemed above medical doctors, who are constructed as neither macho nor tough and thus accorded a lower status (Kellogg 2012). In other contexts, the relative importance of different traits exists in different configurations, like luxury hotels where nationality, position, and organizational status are entwined (Sherman 2007). Simpson and Walker (2002) argue that status expectations theory cannot assume that status characteristics (like race, beauty, or gender) will have uniform influences on status across contexts.

For the ITS workers I encountered, the faculty/staff binary was not merely a distinction between those who taught or researched and those who provided the non-academic services of the university but an organizational status hierarchy with real effects . Among critics, faculty members are considered to do the "real" work of the university, teaching and research, while staff members were considered a necessary expense at best, parasitic at worst (Ginsberg 2011). Stan spoke frankly to impact of organizational status on ITS workers understanding of their place in the university vis-à-vis the dominant faculty:

> The fact that we're in a customer service role, we're, um, we're viewed a little bit differently. It's kinda like an us-and-them attitude. I don't wanna say looked down on a little bit but kind of. A lot of the groups, most of the groups we support are here developing things for the college and are moving the college forward. We're not doing that, we're an expense department really. We're here to support those efforts so it does feel like a little bit second class.

Scholars of higher education outside the United States (Allen-Collinson 2003, 2006, 2009, Whitchurch 2008) have uncovered similar feelings among staff of being marginalized and regarded as less capable or intelligent than faculty. Domestically, Barley and Bechky's research

(1994) on technicians in science labs shows how easily problems (e.g., dead cell cultures, misuse of a machine) could arise if fetishization of doctoral degrees caused faculty and post-doctoral researchers to disregard the advice of experienced technicians. In instances where individuals of high status (i.e., faculty) show disregard for the knowledge and skills of low status others (i.e., staff), the generalized assumptions of superiority embedded in diffuse statuses is most apparent.

In contrast, ITS worker was a specific status characteristic that signaled the individual's skill with computers and related technology. Sometimes ITS workers felt beleaguered by users with overly-high expectations, like expecting ITS workers to be able to fix any problem right away rather than understanding the role of research and trial and error in computer repair. ITS workers reported feeling deeply hurt when users became frustrated at them for taking time to solve a problem or making remarks that questioned their competence. Isaac mentioned that angry faculty members sometimes made off-handed comments that questioned the legitimacy of his identity as a Help Desk employee and general skill in IT (e.g., "Well, what good are you?", "I thought you were a computer expert") because he was not solving the problem as quickly as the user expected. He considered these some of the most hurtful comments he experienced because they question his identity as an IT support worker. Similarly, Nathalie, an ITS worker in a Help Desk unit covering several liberal arts departments, remarked that the first person who asked her a question often treated her as if she was "an idiot" because she could not give them an immediate fix, while the twentieth person to ask the same question thought she was a genius because she could. Otherwise, few assumptions were made about the non-technical qualities of the Help Desk employees. The masculinist construction of computer "nerds" as lacking social skills (Margolis and Fisher 2002) sits uneasily beside expectations that interactive service workers be sociable. This creates conflicting expectations of ITS workers' interactional styles

that preclude it from becoming a diffuse status characteristic. More important to their mundane work lives was their identity as staff, as ITS workers were ascribed the same diffuse status characteristics (e.g., ineptness vis-à-vis faculty) as the rest of the low-status staff.

William King (2005) shows in his careful disentangling of the multiple hierarchies structuring an organization, organizational status (i.e., social prestige) is not identical to hierarchies based on rank (formal position), skill and ability, rewards (formal and informal), seniority (i.e. tenure), or authority (power). As shown above, the esteem felt (or not) for an employee may not map neatly onto their abilities, power, or tenure (King 2005). For example, length of employment may have little impact on status if a manager with twenty years at the company cannot impose his will on his staff (Kanter 1977). Melville Dalton's classic ethnography *Men Who Manage* (1956) introduces the concept of "shadow structure" to describe the decoupling of the formal organizational rank and power from informal status orders such that an employee's ability to influence others and get their way was often incommensurate with what would be assumed from their official title and position. Insights like Dalton's have led to interest in uncovering how the daily activities of organizations do and do not cohere with the official rhetoric of organizational charts and policies. As Chen and colleagues say, organizational hierarchy is "dynamic and fluid" (2012, 300).

My analysis presumes a micro-interactional focus derived from symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology (Goffman 1959, 1967; Dalton 1959). Organizational status, like all status inequalities, is an interactive performance and social process, not an automatic matter of ascription. The rank and rights an employee's title endows them with are meaningful only in so much as the employee is able to benefit through power or resource control in interaction with others. While power and resource control may be tangible, like hiring and firing abilities or

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approval over expenditures, the privileges of status are also intangible, unconsciously guiding interactions so as to reproduce the relevant status hierarchies. Deference, as Erving Goffman (1967) shows, is central. Deference is signaled by interpersonal status rituals in which interactants enact their esteem for each other, validating shared beliefs about the entitlement of different statuses to unequal amounts of resources and courtesy as well as each individual's location within the relevant status arrays. Subordinates enact deference to the dominant group by validating, or deferring to, the knowledge, desires, and/or leadership of interactants belonging to the higher status group (Goffman 1967, 57). Following on Goffman, Sauder, Lynn, and Podolny aver that status is "rooted in the accumulation of deference behaviors" (2012, 268). Lauren Rivera analyses the practical production of status at the front door of an exclusive night club, documenting the processes of admission. She shows how bouncers function as "status judges" who use social capital, race and nationality, gender, and self-presentation to decide who to admit, (re)producing the club's elite status by admitting only elite clientele (2010). Similarly, Tim Hallett's work on inhabited institutions takes as a major example the social processes of deference in a school experiencing retrenchment. He shows how a new principal had great difficulty instituting policy because she could not secure deference from the teachers in the form of compliance with new rules (2010, 2007). Overall, organizational status can be independent of hierarchies of rank, power, and position, and it is through others' enactment of deference that status is best realized (Sauder 2005).

For the ITS workers, the faculty/staff distinction was a diffuse status difference that served as their primary way to understand their users, collapsing fine distinctions among types of academics and managers in the homogenous bloc "faculty." This is clear in how ITS workers answered my questions about their relationship to different members of the departments. When

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asked about "users," they almost always constructed faculty and staff as distinct. The groups served as rhetorical foils for each other, as Erin demonstrates in her answer to a question about user behavior that referred generically to "people": "I can think of a couple, usually faculty, but not always, sometimes staff can be like that." Unlike academic research that either lumps faculty and staff together as a bloc opposed to students or focuses on the conflicting interests of faculty and the administration, the ITS of the university drew a line between faculty and staff (Allen-Collinson 2000, Gieryn 1983, Whitchurch 2008). When I asked about faculty and staff as a singular unit, I nearly always got answers that separated the two – either faculty or staff, rarely both. This divide was apparent here when I asked for elaboration after a story about a less than cordial faculty member:

> Lotus: "Have you actually had very negative interactions with the staff?"
> Nathalie: "With the faculty?"
> Lotus: "Yes."

As we see, Nathalie is unsure whether I am switching subject topics (from faculty to staff) or collapsing staff and faculty in a way she would not. This happened multiple times across interviews as a generic, like people, was interpreted to mean faculty or staff. Another example:

> Lotus: So do you feel you get along well with the people around here?
> Anita: Yes, this is a wonderful faculty, just really intelligent people. It's home for me.

When Wallace told me the history of the H-School Help Desk, my questions about "users," meant as a generic, were responded to with statements about faculty. I often had to ask interviewees explicitly about "staff" to be told about their experiences with low status workers like receptionists or bookkeepers. Given the frequency with which this occurred, I argue, per Ridgeway's expectation states and framing theory, that the faculty/staff difference is a, if not the, primary frame through which ITS workers made sense of their users and work.

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Accompanying the processual and performative aspects of organizational status is the fact of status as a highly subjective experience (Piazza and Castelluci 2014). Organizational status matters for individuals' perceptions of their work worlds and beyond (King 2005). Speaking about community status, Stone and Form (1953) show how status is marked by social closure and exclusiveness, monopolization of appropriate symbols, lifestyle, group solidarity and dignity, all deeply constitutive of the individual. Kanter's classic *Men and Women of the Corporation* (1977) demonstrates that status is subjective by documenting how an individual's location in the power/authority/responsibility matrix of the organization produced outlooks and behaviors. Specifically, "micro-managing" was not a female trait as scholars had assumed, but a non-gendered response to the disempowering combination of high responsibility and low authority and power.

The subjective dimensions of status are nowhere clearer than in people's reactions to challenges to their status (Ridgeway 2014, 7). Status arrays are fluid hierarchies in which the boundaries between status groups are drawn and redrawn, each group valorizing their own qualities and debasing those of their Other (Sauder 2005, 284). Research shows that people become deeply invested in status, taking it quite personally and assuming defensive positions when their status is questioned (Simpson 2005). Scholars use the term "status threat" to refer to situations where people are at risk of being assigned a new (usually lower) status than that with which they identify (Williams 1995). Katherine Kellogg (2012) identifies four such threats: competitive (for resources associated with status), distinctiveness (of status group and right to privilege), category threat (of being assigned a lower status), and acceptance (membership in dominant group). She also identifies four common reactions to status threat by the dominant group vis-à-vis the low status group: discrimination, emphasizing difference, disassociation, and

refraining from low status behavior (2012, 1549). Interpersonal conflicts may arise as individuals jockey for status position.

Technology seems to provoke intense anxiety about status. Barley (1996) highlights this in his remarks that users "knew they had little choice but to stand *obsequiously* to one side while their computers malfunctioned" (my italics, 431).   Users do not simply cede their desk chairs so ITS workers can user their computer, but they take a subordinate position vis-à-vis the more knowledgeable worker. Venkatesh and colleagues document the resistance of doctors to the uptake of electronic records, which raised the specter of increased oversight and decreased autonomy (2011, 530). As discussed in Chapter 1, faculty critics see themselves as threatened with respect to their high status at the university. Interestingly, ITS workers come in for particular opprobrium, as they are often constructed as the individuals leading the administrators' plot to deskill professors, claim ownership of their teaching materials, remove faculty from the classroom, and hire inexpensive instructors without PhDs (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004, Rhoades 1998, Johnson 2012). Theoretically, this sort of division of labor would destroy academia as we know it. Currently, though, the proliferation of support work positions, like ITS workers and administrative, serves to stabilize the professional identities and high status of faculty by allowing a small number of professors to focus ever more intently on their research and teaching, even as managerialism increases. The pressures of ever increasing expectations for publishing and the time demand of teaching and committee work can be eased by the delegation of rote and support-oriented tasks to staff. As I discuss next, IT support work positions were a logical extension of higher education's existing bureaucratic divisions of labor, meant to free faculty from the need to maintain the university's infrastructure while leaving the existing status structure intact.

Professional Habitus and High Status

In *Homo Academicus,* Pierre Bourdieu (1988, 84) introduces the concept "academic capital," which he defines as holding positions of power in the academy such that they are able to control the access of others to elite institutions of higher education. Like Benjamin Ginsberg's demonization of high-level administrators (2011, discussed in the introduction), Bourdieu defines this administrative power against "genius," the former produced by popularity and the drive for power, the latter grounded in true scholarly intelligence and creativity. The derision directed toward ambitious administrators betrays Bourdieu's identification of faculty and non-faculty as diffuse statuses.

Though no other authors attempt as holistic an explanation of faculty's structurally-conditioned subjectivity, organizational scholars have documented some of the interactional rituals that (re)produce the faculty/staff binary as diffuse statuses. One of the most common observations supports my argument about faculty's experience of status threat: Staff technicians in academic laboratories regularly have their (superior) knowledge disregarded because they lack doctoral degrees. Barley and Bechky discuss how staff labeled as "troublesome" those scientists who "confuse[d] status with knowledge" and dismissed technicians' advice to disastrous results (1994, 102). Rather than taking the technicians' advice and preventing errors, the "hubris" of overconfident faculty caused failed experiments that required staff to redo extensive amounts of work (102). More to the point, a respondent in Allen-Collinson's study on non-academic lab staff states that faculty treat her as though she has "the brain of an amoeba" (2006, 272).

Similar behavior is documented among doctors. Thankfully, the days are over when Victorian-era men doctors, who did not wash their hands because it was believed that "gentlemen" did not carry disease, killed thousands of women by transferring bacteria between

patients (Ehrenreich and English (2005[1978]). Nonetheless, some doctors still confuse

organizational status and exemption from hygienic protocols. An article by Brown and

colleagues on efforts by the British National Health Service to decrease staph infections in

hospitals discusses how the staff nurses had to battle against the bad behavior of doctors, whom

they described as "wandering vectors of contamination," engaging in behaviors like unthinkingly

tracking blood from an operating theater to a break room (2008, 1051). The diffuse qualities of

organizational status are clear when a nurse is quoted as saying "Doctors do seem to think that

rules are made for everyone else but they're exempt" (1051).   Lacking authority over the doctors

and thus unable to confront them about their behavior, the nurses could do nothing but try to

clean up the surgeons' messes as quickly as they were created. Like the status-based interactions

I document in the following chapters, nurses both reproduced the doctors' high status through the

deference of remaining silent about their unhygienic behaviors as well as constructing doctors as

a problematic group whose bad behavior was to be expected (Brown et al 2008).

The most candid examples of faculty facing status threat come from some non-scholarly

writings in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Writing under the pseudonym Lucy Young

(2002), an ex-professor talks about losing status after moving from faculty member to staff.

When Young's faculty position was cut but her husband's was not, the couple decided that to

stay where they had already bought a house and begun raising children. She was excited to work

in the archives, imagining her education would help her make valuable contributions. Once

there, she learned of the salience of organizational status for university employees' experiences:

"Staff members don't have careers—they have jobs" (2). Abetted by temporal and spatial

arrangements, like staff and faculty taking lunch at different times, the two groups rarely came

into contact and did not act as peers.   She continues: "After a year in the position, I still have no

idea how the archives functioned at its most basic level. When, what, and how archival materials

were acquired … were secrets to which I was not privy. The way my questions were answered

let me know that further queries would not be particularly welcomed, and my thoughts on

matters were never solicited" (3). She says this has contributed to a "creeping sense of worker

alienation" in which her love for academe has been undermined by its disregard for her skills (3).

Rachael Toor makes a similar remark, describing staff as "in, but not of, the academy" (2000, 1).

She perceptively notes that "in the slash between faculty/staff lies a world of difference. …

[T]here are two categories in the university: faculty and not" (2).   An article in *Vitae* (an online

publication of *The Chronicle*) written by a doctoral student employed as staff at her university

describes the importance of organizational status to interaction rituals. Similar to my own

divided experiences (described in Chapter 2) of being ignored by faculty who thought I was an

ITS worker versus being drawn into conversation about my research by those who knew I was a

graduate student, Jessica Ehinger, an administrative coordinator at Northeastern University,

writes about the importance of status for interaction (2014). She states, "There's nothing more

disheartening than when a faculty member suddenly treats you better upon learning that you're a

doctoral student" (3). Similar sentiments surface in Letters to the Editor in *The Chronicle*, like a

staff member who blasted the periodical for describing staff as "Other" (Weiss 2015), which, as

Schwalbe and colleagues note (2000), is one of the generic processes in the reproduction of

inequality.   Perhaps most telling is the fear of being outnumbered that seems to prompt scare

statistics about staff numbers doubling (see Kanter 1977). Underlying all of these experiences is

the organizational (re)production of faculty and staff as diffuse statuses in which staff members'

lack of academic credentials and disciplinary knowledge are treated by faculty as a justifications

for ignoring their skills, contributions, and voices.

Taken as a whole, the reality of status threat as regards the subjectivity of faculty is evident. One serious consequence is that staff bear much of the brunt of faculty's pursuit of status in the marketized university. As I show in the following chapters, the distinct interaction rituals engaged by faculty and staff as they interact with IT support workers (re)produce the university's status hierarchy of faculty over staff, to the detriment of staff.

A Brief History of Computing and IT Support at Universities

The first computers in universities were mainframes, gigantic computers in centralized locations run by a corps of computing professionals that maintained the behemoths, organized the processing of punch cards, and distributed reams upon reams of printouts. These computers were introduced in the mid- to late-1950s and helped with registration and grades on the administrative side and research on the academic side. By 1964, mainframes were common in public and private institutions of higher education (Rourke and Brooks 1967). Beginning in the 1980s, individual desktop units slowly made their way into universities, one by one as professors found them useful for research, then by droves when adopted by administrative departments to ease processing the endless amount of paperwork produced by modern bureaucracies.

Among the earliest adopters of desktop computers, IT Support as we think of it today was unnecessary. These early machines were self-contained units, maybe two or twenty strung together—certainly not connected to an infinite number of others through the internet—and repair was done by the user through trial and error and maybe a call to the manufacturer. Computer support was ad hoc, often handled by an existing member of staff who either was hobbyists in their spare time or simply found computers interesting. Secretaries often learned computer systems and networking, though such skills were rarely recognized or rewarded. As discussed in Chapter 2, Wallace was employed in the video studio of the H-School when

approached about maintaining a few desktops, the requestor seeing an equivalence between the computerized equipment in the studio and desktop computers. Almost none of the earliest IT Support workers had formal computer training, though some came from engineering backgrounds. Computer science degrees were oriented toward abstract skills of programming; the practical matters of networks were handled by units like Facilities, the departments responsible for the physical systems of the university like electricity and plumbing.

Only in the late-1980s and early-1990s did IT support begin to coalesce into unique units and departments (Zabusky 1997). As computers became ubiquitous, users began to know less and less about their fundamental functioning. Pundits have argued that Apple Computers, including Macintoshes, are popular because they do not require the user to understand computers on a deep level. Whereas Linux and similarly esoteric operating systems have always required facility with computers' more arcane functions, over the last twenty years (beginning with Windows 3.1 in 1992) Microsoft's interface has come to share Macintosh's emphasis on visual rather than textual engagement, what experts refer to as a shift from command-line interfaces to object-oriented or graphic user interfaces. Icons create opacity between the user and the internal functioning of the computer that had not been possible with DOS (Levy 1984). Smartphones and tablets require even less from the user as regards understanding technology at the level of the operating system. As a result, people have more interaction than ever with computers but are less knowledgeable on average about the technology they are using. Such users become dependent upon others to restore them and their devices to full working order.

For users at home, computer support is an individual problem, solved on a one-by-one basis through family, friends, and/or paid services. Depending upon size and needs, organizations may either bring in contractors from outside on a contingent basis or hire internal

employees to maintain their technological infrastructure (Hatton 2011). At the university, IT

Support is an organizational problem solved internally.   When basic academic and

administrative functions like clinic records, registration, and grades were computerized and

email communication was normalized, the university's insistence that students and employees

use these systems meant the university had to take some responsibility for the functionality of

those systems. The university's solution for coordinating IT Support provision exemplified the

bureaucratic division of labor (Weber 1946).

One of the very few articles to examine ITS is Zabusky's (1997) discussion of university

computing support, which uses data collected in 1993, the same year the first popular use web

browser was invented and long before IT became integral to our lives. (The "internet" was first

conceived in the early 1960s; the first computer network was referred to as ARPANET.

Developed by Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), a unit of the Department

of Defense, the technology was first used by a small number of researchers and only later in the

1990s became generally available.) Zabusky's study thus serves as a point of historical

comparison with my own data from twenty years later. The key problem as identified by

Zabusky was uncertainty over the organizational status of computer technicians:

> Without these critical employees [microcomputer technicians], organizations would have
> no way of getting the technological information they need to maintain their infrastructure.
> Their critical position is not matched, however, with high status in the organization. This
> incommensurability generates uncertainties of social status, notable particularly in the
> negotiations between technicians and organizational users about the proper stance from
> which technical service should be provided and received within the organization. These
> uncertainties of status manifest themselves phenomenologically as problems of identity:
> are they subordinates or partners in the work process? (132).

More bluntly she asks, "Are technicians servants or professionals?" (133).

This question of "servant or professional" is only partially resolved by Zabusky; more useful is how she documents the process by which faculty and ITS workers wrestle with the organizational status of IT support. Written early in the history of ITS, the occupation is novel enough for Zabusky to ask whether ITS workers were considered "integral members" of the organization or outsiders, regardless of their formal location within the university bureaucracy (136). Zabusky avers that "the microcomputer technicians confronted and negotiated their rightful place in the organization on a daily basis" (136) and were mired in "interpersonal relations filled with ambivalence" (146). In particular, she quotes a technician as saying that their users could not decide if they were "librarians, janitors, or facilities" and were often denigrated by users that refused to grant them the authority of professionals (146). Zabusky sums the problems of their ambiguous status thusly: "Users expressed their ambivalent expectations in the form of resentment of what could be regarded as technicians' displays of expertise. Such resentment seemed to suggest that users did not expect or want technicians to behave like professionals but preferred them instead to act like servants. Users were therefore irritated when technicians did not exhibit behavior appropriate to that status" (147).

The institutionalization of ITS over twenty years means, however, that these "negotiations" have shifted ITS workers' efforts from finding their place in the university to dealing with how faculty and staff utilize interactions with ITS to substantiate and secure their own organizational statuses. Unlike the technicians Zabusky observed, the ITS workers I met did not consider themselves "outsiders" to the university, let alone their individual departments. ITS workers displayed intense attachment to their departments, genuinely caring about their users' success in research and teaching, even keeping in touch with their previous departments when moving to Central IT, suggesting how deeply some ITS workers identified with their units.

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Moreover, rather than fail to "articulate any acceptance of their places as insiders" (139), the ITS workers I observed saw themselves as a very particular kind of insider: university staff. Neither did other members of the university (e.g., staff, faculty, students) regard the ITS workers as "outsiders" without solid attachment to the university. Users seemed very much to identify Help Desk employees as staff, as suggested by the tendency of ITS workers and staff to ally themselves in opposition to the faculty. Similarly, the conflict between ITS workers and the administration over the control and planning of technology was not a marker of outsider status but a sign of the shared subordinance of staff to the university's leadership.

As I discuss next, the erasure and/or marginalization of staff mirrors the problems existing sociological theories of work have in categorizing IT support and recognizing its indispensability to professional/core accomplishments.

How to Categorize IT Support

As an occupational type, IT Support is hard to classify using preexisting categories for occupations, like professional, technician, service worker, and blue collar. Not only does the position cross gender lines, combining feminine care work and emotional labor with technology coded as masculine (see Chapter 7), but it calls in for criticism several existing ways of categorizing occupations for how they naturalize organizational status as a diffuse status characteristic (see Friedson 1976, Garnsey 1981, Strauss 1985 for discussions of researchers' inattention to the social division of labor as socially constructed). This section examines four ways IT Support may be characterized by existing sociological theories of work, including as peripheral employees, as technicians, as non-professionals, and as service workers. I focus on the inadequacy of these concepts for understanding the complexities of IT support. I then advance "support work" as a distinct category to more accurately capture the interdependent

relationship of core employees and the support workers that make their professional

achievements possible.

<center>Core/Peripheral</center>

The concepts of core and peripheral employees arises from of the management literature

on "core competencies" which began with Prahalad and Hamel's (1990) assertion that firms

should eschew diversification and focus on becoming better at what they do best. For example,

cars in general are not considered Honda's core competency. Instead, Prahalad and Hamel

identify engineering and producing motors as Honda's key strength, advising that they focus on

becoming the top motor producer, which will allow them to dominate not just the automobile

market but everything with a motor, like lawnmowers and go-carts (1990, 85).   Though the

original piece is pitched at a level of abstraction that focuses more on the identity of firms than

its employees, scholars drawing on these ideas have focused more on theorizing the viability of

outsourcing peripheral functions than the interdependence of the core and periphery (Gilley and

Rasheed 2000, Deavers 1997). Outsourced functions range from hiring external custodial and

food services providers in universities to Microsoft's reliance on anon-permanent clerical corps

managed day-to-day by temporary services firms.

ITS workers are easily categorized as "peripheral" (Gilley and Rasheed 2000, Deavers

1997) or "back office employees" (Ho 2009, Korczynski 2004), since they (re)produce the

technical infrastructure of organizations. While programmers and systems analysts are "core"

employees in high tech firms, ITS workers are "peripheral" in that they make the "core" work of

others possible. IT support is easily outsourced, especially if a firm does not need full time Help

Desk employees. While IT support at the university in the mid 1990s was partially outsourced,

the consolidation of the Central IT department in the late 1990s internalized all IT support functions.

The core/periphery binary is appealing for its simple spatial metaphor, but it connotes a status hierarchy where those who do the visible work of making and selling are lauded as *the* source of firm profits, while the indispensability of "back office employees" to the ability of the core employees to do their work is disappeared (Ho 2009). Without the orderly flow of paperwork and infrastructure support provided by peripheral employees, the existence of large firms based on complex divisions of labor would be impossible (Chandler 1977). Were investment bankers responsible not just for making deals but also for scheduling their own lunch meetings, preparing the required documentation for deals, coordinating the distribution and archiving of those documents, and repairing their own computers, they would likely make far fewer deals and earn far smaller bonus checks than currently (Ho 2009). The core/periphery discourse makes these status processes invisible, rendering it less than useful for understanding the experience of the ITS workers I encountered.

Technicians

Technicians are workers who are "responsible for creating the general conditions necessary for the work of others … [by overseeing] some aspect of the technical infrastructure on which a production system rests" (Barley, qtd in Zabusky 1997, 131). The category of technician is meant to highlight their position straddling mental and manual labor, combining the abstract skill of white collar professionals with the contextual knowledge and physical labor of blue collar workers (Whalley and Barley 1997). Originating in labor process theories of managers' exercise of control over workers and Marxist concerns with the status of technical

workers relative to the managerial class, research on technicians has been fairly sparse (Orr 1996, Barley 1996, Barley and Orr 1997).

IT Support workers fit the definition of "technician" perfectly. By maintaining the technical systems that undergird an organization's operation, like email, credit card processing, and computerized assembly lines, they make the work of "core" employees possible. As a job category "technician" is valuable for its attention to the power dynamics between core employees and technicians. As Zabusky (1997, above) shows, the relative status of technicians and the workers they support has been of keen interest to researchers (see also Barley and Orr 1997, Creighton and Hodson 1997). Also useful is how Barley's definition avoids using "professionals" to describe the recipient of support workers' services, including back office staff. If technicians are defined by their work for professional or core employees, their role as (re)producers of the general infrastructure is downplayed. Employees like clerical staff are as much the beneficiaries of support work as front office workers like managers or salesmen (Ho 2009), and excluding them undermines theoretical efforts to examine the interdependence of occupations.

Though the identification of technicians helped in the 1990s to call attention to a flourishing new occupational sector, the concept has become less useful as ITS has been institutionalized. By focusing too much on the types of equipment used by such workers, they obscure the continuities between technicians and already existing groups of non-technical workers who also make others' work possible (Orr 1996, Barley 1996, Barley and Orr 1997). Creighton and Hodson unreflexively distinguish between technical workers (as defined by the US Census) and nontechnical workers, which includes "clerical, manual, and service occupations" (1997, 90). When function rather than type of tools is considered, though,

technicians show themselves to provide very much the same service vis-à-vis core and professional employees as those who maintain the non-technical aspects of the infrastructure. For example, secretaries actively produce the managerial schedules sustains the temporal infrastructure of organizational life by establishing when events will take place and insuring their bosses get to where they are going on time. Similarly, when administrative assistants in higher education settings do photocopying for faculty, they are producing the tools (e.g., hard copies of syllabi or exams) that faculty will use to do their work of teaching. Custodians and others who maintain the physical facilities of the university are also engaged in the (re)production of its infrastructure (Soni-Sinha and Yates 2013, Hood 1998). Overall, ignoring the functional similarities of technicians and non-technical support staff prevents scholarly from carefully considering the factors that cause the inequalities of esteem, especially gender and related diffuse status characteristics grounded in the mental/manual labor binary.

Similarly, IT support can easily be categorized as "knowledge workers," defined as workers who "make use of expert knowledge to solve concrete problems" (Gorman and Sandefur 2011) and those engage in "information-intensive service sector activity (particularly where information serves to add value to goods and services)" (Webster 1999, 203). In practice, "knowledge work" has been used primarily to denote an array of high-tech jobs like programmer, developer, and network security (Cooper 2000), though non-technical fields like financial services (Webster 1999) and law (Alvesson 2001) are knowledge-intensive enough to be included. Compounding the frequent overemphasis on the technologies in use, the concept of "knowledge work" is also problematic for classist and masculinist connotations. Susan Durbin (2007) argues that sexism and low-status results in call center technical support workers being excluded from categorization as knowledge workers. Similarly, Makiko Nishikawa argues for a

redefinition of care workers (e.g., home health care aides) as "knowledge workers" because "the productivity of their work and their organization depends very much on their knowledge," even if much is tacit and local (2011, 115). Few scholars have dealt with these problems in any substantive way. For these reasons, "knowledge worker" is a less than useful category for understanding IT support work and the interdependence of all workers on support workers' (re)production of both infrastructures and status structures in contemporary organizations.

Finally, the same critique can be made as regards the categories of white and blue collar. Once a dominant means for classifying labor based on sector, the concepts have been critiqued for their overly simplistic reliance on class for distinguishing groups (Southern 2000). This overemphasis on the mental and manual labor split led feminists to introduce the concept pink collar to discuss women who performed low-status, routinized clerical work in office settings dominated by men in white collar jobs (Probert and Wilson 1993). In turn, the last decade has seen a proliferation of collars in myriad colors, like brown collar used to denote the low paid work done by Latin@ immigrants (Catanzarite 2002) and green collar to describe employment in the environmental sector (O'Hear 2004). Problematically, this multiplication of colored collars does little to underscore the interdependence of different sectors of employment. As I show in my discussion of support work, a more useful means of categorization would emphasize the functional interdependence of occupations rather than delimiting different occupational fields based on the necessary tools or categorical identities of employees.

Professionals and Devolved Occupations

Contemporary scholarship on professions, mostly deriving from Andrew Abbott's *The System of Professions* (1988), focuses the battles for jurisdiction among different professional groups, like doctors, lawyers, and professors. Professional status brings great rewards to

practitioners, esteem as well as remuneration, resulting in professionals' gate-keeping efforts to maintain their monopoly over a body of knowledge and the associated jobs. For instance, the medical profession as we know it created male-only institutions to support elaborate training and certification processes. Women were excluded from professional medicine, their inability to attend medical schools compounding the delegitimation of midwifery (Witz 1992). Battles between peer professions are complemented by professionals' domination of the subordinates to whom they have delegated routine or less esteemed tasks, like lab technicians and nurses (Abbott 1988, 51). Anne Witz's *Professions and Patriarchy* notes professionals' pursuit of "inter-occupational control over the affairs of related or adjacent occupations in the division of labor" (1992, 44) and how this results in the "downward exercise of power" by professionals toward non-professionals as part of their strategy of enhancing their "privileged access to rewards and opportunities" (1992, 46).

IT Support does not meet the formal definition of a profession, because it lacks any mechanisms for meaningful jurisdictional closure and peer gate-keeping despite the proliferation of certifications and professional associations (see Chapter 7) on the lack of technical backgrounds among IT support workers) (Abbott 1988). ITS does bear some similarity to the subordinate occupations that play supporting roles in the work of professions, but it does not take part in jurisdictional battles, like nurses and doctors (Witz 1992), nor is ITS workers' knowledge devolved from professionals, like lab technicians (Barley and Bechky 1994). ITS workers' body of knowledge generally does not overlap with the professions they support, though this does not mean that relationships are copacetic. As discussed, technology seems to catalyze status threat, causing faculty to engage in face-saving strategies to ameliorate their need to admit ignorance.

For example, professors' overestimations of their technical skill were an attempt to forestall displaying a lack of knowledge.

The professions literature is valuable for the regard given to the non-professionals that make professionals' accomplishments possible. Witz talks about doctors' ambivalence to regulating midwives, as the competition was overshadowed by the need for midwives because the number of patients exceeded doctors' capacities (114). Abbott remarks that paralegals doing routine clerical work is the result of lawyers "claiming more jurisdiction than they can effectively serve" (1988, 25). Were professionals required to learn how to repair and maintain their own computers, they would have less time for their professional responsibilities, especially if they found learning computers difficult. The same goes for faculty in labs where technicians produce the empirical data that faculty convert into the papers and presentations upon which their careers are made. As Barley and Bechky (1994, 91) say, "To the degree that technicians mediate between the physical and symbolic, their work should be structurally critical in the sense that their absence would debilitate a lab's production." The same goes for all workplaces where only some individuals engage in the (re)production of the infrastructure.

Related to the debates on professions is a discussion of "professionalism" as discursive strategy meant to elevate the status of a given occupation, even if the processes of closure and gate-keeping are not feasible. Abbott (1988) himself notes that this proliferation of semi-professions turned his attention from defining professions to the processes by which professions develop and battle for turf. Studies of personal trainers (George 2008), midwives (Foley 2005), tattoo artists (Maroto 2011), and other occupations have demonstrated how "professionalism" is used colloquially to denote a particular type of self-presentation and approach meant to secure respect and authority vis-à-vis clients. Inversely, employers can use professionalism discourses

to exert control over workers, ironically evacuating "professional" of any connotation of autonomy and disciplining workers for organizational ends (Fournier 1999). IT support workers are often grouped under the umbrella term "IT professionals," an appellation that depends on the colloquial usage of professional as denoting respectable and knowledgeable workers, not autonomy or closure and gate-keeping mechanisms. I avoid this overly loose usage of "professional" in this dissertation, partially in deference to Abbott's definition and partially because such an expansive definition does little help scholars conceptualize the interdependence of support workers and those they support.

Even with a more expansive definition of professionalization, the main problem with the professions literature is its inattention to the non-professional employees, like ITS workers or facilities managers, who provide support services for professionals but are not engaged in battles over jurisdiction. This is problematic for understanding ITS workers, because their unique place in the organizational status array and creation of professional success is marginalized. Conflict between the groups is not the usual battle over knowledge and occupational closure but a jockeying for status within a unique arena that underscores the need to distinguish between organizational status and other organizational hierarchies.

Interactive Service Work

Interactive service work (often shortened to "service work") consists of jobs that "require workers to interact directly with customers or clients," whether worker involvement is peripheral to the consumption experience, like fast food counter workers taking orders and serving hamburgers, or central, as in the case of psychotherapy (Leidner 1993, 1). Key is the distinction between Fordism's alienated labor that makes a tangible object (e.g., cars) but never sees the customer and post-Fordist service work where interaction with individual consumer is part of the

production process (e.g., massage therapist). Scholars have examined numerous interactive

service work jobs, like doormen (Bearman 2005), toy store employees (Williams 2006), and

strippers (Frank 2002), and begun to identify distinct kinds of interactive service work. Care

work, or interactive labor meant to develop the skills, competencies, and well-being of the

customer or client (England 2005), is one such subset. Because care work is work on people, it

is interactive service work; however, interactive service work is not always care work. Bill

collectors and bouncers are jobs that require workers to be mean and punishing so as to induce

fear in others, which is emotional labor (Hochschild 1983). Given that these workers perform

emotional labor but not develop the capacities of their interactants, they highlight the differences

between emotional labor and care work. (See Chapter 7 for a more extensive discussion.)

IT support can easily be categorized as interactive service work. The goal of ITS is to

provide a functioning computer or gadget, but this rarely happens without interaction between

the user and an ITS worker. Even when conducted at a distance through remote assistance with

contact by phone or instant messaging (Pollock et al. 2009), IT support requires the user and ITS

worker to work together to solve their problem.

The key exception when characterizing university Help Desk employees as service

workers is that they do not occupy "boundary spanning roles" between the customer outside the

organization and the employees within, which is usually key to definitions of service work

(Steinberg and Figart 1999). In IT support, the "customer" and service worker are members of

the same organization and thus part of the same status structure. Researchers usually focuses on

"frontline" employees acting as an interface between the firm/organization and the

customer/client, as do both Leidner's (1993) concept interactive service work and Lipsky's street

level bureaucrats (2010[1970]). Both Leidner's and Lipsky's service workers are interacting

with individuals who have the right to exit, to choose either to spend their dollars elsewhere or end their attempts at receiving services. By contrast, the organizational "customers" supported by internal support workers rarely have choice as to use their firms support resources or seek alternatives. In such instances, status and relative positioning within an organization's hierarchy comes to matter greatly. Rather than the customer being external to the organization's status array, they are part of it. This creates different conditions for interaction, because status is a "zero-sum game" of relative positioning (Frank and Cook 1995). A service worker's treatment of an external customer only impacts the worker's organizational status in so much as their handling of customers is a cause for positive or negative esteem by colleagues. In contrast, the organizational status of both individuals can be affected should the support worker interaction go awry. Should a support worker fail to engage in the level of deference appropriate for their interactant's status, they threaten the enactment of entitlement by high status individuals. Such support workers are likely be reprimanded or punished not merely for bad service or breaking protocol, but to insure that the organization's status array is returned to is normative state.

These more complex dynamics call into question the applicability of the "service work triangle" for understanding support work. As theorized by Steven Lopez (2010), service workers do not just experience the single authority of a manager (like factory workers once did) but the dual authorities of managers and customers. The relationships and power dynamics of these three parties are fluid; service workers and customers can align in opposition to managerial dictators as easily as managers and customers can ally to discipline service workers. In the conventional service work triangle, the recipient of the service worker's efforts is outside the organization, interacting with either compulsion or volition (Lopez 2010). Where support work breaks with service work is that an internal "customer" may have more organizational status and

power than the service worker, causing more complex power relations than theorized by Lopez (2010). Though the external customer must comply with the organization's demands if they are to receive service (e.g., submit to street level bureaucrats (Lipsky 2010[1970]), pay for things), they are not disciplined as members of the same organization nor does the customer possibly have organizational power over the user. In contrast, the support work relationship is one where both the service worker and the individual being helped are located within the same structure and the client may have power over or at least greater organizational status than the service worker (Dalton 1959). High status users may not ally with either the customer or the manager but instead break the chain of command to speak to a higher ranked manager with power over the support worker and their local manager. This adds another party and more complex power dynamics to the support work interaction. Similarly, high status users may rely on their organizational status to receive non-standard or exceptional services without involving the support workers' manager. In all instances, the organizational status of each party to the support work interaction is subject to change given the "zero-sum" character of status arrays (Frank and Cook 1995), making "service work" less useful than "support workers" for understanding the experience of IT support who are not in boundary spanning roles.

Another lacuna appears when the uniqueness of ITS workers' relatively high status and pay is compared to commonly examined service work jobs like waitress or secretary. No clear consensus exist as to whether or not high status occupations (i.e., psychotherapist, financial advisor, professor) can be defined as service work because they provide services where the interaction is the central moment of consumption. Marek Korcyznski, who has written prolifically about service work, goes so far to define service work as "work undertaken where the central job task involves interaction with service recipient and where the job status is below that

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of professional" (2009, 952). Problematically, he does not provide a viable justification for this boundary or how it contradicts his claim to be "divid[ing] the workforce primarily according to the presence and absence of the customer in the labor process" (962, fn 1). Korcyznski ultimately defines service work not by the type of work being done but by the categorical identity of the worker as professional or not.

Other scholars try to remedy this inconsistency by showing variation in status of the service workers. Molly George's (2008) writing on "expert service work" examines the rise of semi-professional service workers, like uncredentialed personal trainers. Expert service workers utilize discourses of professionalism and weak forms of gate-keeping (e.g., multiple competing regulatory and credentialing organizations) to elevate their status and gain authority. At the same time, however, their work is still structured by the interactional demands of service work, including the need to perform the sort of emotional labor that brings paying customers. Similarly, software developers who must interact with their end users as part of the development process (O Riain 2010). This refocus scholarship on the relationship and/or interaction between the "customer" and the service worker as well as acknowledges the range of organizational and occupational statuses that service workers can take, including service workers with higher status than their "customers," like IT support workers assisting low status receptionists. Though most research treats high status interactive service work as an oxymoron (Hochschild 1983, A. Wharton 1999), attention to the possible pleasures of service work suggests that interactive service work can be something a soul crushing experience based on inauthentic emotions (C. Wharton 1996, Erickson 2009, Lopez 2006).

Theorizing Support Work

Miriam Glucksman's concept of the Total Social Organization of Labor (2009) offers some suggestions about dealing with categories of labor. Grounded in a critique of inattention to the imbrication of public and private in economic exchanges of consumption, production, distribution, and exchange, her focus on interdependencies in economic activities highlights the need to pay more attention to the way all occupations within an organization come together to make the work of core/professional employees profitable. Specifically, need to recognize the interdependence of occupations and the inability of professional to complete their work. The disappearance of support workers from explanations of professional accomplishment is part of the myth of autonomous achievement that underlies neoliberal economics.

The disappearance of support workers' part in professional/core employees' achievements results from and reinforces their low status. Allen-Collinson's (2003, 2004, 2006) writings on "non-academic" laboratory workers document how lab technicians are essential to the productivity of professional scientists but have their contributions erased. For example, lab techs may not have their contributions acknowledged in papers based on the empirical data they produced and helped analyze, may be ignored when academic researchers are honored by their universities or peers, and may be left out of or not even considered during administrative meetings and decision making. When the hard work of "non-academic" lab techs is not recognized as essential to "academic" researchers' accomplishments, the faculty/staff distinction is solidified as diffuse status characteristics. Dorothy Smith (1987) makes the same point about domestic labor of housewives in her explication of feminist standpoint theory. When husbands do not do laundry, they may enjoy clean socks without any sense of the labor required to produce them. Socks appear magically, no trace of the complex processes of buying and using washing machines, learning how to wash clothes, or the organization of domestic labor. The labor

required for clean socks is disappeared, allowing it to be dismissed as unimportant domestic labor in contrast with the important labors of the public sphere. In instances like these, a lack of recognition for a contribution is interpreted as an absence of contribution and thus skill, reproducing their low status.

The bureaucratic division of organizational labor does not necessarily imply diffuse status differences, though in practice they come to function as such. In many ways support work and professionals have a relationship similar to Hegel's master/slave dyad. He theorized that the dominant party's power and identity depends on not simply on the domination of the subordinate group but also the subordinate group's recognition of the master as dominant (Singer 2001). Macdonald and Sirianni make a similar observation in their critical appraisal of service work, saying that master/servant dyad is deployed in service work through the guiding logic "that the customer is always right and that the role of the server is to be deferent in serving, even if the customer's demands are unreasonable and demeanor abusive" (1996a, 16). Similarly, asymmetry is entrenched in the organizational relationship between support workers and core/professional employees. Professional success only possible with the help of support workers, but the definition of professional achievement as individual requires the disavowal of support workers.

Two literatures are valuable for recognizing the interdependence of support and core/professional workers, though each has some blind spots. First, writings on "dirty work" discuss the ability of occupational groupings to become diffuse statuses, as interactions with the abject come to pollute the whole of the character of people engaged in "dirty work" (Hughes 1958, Ashforth and Kreiner 1999, Kreiner, Ashforth, and Sluss 2006). The construction of some occupations, like exotic dancing (Mavin and Grandy 2013), butchering (Simpson et al 2014),

counselors for suicide hotlines (McMurray and Ward 2014), and bike messengers (Kidder 2006), as dirty, allows others to define their jobs as "clean." Dirty work comes to function as a diffuse status, as an individual's willingness to engage in dirty work, conceived as a choice, is enough to taint the worker. In turn, individuals in "clean" jobs can regard themselves as superior for their unwillingness to associate with dirt (Kreiner, Ashforth, and Sluss 2006). Unfortunately, the dirty/clean binary does not prove particularly useful in describing the overall interdependence of support workers and those they help, which is my key aim in conceptualizing support work.

Second, the indispensability of support workers to the daily achievements of modern society is a burgeoning literature on "repair" (Graham and Thrift 2007, Henke 1999, 2008). Defined as the repair and maintenance of the infrastructure upon which modern society is built, "repair work" includes machines and material artifacts as well as the built environment and general social order. Repair work is "an essential segment in the division of labor because people often do not know how to fix things when they break" (Henke 1999, 55). The repair literature, however, has focused largely on the built environment and general social order, translating the concept of "repair" from conversation analysis's micro-interactional focus to macro-level considerations like urban planning, social policy, and the field of industrial agriculture (Henke 1999, 2008). In contrast, support work is more suited to explain meso-level organizational processes where core/professional employees (re)produce their high status through interactions with the support workers that maintain both the physical and the paperwork-based infrastructures of organizations as well as reproduce the organization's status hierarchy through status-differentiated interaction rituals with support workers. Overall, both of these literatures provide valuable suggestions of how to delimit support work as a distinct group of workers.

Considering these literatures as a whole, "support work" as a concept has several strengths relative to other ways of understanding ITS workers. Not only does it identify a unique set of workers who maintain both infrastructures and status structures in contemporary organizations, but it also shows how the reactive character of support work reveals both the dependency of professional achievement on support workers' contributions and how support workers' expertise is disappeared by evaluations that focus on response times and deference rather than actual skill.

First, I argue that support workers constitute a unique subset of interactive service workers that are responsible for maintaining both an organization's infrastructure and its overall status structure. The computer infrastructure supported by ITS workers is tangible and obvious. The work of support workers like secretaries is less visible but equally important. Take scheduling for instance – without administrative assistants to coordinate executives' schedules, there would be fewer meetings; same goes for scheduling in clinics and by advisors. Administrative assistants and schedulers shepherd the temporal ordering of professionals' days, creating the conditions for work to be done. Both occupations, however, serve as rhetorical foils for the professional or core employees that depend upon support workers for the daily (re)production of the conditions of their work.

While the role of support work in maintaining the status infrastructure of the organization may be explicit as in the example of how secretaries use status to determine which manager gets priority when deciding a meeting time, support workers perform a more tacit function in status processes resulting from assumptions about who has the right to the work of others. As Rachel Sherman documents in her ethnography of luxury hotel staff and customer or client status is manifest in degree of "entitlement to consume workers' labor" (2007, 10) and substantiated by

the enactment of that entitlement in interactions with service workers. Research on secretaries corroborates this (Pringle 1988). Status is not reproduced through a simple dichotomy in which asking for help diminishes status (pace Lee 1997, 1999, 2002) but through the actual micro, interactive process by which individuals ask for and receive help from support workers. Second, unique among support work positions is their a highly reactive component, which limits the ability of support workers to pace their work themselves. If the hallmark of a professional is to autonomously organize and pace their own work, then support workers are definitely not professionals. While some planning is possible and efforts to anticipate user problems makes dealing with them more efficient, much of what support staff does is in response to failures of the normal functioning of the infrastructure. Everett C. Hughes notes this phenomenon as well as its negative results in *Men and Their Work* that in some occupations the workers "deal *routinely* with what are emergencies to the people who receive their services" (my italics, 1958, 54). This creates an affective asymmetry as the sense of uniqueness and urgency on the part of the inconvenienced user is not felt by the support worker, who may consider the individual's problem just the latest of a dozen identical issues all vying for priority. The crisis quality of support work influences how such workers are evaluated by those they help, especially when the symbolic significance of waiting is taken into account, as waiting is perceived by the individual made to wait as a slight in which their status as less important than someone else is communicated (Mann 1969, Schwartz 1974). Thus, speed and responsiveness, not objective skill (which few users are qualified to assess), are the primary metrics by which ITS workers are evaluated by users. Being forced to wait for help is considered tantamount to a lack of competence by users who view ITS as first and foremost service workers (Zabusky 1997, 147).

As I discuss in Chapter 5, this serves to inadvertently reproduce the managerialist logics

disdained by critics of the neoliberal university and deprofessionalization of the professoriate

Because support workers are only part of the complex division of labor in contemporary

societies and organizations, a useful reconceptualization of it as a type of labor must develop

complementary concepts for the rest of the occupations. I argue that the concept of support

workers is best complemented by the categories of production and management. Rather than

proliferating categories of work to include ever more fine detail about the doers and objects,

research might be better served by a simple system for understanding the interconnectedness of

all labor. The categories can be used to identify the primary function of a worker and their place

in an organization's division of labor as well as distinguish among different aspects of a single

occupation or job. Though some jobs may fit squarely within a single category, many

incorporate two to three elements in varying proportion. In turn, these categories are meant to

reinforce the interdependence of production workers, whether factory workers or hedge fund

managers, and managerial workers on support workers for their accomplishments.

Conclusion

As shown from my discussion of status and support work, faculty and staff are not simply

distinct occupational groups but constitute an organizational status hierarchy in which faculty

and staff are diffuse status characteristics that serve as the primary frame through which ITS

workers understand their users. Divisions of labor are not in and of themselves status

hierarchies, but when an occupation comes to speak to the whole of the individual's character, it

becomes the basis for a status array. When the subordinate occupational group is constructed as

lesser than the dominant group, particularly as regards knowledge and skill, contribution of

support workers to the achievements of managers and production workers are marginalized. As

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Judith Butler (1990) remarks about the performance of gender and Rosemary Pringle (1988) shows for secretaries, the best performances are those who erase all evidence of their construction. Support workers only come for notice when problems arise and must be solved. Among ITS workers, their daily function in reproducing infrastructures and status structures are generally ignored and their knowledge and skill are disappeared, (re)producing the faculty/staff binary as diffuse status differences.

The practical effect is to create different expectations for each group. Faculty, while regarded poorly for their misbehavior, like rudeness and ignoring email, were never criticized to their faces for such behavior. Help Desk employees expected faculty to be less than ideal users and had generally low expectations for them. After one particularly contentious experience with a post doc (discussed at length in Chapter 6), my astonishment at her poor behavior was dismissed by the Help Desk employees. The general agreement among Sue, Harry, Isaac, and Jake was that she had neither yelled nor cursed at them so she was not the worst user they had experienced and thus not worth a second thought. In contrast, staff quickly came in for censure if they engaged in the same behaviors as faculty. The final result was the (re)production of the faculty/staff binary as diffuse status characteristics and the university's organizational hierarchy as a whole.

In the three chapters that follow, I provide three distinct examples of how organizational status influences the distinct interaction rituals of staff and faculty vis-à-vis IT support workers. Using the interactional processes of help-seeking, waiting and queuing, and refusal, I show how the distinction between faculty and staff as occupational groups is transmuted into and organizational status array that serves as a key structuring force in t he university as workplace.

Chapter 4: Help-Seeking, Face-Saving, and Status

Call (9.00) – Shaftsbury Auditorium is having issues. ... Isaac goes upstairs to resolve the problem. ... Dr. Elsa is holding class and needs to have the VCR functioning but can't get it to show her tape.

[Isaac and I scramble to locate a room that will allow her to show the videotape, which takes several tries since one room doesn't have a VCR and another has both a VCR and a class in it.]

In the third room, which is free, I stay at the top of the room while Isaac looks at the setup. There is a VCR, so he goes about setting the video to play. It's 9.30. Once he's sure it will play, he asks me to go back to Shaftsbury and tell Dr. Elsa. I say yes immediately. ... I get to Shaftsbury and before I can get anything out she asks me if we've got it working. I say yes and she starts to announce to the students that they will be going to the first classroom Isaac and I tried. I have to interrupt her and tell her it's a different room. She's cool with it and readjusts her announcement. I slip back out of the room and go to where Isaac is. He's got the video in and students are filtering into the classroom. He stands there for a few minutes and wonders aloud where he should set the tape, saying "I don't know where she wants it." He waffles on waiting but decides we should go back to the Help Desk offices. It's nearly 9.45. (FN 0510).

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Once upon a time, faculty's classroom performances required little more than a podium, supplemented perhaps by a chalkboard or an overhead projector with acetate transparencies. Today, an unadorned lecture is not enough to meet expectations for engaged learning, multimedia teaching tools, and PowerPoint to accompany presentations. The professor who simply lectures is unlikely to keep students' attention or receive good evaluations, no matter how fascinating the material. Some faculty remain steadfast in their traditional methods, but most have begun to incorporate an array of teaching tools, from simple lecture slides to online videos

to interactive "clickers" that let instructors and students "interact dynamically"[13] through polls and games.   Like the opening vignette in which Dr. Elsa's success depended on Isaac making it possible for her class to view a video, faculty today rely on IT Support (ITS) workers to keep technology functioning and their classes running smoothly.

Whenever computers (and the technologies that rely upon them) are central to the operation of the contemporary organization, whether in classrooms, back offices, or the hands of sales forces, the ability of individuals to work depends on technology's uninterrupted functioning. Any number of technical failures can cause work to grind to a halt: a forgotten password, a server down for maintenance, a computer virus, or a suddenly dead power supply. As Barley and Orr (1997, 14) say, technicians "separate us from the technology on which our society is based," since most individuals encounter technology as a black box, ignorant of the fundamental processes (e.g., the intricacies of computer code) that make possible the devices upon which they depend. At the H-School, the recent completion of a major project to convert clinic records from paper to an electronic format meant there was widespread disruption if the computer system went down, as no patients could be seen or billed. In classrooms across the university, a malfunctioning computer or projector could disrupt lessons and derail whole classes depending upon visual aids or media (e.g., lecture slides, films). Some problems are small enough (and some users savvy enough) to troubleshoot their own machines, but most users require the expertise of ITS workers to return to work. Existing research examines how individuals decide whether or not to ask for help (Lee 1997, 2002), but faculty and staff had no choice but to request assistance from the Help Desk and risk possible status threat (see Chapter

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[13] See https://www1.iclicker.com/ for an explanation of "clickers" and how they can be used for interactive learning in the classroom.

3). As a result, how users went about getting the help they needed, not whether or not they decided to ask for help, was a key site for the (re)production of organizational status. Using the example of IT support workers, I document the interactional processes through which organizational status shapes modes of help-seeking and show how those interactions in turn (re)produce the faculty/staff binary as a status hierarchy based on diffuse status characteristics (see Chapter 3).

"Help-seeking," as used by psychologists, describes how organizational members decide to locate information or ask for assistance with a problem (Hofman, Lei, and Grant 2009). Research has focused on the psychological processes by which people decide to ask for help or not, constructing help-seeking as an active process where individuals make decisions about whom to interact with and how to approach them. Their key finding is that an individual's desire to gain or maintain power and status is inversely related to their willingness to seek help (Lee 1997, 340). Employees may be inhibited from help-seeking because of the social cost (e.g., loss of power) of being perceived as incompetent and/or dependent on others (Lee 1997, 339). Alternately, people may want to avoid the impoliteness of imposing on others by asking for help (Brown and Levinson 1987). Using the example of hospital employees' help-seeking in relation to a new electronic records system, David Hofman and colleagues (2009) show how help-seekers perceptions of potential helpers' accessibility (i.e., whether the request would be seen as an imposition) and trustworthiness (i.e., whether the request will cause the requestor to lose face) matters more than objective skill when choosing whom to ask for help. Subjects showed a marked preference for seeking assistance from individuals who would not make them feel bad for needing or requesting help, highlighting the role of status processes in help-seeking interactions.

Fiona Lee has examined the strategies individuals use to seek help, showing how people try to frame their requests in such a way as to save face for both themselves and the person from whom they are requesting assistance (2002). She documents three major "verbal strategies" that people utilize to soften requests for help and maintain others' favorable impressions of them: "other-enhancing strategies" that "elevated the helper or abased the help seeker," "minimizing strategies" that downplayed the imposition of the request, and "task-oriented strategies" that "oriented the helper's attention toward the task at hand" (1999, 1479). She concludes that gender, power, and local norms all play a part in how individuals ask for help; for example, low status men and women are most likely to engage in the types of verbal strategies she identifies. No details are provided about requests that do not involve face-saving strategies, particularly negative affect and behavior by requestors, or the role of such behaviors in (re)producing the status of the requestor. Until now, very few scholars have continued this investigation, particularly from a qualitative perspective. As I show, the example of ITS workers goes beyond existing studies to show how status is not merely a variable influencing users' methods of help-seeking but the active (re)production of users' individual statuses and the organizational status structure as a whole.

While no two requests for help or service calls were ever identical, they did unfold in patterned ways, following Goffman's ideas of interaction rituals and deference (1969, discussed in Chapter 3). Crucially, the interactional rituals I observed varied with the status of the user engaging with the ITS worker. The character of these interactions was not diametrically opposed such that one could characterize all faculty as less civil and staff as more civil or all staff as more apologetic and appreciative than faculty. Indeed there were grumpy or inconsiderate staff and incredibly friendly professors, but certain behaviors were more common or more intense among

certain groups and some deviant behaviors were limited to a specific group, though not all might

have engaged in such behaviors. As I show below, the net result was the (re)production of

organizational status inequality.

Low Status Help Seeking

When Andre and I reach the first floor office of Human Resources, he makes a beeline for an admin located at the far right desk. A woman in her mid-40s, blonde, dressed in feminine business casual but with stocking feet as her heels are kicked off under her desk, smiles brightly as we walk into view. The first words out of her mouth are "I'm sorry for making you come all the way up here for something so silly." Andre shakes his head and tells her not to worry, that he's happy to help. She then sheepishly explains more thoroughly what we'd read on the ticket: she's dealing with a presentation for the manager she works for but is having issues with the audio and cannot get sound from the machine. She says that she had tried the system volume control to no avail. At the same time she's talking, she gets out of her seat and lets Andre slide into it. (This is when we realize she has no shoes on, as she apologizes for it and slips into her shoes to get up.) He looks in the bottom left corner and finds that she had indeed accomplished the first step of trouble shooting. The next step is to check hardware, but his face develops a quizzical look, as the volume knob for the speakers, which are mounted below the monitor, are not readily apparent. He turns to look at her, but before he says anything, she laughingly tells him that she does not know where the controls are either. He begins to feel under and around the monitor, until he finds a knob. "There it is" he exclaims excitedly, though hushed, and we all breathe a sigh of relief when NPR pours forth in low tones.

The admin is vocally thrilled and thanks Andre emphatically before beginning a second round of apologies for needing his help with such "a little" thing. Andre brushes it off by telling her that's his job, that he's happy to help, and that it is always nice to get away from the basement. The admin picks up on this last statement and jokes that she was happy to be able to help him rather than be a bother. With cheery goodbyes on both sides and more thank yous from the admin as she slips back into her seat, we depart. When I ask Andre his opinion of the call, he laughs and says that it might seem strange to travel two floors to help an admin turn on her speakers, but that (as I saw) he himself did not remember right away where the volume knob was and stating that it was in a strange place relative to other computers. He remains smiling as we walk back downstairs and split up as he goes to record the service visit in the appropriate ticket.

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While observing the H-School Help Desk, I was amazed by how friendly staff members

were when we wandered the halls on service calls. Receptionists, lab managers, and clinic

administrators all greeted the ITS workers by name, smiling, waving, asking "How do you do?",

chatting pleasantly about work and weather. The ITS workers and staff joked together, commiserating about technology and its frustrations, the university and its denizens. Positioning themselves as peers, ITS workers and low status staff members interacted in a consistently affable manner. This collegiality that inadvertently served as a foil to the demanding and sometimes uncivil temperament of faculty.

During help-seeking interactions between low status users and Help Desk employees deference (see Chapter 3) was freely given to the ITS workers as their services were requested and/or employed. Though definitions of deference usually emphasize asymmetries of status, the crux of deference rituals is interactants enacting their esteem for each other, meaning deference acts are also engaged in by equals. Scholars refer to this as lateral deference and show that individuals engage in deference with peers when concerned with showing they are not "overstepping their bounds" in interactions with peers (Fragale et al. 2012). Staff users hailed ITS workers as professionals, respecting and deferring to their knowledge. In turn, ITS workers were almost uniformly empathetic, considerate, and concerned to keep staff working, treating them with the same care as they gave faculty. The tone of their interactions were characterized by some admixture of politeness, appreciation, and jocularity on the part of both the ITS worker and the user. For example, during a visit to a staff user, the woman freely admits her confusion, saying, "I'm lost." Sue replies sympathetically, crouching beside the woman's chair and consolingly telling the woman she will get her "unlost." Similarly, when a staff member said apologetically "I'm creating problems," Harry was quick to dismiss her concern, saying "It's okay – we're here to fix problems," consoling her and reinforcing her right to service. Staff users (men and women alike) more consistently engaged in basic conversational pleasantries, like saying hello, asking the Help Desk employee how they were doing, and checking to see if

the ITS worker had time to listen to their concerns about their computer before launching into an explanation of their problem. Low status users were also more likely to apologize for "bothering" an ITS worker by needing assistance and to give an emphatic thank you to the ITS worker for their help. Indeed, users' self-abasement could become distracting, as it was for one admin whose apologies drowned out Sue's attempts to explain the process about which she is lamenting. no point during my observation did I see a low status worker attempt to circumvent the queue, seek an exemption to ITS rules, or challenge the Help Desk's protocol, all of which (as I discuss below) were engaged in by faculty. The alignment of ITS workers and staff was obvious during multiple interactions where staff framed their requests or conversation through the faculty versus staff frame. On one service call, we went to a lab classroom where a professor was having trouble getting the VCR to play. Once there we were met by a woman lab manager, an unexpected event since she was not the doctor's lab manager nor assigned to the room itself. The doctor never stopped teaching and Harry and the woman spoke in low tones, trying to get the video playing. When done, she politely asked the doctor if he would stop class to let them try the video. It was successful, so they quietly rewound the tape, pressed pause, and left the room. In the hall and out of earshot, the admin thanked Harry profusely and then apologized for having to ask for his assistance, saying "Thank goodness that worked. The doctor just walked in and said he had a VHS tape and it's been so long since I did anything in that room, I forgot." Harry brushes off the apology as well as the gratitude, instead commiserating with the lab manager that he had not been given any forewarning either, despite having just seen the doctor prior to his needing help. The lab manager is brightened by this and seems relieved that Harry is not irritated. The net result was a (re)production of the faculty/staff status hierarchy in which faculty are constructed as powerful yet inconsiderate in contrast to a beleaguered staff.

Something similar happened on multiple unique service calls when a doctor's blasé remarks of appreciation for a repaired printer were overshadowed by the emphatic thank you of staff.   We often interacted with staff who were invested in having faculty's technical problems solved because they were making more work for the staff, like a malfunctioning printer that was in one admin's words, "a pain in the ass" because the faculty kept asking her to print for them, unapologetically interrupting her official responsibilities. On a different printer-related service call, Claudette jokingly made sure that we knew the faculty or graduate students had caused the problem resulting in our service call as opposed to anything she had done, a claim Isaac accepted readily. In such instances the staff and ITS workers commiserated politely about professors' demanding temperaments and thoughtlessness, which served to reinforce the ITS workers' bifurcation of their uses into dominant faculty and subordinate staff.

Though they always treated the staff respectfully, there were instances where the ITS workers actively and explicitly (re)produced the staff's low status. Harry once explicitly told a user that he would not be able to deal with their computer until the next day because he was needed at the dean's reception to configure their Audio-Visual equipment. The staff member did not bat an eyelash at this explanation and immediately replied with her availability the next day. This behavior was not uncommon; the shared faculty/staff frame made staff not react negatively to such comments. Instead, they were entirely legitimate explanations for a delay. More common, though, was for high status individuals to be served before low status users without the latter explicitly being informed about their diminished priority. On one occasion I observed Isaac tell a caller from the records department that he would visit her office "right away" to solve a printer issue. Instead of going directly to her office, however, he first completed a service call

for an Assistant Dean. The detour only added five minutes to the user's wait, too little to be noticed but enough to (re)produce the university's status hierarchy.

In one realm, though, H-School Help Desk did (re)produce staff's low status backstage through dismissive reactions to a subset of staff complaints: reports of slow computers. The ITS workers considered complaints about network speed almost exclusively as a problem of individual impatience. While respectful to staff to their faces, as they tried to explain politely that the slowness of the network was not something they could alter; among themselves such users were an object of scorn. In particular, the Help Desk employees saw these users as having unrealistic expectations and an unclear understanding of what constituted a "problem." This irritation was compounded by service calls that involved traveling long distances to deal with a machine described as "broken" only to be greeted by the user who is ecstatic their machine has "fixed itself" and begun working again. ITS workers generally bit their tongues in such situations, though during return trips to the Help Desk I listened to many a rant about machines never having been broken and the "fix" just it having finally finished processing. Similar interactions with faculty were rare, as faculty rarely used the administrative programs, like systems for billing or coordinating student admissions, that caused headaches for staff.

That staff members and Help Desk employees considered each other peers was also obvious in the way ITS workers reacted negatively to staff whom they felt treated them as subordinates. I quote Jim at length:

> After Faculty, the most annoying users are the high level administrative assistants. There was a secretary from the dean's office that was a big problem. She acted more like faculty. She would come in speaking. Like today, making a point of pointing out that no one answered, but knowing we're very busy. The one who was the worst is better now. She made so many demands because she was the Dean's personal secretary. Oh, she was awful. Others were bothered by it and told her she was overstepping her bounds and couldn't treat people under her like that." His overall impression was that she was

disrespectful to the IT staff and did not treat them as equals or professionals. She was too demanding and unwilling to acknowledge that her problems might not be the most pressing ones the ITS workers were dealing with. It was an issue of an inability to lose any source of face. She would always name drop, 'The dean is here, you must come.' Which is true, but you don't have to say it, we know who to come on demand for. It was the demanding that got a lot of people down here frazzled. Especially in the university, IT isn't trod on in the same way as in corporate." He concluded the narrative by saying that the other admins intervened and explicitly stated to the woman that she couldn't behave like that with the IT group. Apparently she got the message because she's still in the H-school and has reined in her behavior. (FN0418)

Jim's criticism lays bare how the faculty/staff binary serves as the primary frame for how ITS workers understand and evaluate users' behaviors. The administrative assistant was not simply being rude by being demanding as well as dismissive of the ITS workers' skills, but she was acting like faculty – usurping a prerogative that was not hers, a much more grievous act. Though his comments are not intended to legitimate faculty members' misbehavior, they do normalize incivilities by faculty. The importance of status for structuring interactions between users and ITS workers was underscored by the perspective of other Help Desk employees on the Dean's secretary. Exacerbating the situation was the admin's habit behaving quite differently with Alice, the manager of the Help Desk, than with the ITS workers. The secretary was willing to enact deference when interacting with Alice, leading Alice to have a very different opinion of the secretary than the rest of the unit. As Jim suggests, only intervention by the admin's peers was able to alter her behavior. Ultimately, the ITS workers acknowledged the stress that the secretary was under as primary support for the Dean, what Kanter (1997) would describe as the unenviable position of having responsibilities but not the necessary power and authority to insure work is done correctly. Nonetheless, they felt she was remiss in taking out her frustrations on the Help Desk employees who were trying to help. Once she ceased these behaviors, the secretary was again treated as a peer whom ITS workers were happy to help. In this way, the

staff identity and thus low status of the Dean's secretary was actively produced in her dealings

with ITS workers, exemplifying the interactional production of organizational status.

ITS workers in other departments had similarly positive relationships with staff,

replicating the pattern observed at the H-School. Though individual staff could be labeled as

difficult—like a secretary called out for her habit of downloading malware that required

substantial effort to repair each time or a lab manager who was considered overly grumpy—staff

as a group were as a whole regarded as more agreeable and respectful than faculty. Though this

was complimentary, the end result was to (re)produce faculty and staff as diffuse status

characteristics. ITS workers expected all staff, regardless of gender, to be polite, understanding,

and eschew the interactional styles of faculty, while tacitly allowing faculty to act in ways they

would never permit from staff. Thus, staff's acts of lateral deference were not only moments in

which respect for ITS workers was performed but in which their subordinance was solidified.

High Status Face Saving

"They want what they want when they want it" – Ian

"Depending on who they are, they will get what they want when they want it" – Burton

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While the interactions between H-School staff and Help Desk employees tended to be

treated as exchanges among peers with polite deference given for superior skill with technology,

faculty's interactions with Help Desk employees were structured in relation to possibility of

status threat. Faculty members were typically polite and pleasant, but their interactions with the

Help Desk employees were nonetheless moments in which their organizational status was

(re)produced and/or challenged. As I show below, faculty utilized a unique set of strategies not

observed among low status staff. The net result was to reproduce the faculty/staff binary as

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diffuse status characteristics and (re)produce faculty's high status. Three groups of behaviors are

discussed: incivility and rudeness, face saving, and enacting entitlement.

Incivility and Rudeness

"You're going to get eaten alive when you go to the academic units. [Faculty] will eat you alive." –Gemma's advice to Central IT

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The right to free emotional expression is structured by status. While dominant groups,

like whites and men, are granted the right to untrammeled expression, subordinate groups are

expected to manage their emotions to meet the preferences of the more powerful (Gibson and

Callister 2010). In particular, high status individuals have the right to express anger and other

negative emotions (Sloan 2012, Hall and Friedman 1999), while minority individuals who do the

same may experience sanctions, like the withdrawal of material support (Power, Cole, and

Fredrickson 2011). Within workplaces, the right of dominant groups to unmanaged emotional

expression is circumscribed by norms of calm, rational congeniality that apply to all employees

(Domagalski and Steelman 2007, Manning 2002, Collett and Lizardo 2010). An asymmetry

persists, however, as displays of negative affect toward subordinates are unlikely to receive

censure except in particularly abusive instances, while similar behaviors by subordinates to the

higher status group is likely to be defined as insubordination. Among the ITS workers I

encountered, emotional expression by users was stratified by organizational status. Everyone

became frustrated (see Chapter 7) with malfunctioning technology, but only faculty engaged in

uncivil or rude behavior directed toward the Help Desk employee, which could involved anger,

condescension, and/or disregard. By displaying this behavior toward ITS workers, faculty

members were able to reaffirm their high organizational status.

While low status staff habitually enacted lateral deference (Fragale et al. 2012) toward ITS workers as discussed above, faculty were more varied in their modes of interacting with Help Desk employees. Though this dissertation focuses heavily on problematic interactions between faculty members and ITS workers, I do not want to suggest that positive exchanges between them were unusual or rare. Some faculty were quite nice, treating the ITS workers with respect and friendliness, showering them with praise for their IT skills, and avoided enacting high status or expecting deference from the ITS workers. Foremost was Dr. Catalina, beloved by the whole H-School Help Desk, even the usually sarcastic Jim. Otherwise, individual Help Desk employees often had their own favorite faculty member, users with whom they got along and enjoyed helping. The commonality among favored faculty was respectful treatment of the ITS worker, positive and appreciative affect, and a general hewing to the interactional niceties engaged in by peers.

Other faculty engaged with ITS workers in utilitarian ways that skipped over basic interactional elements linked to deference. Even if these individuals did not intend for anything other than an efficient interaction, their interaction style could be interpreted as incivility. Workplace incivility is defined as "low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect" and "displaying a lack of regard for others" (Andersson and Pearson 1999, 457). Instances of incivility include insulting remarks, hostile looks, condescension, and myriad other instances in which an individual tacitly conveys their lack of esteem for their interactant. Lilia Cortina and colleagues aver that incivility involves "behaviors [that] lack clear, conscious intentionality" and that the lack of intent does not diminish the psychological harm (2001, 64). As I show, acts of incivility by faculty

(re)produces their high organizational status while actually diminishing the ITS workers' esteem for them.

The number one example of incivility was a perfunctory, hurried interactional style in which faculty members who came into the physical Help Desk often skipped over common opening pleasantries like "Hello" and "How are you?" that typically are used to initiate conversation. Unlike staff, faculty rarely asked if the Help Desk employee on duty was free to take their request, which, while ritualistic, was regarded as respectful of the time and energies of ITS workers. Instead, catching the eye of the Help Desk worker was enough to launch faculty immediately into an explanation of their problem. A common example from my field notes is "Walk in (10:15am) – Woman (younger, white) comes in and starts immediately: 'I'm faculty and I've been trying to approve procedures and just today it says my card is expired'" (FN0402). Note the absence of any of interactional niceties as well as the immediate identification of faculty status. Though not particularly rude, such perfunctory interactions are enactments of status though the faculty member's failure to engage in the small rituals through which individuals express their respect for each other (Lee 1999). To launch immediately into a request without checking whether the Help Desk worker is prepared to work on their problem was an expression of disregard. Skipping over these introductory remarks ignored the possibility that the ITS worker was currently engaged in a repair using the remote connection, software that allowed them to take control of users' computers and fix some things without physically interacting. The routine character of these omissions was made most obvious in the question of a undergraduate research assistant who had been helping me with coding my field notes. She asked whether or not I routinely omitted such basic pleasantries from my field notes for

efficiency's sake or if the faculty had really not engaged in such common interaction rituals, so glaring was their absence.

A habit of ceasing communication with an ITS worker immediately upon a computer returning to functioning was also a utilitarian mode of interaction that approached incivility. I quote a particularly egregious example from my field notes:

> Phone Call (12.56) – A male instructor calls with a problem with the projector in his classroom. Harry talks him through all the basic fixes: Are you using a laptop? Did you push the appropriate buttons? Did you turn it off and on again? In the middle of this, Harry stops as the individual abruptly says, "It's working – goodbye," and hangs up. I ask Harry what was wrong/necessary to fix and he says he isn't sure as the instructor jumped off the phone once his problem was no more. (FN03262)

Though the instructor said good bye, the suddenness with which he ended the call was reminiscent of being hung up on. Such an abrupt exit from a conversation contradicted normal interactional processes but was common among both staff and faculty. Early in my observation, I asked Isaac if a call from the day before had been resolved. He shook his head a little, saying he assumed it was fine because he had not heard anything. Users rarely followed up with ITS workers to let them know a fix was successful and almost never communicated their appreciation for a fix. Strangely, this was one of the few incivilities engaged in by both faculty and staff. A similar practice shared by faculty and staff was that appreciation was extended to Help Desk workers for only repaired machines, nothing else. In instances where ITS workers were unable to fix something or had to refer the individual elsewhere, users almost never said "thank you" for the ITS workers' efforts. Status, though, governed when thanks were given for repairs. Staff were generally good about enacting their appreciation for the help they received, ending their interactions with the ITS workers with expressions of appreciation intermixed with farewells. Though some faculty expressed their gratitude in obvious ways, like calling the ITS worker a

"genius" or telling them "you saved my life," it was not unusual for a faculty member to depart without expressing any appreciation for the ITS workers' assistance. Not saying thank you is an incivility (re)producing status through an expression of a feeling of entitlement to the labor of another.

Incivility was also present when faculty lied or bent the truth in their interactions with ITS workers. Overlapping with face saving, discussed below, faculty sometimes tried to avoid censure by not admitting to having caused problems or broken protocol. Craig at the P-School told of a professor who had spilled a large latte on his laptop but would not admit having done so despite the clear presence of coffee in the circuitry. Craig spoke harshly of the professor's attempt to save face through remarks that at bottom dismissed his skill as an IT expert (0807). Jane similarly recalled a professor who had reported a keyboard mysteriously malfunctioning and then remained steadfast in his denial of responsibility even as she drained about a cup of cola out of a keyboard in front of him. Users sometimes fibbed about the origins of computers in an attempt to circumvent limits on network access and software installation, which not only was disrespectful but also opened up ITS workers to liability for violating protocol. ITS workers also regarded faculty passively appropriating ITS units' resources as instances of discourteousness. Maggie mentioned a post doc who at first tried to avoid returning a laptop she had borrowed, only to relent and return it with a power cord in worse condition than the one she had been given. Sue leveled similar charges against a doctor who had borrowed an iPad and returned it with a grubby cord that was obviously not the one she had been given. In both instances, the ITS workers were angry that the users remained steadfast in their insistence that they had returned what they had been loaned, disregarding the ITS worker's superior knowledge about the equipment for which they were responsible. In general, the flimsy quality of the lies told by

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faculty made them more hurtful because they were premised on the belief that ITS workers were not smart enough to recognize their statements as patently false lies.

A ubiquitous form of incivility that negatively impacted on ITS workers' ability to properly do their job was faculty members' habitual disregard for communiqués from the IT department. In these instances, incivility was only partially about ignoring emails about important service changes or outages. What Help Desk employees really hated was faculty's reluctance to take responsibility for problems that could be ultimately traced back to ignoring email. Faculty very rarely apologized for their part in such a problem or softened their requests to admit some culpability through inattention. More common was for faculty to express irritation at being inconvenienced by changes they claimed ignorance of and then to expect the Help Desk employee to provide an immediate resolution to their problem. This caused resentment among ITS workers who felt they were being unfairly blamed for problems that could have been prevented.

The tendency of faculty to ignore vital emails from ITS workers was highlighted by some professors' behavior following a major overhaul of the university's email system. In the summer before my observation, the university as a whole adopted Google for email and other applications. This had been a somewhat contentious decision and was widely publicized by ITS workers in an attempt to ameliorate concern and prepare people for the transition (see Chapter 7 on managing expectations). Though the H-School staff had accepted the transition with some grumbling, more than a few faculty members ignored the flurry of announcements. As a result, a month after the transition was over faculty members were still coming to the Help Desk in a panic over missing email. The lag between the change and faculty noticing the change is apparent when Jim remarks exasperatedly two months after his first remark: "Half do it [read the

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email, follow the directions]; the other half show up [at the Help Desk] because they never read their email" (FN0530). ITS workers interpreted it as a sign of disrespect, an indication faculty considered themselves and their time as more important than that of the Help Desk employees.

Faculty members' failure to promptly read or respond to emails was a theme that frequently recurred in discussions with ITS workers. The H-School Help Desk employees communicated this to Lola during her training. While preparing a new laptop for use by its recipient, Sue tells her, just as Isaac had a few minutes prior, that when the professor comes for the laptop Lola needs to explain about having to buy her own network adaptor (referred to *in vivo* as a dongle). Lola nods, causing Sue to mutter under her breath, "I hope she knows. Well, we'll deal with that when she gets here." Lola counters by asking, "Have they not replied? I wrote an email yesterday." Sue dismisses the expectation of a prompt response from a professor out of hand, saying "She's probably not even in the building" and then dropping the entire discussion (FN 0530). These failures of communication were also common among faculty in the P-School and in the interviewees' departments. Greg, a Help Desk employee in a professional school talked about the aftermath of some changes they made to their printer system:

> People will walk in and be like, "Did you guys do something different to the printers because I can't print now." "Yeah, we sent you out four emails within the last month saying, 'We're gonna do it in three weeks, we're gonna do it next week, we're gonna do it tomorrow.' We did it. In every case, here's what you need to do to fix the new printing." That ...yeah, that's ... it's all documented on our website. Everything you need to know is right there on the site and they're still like, "What do I do?"

Though usually just irritating and time consuming, faculty members' failure to read and/or reply to ITS missives could leave the Help Desk employees unable to complete requested service calls. If a Help Desk employee needed to know what files the user wanted backed up, have the user log into a password protected machine, or have the user explain a problem more fully, the

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completion of the original request depended up the user replying to the ITS worker. In all these ways, faculty's lack of communication was interpreted as a sign of disrespect for the ITS workers who were trying to help them. Interestingly, a similar phenomenon has been noted in the literature on staff researchers, whereby faculty "punished" researchers by ignoring their emails (Allen-Collinson 2006).

Faculty's complaints about slow service from ITS workers often omitted their own role in preventing the completion of requests. Faculty might ignore ITS emails for weeks on end and then complain to an ITS manager that their service request had not been completed. ITS workers could then come in for censure if the faculty's omission of their culpability successfully deflected blame onto the ITS worker.   Isaac complained to me more than once about faculty who would not respond to multiple attempts to schedule installation of Windows 7. Letting users keep Windows XP after Microsoft ceased support (e.g., distributing updates to protect against security threats) meant their computers would be vulnerable to attack. He was worried that all the upgrades would not be accomplished in time and some computers would have to be removed from the network. Removing the computers would be easy; having to deal with irate faculty whose computers stopped accepting remote connections or accessing the internet would not. Informing a user that their problem was the result of their own failure to communicate with the Help Desk was rarely well received, so Isaac hoped to prevent any such exchanges in the future. The irony, though, was that faculty who often ignored emails about preventative maintenance were quick to contact the Help Desk when their machine did not work as expected. ITS workers often bit their tongues in these situations, knowing that pointing out a user's share of the blame would not make the interactions any easier.

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The P-School Help Desk lamented faculty requesting help on Friday afternoons. Geordie said that each week at least one or two professors showing up in the late afternoon with malfunctioning laptops that they wanted repaired before they left for the weekend. The P-School Help Desk employees found this behavior frustrating because it significantly underestimated the time and energy required to fix a computer. Faculty's failures to plan repairs were interpreted as a disregard for the other responsibilities of the ITS workers. Chris, also at the P-School, spent several minutes ranting one day about users that waited days or weeks between detecting a problem with their machines and contacting the P-School Help Desk. Delayed reporting in and of itself was not problematic; what was infuriating for Chris was that those users then expected the ITS workers to drop everything and immediately take care of their problem, without any regard for what tasks the ITS worker might currently be completing or deadlines they might have. As discussed in Chapter 5, users often considered waiting an affront to their status, as it was received as a signal that someone else was being considered to have a greater right to ITS workers' services. This was particularly bothersome when it manifest itself in faculty's assumptions that they should not have to endure any delay between visiting the Help Desk and having their computer repaired. It became insulting when the faculty expressed irritation that they be expected to schedule repairs rather than have them done at their convenience, attempting to save face by making the difficulty of fulfilling last minute requests the ITS worker's problem, not theirs.

Sam, ITS worker for a unit covering multiple Social Science departments, describes a similar disregard for the time of ITS workers among his users:

> We gave a faculty member directions on how to upgrade to SPSS Amos 21 because of the whole big Gmail change. Didn't work for him 'cause he was on a laptop. Gotta be plugged into the internet, hardwired, but that still didn't work. Uninstalled, reinstalled,

still getting an error. [I told him] "You're going to have to bring it down." I told him [to bring it] this Wednesday. So my other coworker gets involved and he's like, "You need to bring it down to us." And somewhere around 2 o'clock there was a response that said, "Well, how long would you need it?" Coworker responds at 2:15, "About 15 minutes?" Then we heard nothing. Friday, he shows up at 4 o'clock with the laptop. "Fix it. I need it for this weekend."

The most problematic moment was when the faculty member ceased communicating with the ITS workers after receiving Sam's colleague's estimation of the time required. Though the coworker was trying to encourage the professor to bring his computer right away by stressing how quickly the fix would be, the professor gave it a different meaning. Rather than continuing the established email conversation about when to bring the laptop, the professor seems to have interpreted the answer to the question of how long the process would take as an assertion that they would be able to fix his computer anytime he could let go of it for fifteen minutes. This overlaps with managing expectations precisely because it violates the practice of under-promising; instead, the coworker overpromised and was ultimately burned by the practice. As a whole, faculty members' habits of waiting until the last minute were performances of status that took the workers' polite downplaying of their efforts at face value (Sherman 2007).

More serious than the common incivilities discussed above was a rudeness that ITS workers saw as the sole province of faculty. While at the H-School, I witnessed only one querulous interaction between ITS workers and a staff member. A lab manager, a working class white woman, got upset when Jim informed her that they did not have any 9-Volt batteries and that she needed to use the rechargeable batteries in the room. She was adamant that there were no rechargeable batteries and insisted that any that might have that been there were likely thrown away by professors. A couple interviewees mentioned staff members who had computer privileges, like administrator rights, withdrawn as a result of multiple viruses. Contentious

interactions between ITS workers and staff were rare; friction with faculty were far more common. Isaac described being cursed at by a professor for a mistake with a presentation. This experience was widespread as Sue and Jake both shrugged off a post doc's incivility with the rationalization that she had not screamed or cursed at her, so it was acceptable behavior`. Among interactions I observed, one white man professor reacted defensively to Harry's admiring remark that the doctor's new laptop had an enviably large monitor with the remark "Us old people have to see," said without a tinge of jocularity (FN 0416). After he left, we turned to each other and asked if the other was disconcerted by his bristly response to honest praise. Similarly, an Assistant Dean's visit for repair of the wireless internet of a staff member's laptop was punctuated by increasingly vitriolic remarks to Isaac about how someone needed to provide him with a "500 foot" cable so that the staffer could work away from the building like the Assistant Dean wanted. The Assistant Dean's tone became so caustic that Alice, who rarely intervened in Help Desk interactions, slipped out of her office and into the fray in an attempt to calm him down enough that Isaac could proceed with his repair and explanation.

Stories of faculty rudeness were told by nearly every ITS worker I encountered. Jake, a Systems Administrator at the H-School, told about his previous job when he went to Human Resources to report some faculty that habitually yelled at the ITS workers. Impressively, he succeeded at forcing the faculty to change this behavior. Others were not so lucky. Joan talked about the dissent that ensued when changes were made to printing at the library: "[The ITS workers are] getting the people that are just screaming about, 'Where's my print job, where's this, where's that, why is not working this way and it's always worked this way!'" More egregious was an interaction related by Norma:

I had one professor … Something was just not going her way. I don't remember what it was, but I was trying to help her out in her classroom, in front of class, and she just bitched me out right in front of class and I just said something to her like, 'Uh, we can talk about this later.' You know? I'm not going to roll over and play dead. And I'll just say something if they're treating me bad in front of class ... You know, let's talk about this later.

Unfortunately, being yelled at was not a rare experience. As predicted by Hochschild (1983), this had negative ramifications in the form of alienation from organic emotional response. Not being yelled at became the low threshold a user had to meet to be considered a good interaction, (re)producing faculty's high status by legitimating their unguarded emotional displays.

The psychological damage arising from routine rudeness and incivility was not minor. Though some individuals worked through poor relationships with faculty, like a frequently retold story of Sue ultimately making friends with a faculty member that had been rude to her, others had to develop strategies to shield themselves from the negative effects of incivility. Stan spoke angrily about "the second floor [where the deans are], I don't want to go up there. They're mean, they're mean, they're inconsiderate, they have their own little clique. And if you're not in the club, it's us and them and you're one of them." Stan felt particularly beleaguered by his interactions with faculty and was seriously considering leaving the university. Others who similarly felt psychologically unable to handle faculty rudeness took advantage of the centralization and rationalization of IT to move into positions that did not involve user support, like licensing or management.

Ultimately, incivility and rudeness were not harmless instances of personality differences, though some ITS workers attempted to rationalize them as such, but modes of interaction with real consequences for the reproduction of the organizational status array of the university. Like dominant groups everywhere, faculty were less likely to suppress negative affect while

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interacting with subordinates and more likely to engage in incivilities. When these behaviors

went unchallenged, they became performances of status that reproduced the dominance of

faculty over staff.

<p style="text-align:center">*Face Saving*</p>

As discussed in Chapter 3, status threat refers to situations in which individuals are at risk

for being categorized as lower status than they consider themselves (Kellogg 2012, Williams

1989). For faculty who based their identities on their academic knowledge, being thrust into a

situation where their ignorance on a topic was highlighted could be experienced as a status

threat. Accustomed to being experts in other aspects of their lives, they seemed flummoxed

when that identity was suspended in interaction. For some, this was manifested in several

strategies for face saving, including incivility.

Sometimes ITS workers experienced simple condescension from faculty who intimated

that they did not entirely believe the ITS workers were competent at their jobs until they had

proven themselves in some obvious way. Numerous ITS workers mentioned faculty whose tone

and body language suggested that they did not trust the ITS worker to complete a repair properly,

despite having been hired precisely for those skills. Burton in the P-School referenced *Monty

Python's Holy Grail* to explain this incivility, comparing:

> Some professors who consider themselves very tech savvy to the guardian of the bridge
> that asks riddles. He describes their mindset thusly, "If you answer the right questions, I
> might trust you to work on my computer." Burton described it as them basically saying,
> "I don't think you're smart as I am."   Fixing a computer, though, only meant temporary
> approval: "For the good part of a week, [the person you fix it for] will see me and
> remember, I'm okay."

More subtly, faculty were much less likely to engage in the rhetoric of technological

incompetence that low status staff sometimes engaged in to apologize for having to ask ITS

workers for their help. Faculty were more likely to locate the origins of their technical problems outside themselves. For example, one professor seemed to slide into defensiveness when trying to explain the unintentional installation of the piece of malware, but turned the blame on the originating company, describing it as an instance of how internet firms "get you." Rather than the apologizing for needing to have a virus or malware removed, which was common among staff, he assumed that the Help Desk would provide the required assistance. ITS workers did not expect users to perform technological incompetence as a means of engaging in lateral deference, nor did they regard users as uncivil if they did not. Nonetheless, the general absence of such interactional strategies served to (re)produce faculty's high status.

Faculty's attempts at face saving were evident in their unique habit of telling ITS workers what they believed was wrong with their computer and what should be done to repair it. Though these users might have not intended to be uncivil, the ITS workers interpreted these interactions as expressions of faculty's distrust of their expertise. This negative reaction was multiplied when the advice given was actually wrong and the user refused to acknowledge their error. For example, Isaac fiercely critiqued a particular faculty member for his unsolicited advice about how his computer should be repaired. Isaac said the doctor would never take advice on how to set a broken bone, so for the doctor to be giving him incorrect advice about how to repair was an unambiguous expression of disregard for Isaac's skill. More importantly, such advice was indicative of how faculty identity was treated as a diffuse status characteristic, whereby expertise in a particular academic field was assumed to denote expertise in unrelated fields.

ITS workers were highly critical of users who overestimated their facility with computers, as such individuals were more likely to cause problems that required intervention by the ITS workers. Andre joked that "a little knowledge can be a bad thing," because

overconfident users were often able to get themselves in serious trouble on their own but required the Help Desk's assistance to get out of trouble. Like the kind of problems usually caused by hubris, overestimation of technical skill had far-reaching effects. Harry once replied to a question about what was wrong with a computer he was working on with the laconic remark, "A virus. This is what you get for giving people administrator rights to their machines." Administrator rights, or the ability to make changes to or install programs on a machine, were typically withheld from users in an attempt to forestall acquiring viruses and illegal software, both of which caused problems that could take hours for the ITS workers to rectify. Some high status users, however, petitioned for and were granted administrator rights under the logic that they could not waste time waiting for ITS workers. In a self-fulfilling move, the ITS workers experienced frustration as they had to fix problems that would not have arisen had no one bent the rules about administrator rights.

Less subtle examples of faculty's overestimations of their technical skill abounded. I watched Jim get in a spat with a professor about the installation of a TV in a waiting room. The professor had walked into the Help Desk and began talking immediately and loudly: "I came in two months ago about a Smart TV. I came here a month ago and wasn't done. I came in last night and it wasn't done." Jim recognizes the man by sight and after clicking through a few screens of the ticket queue, he asks whether or not the professor had gotten the emails the system indicated had been sent. The professor says no, and when Jim begins to describe the emails, which have "computer" rather than "TV" in their subject line, the professor spits back, "It's not a computer it's a television." Jim takes a deep breath and then tries to explain that being a Smart TV, it's actually a computer, which somewhat placates the professor, though not fully. Rather than acknowledging that the new generation of TVs, like the one the professor himself had

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selected from the catalog, were more accurately categorized as computers than televisions, the professor held firm to his traditional definitions and thus his justification for having ignored the Help Desk's emails.

Such interactions were not uncommon with high status individuals. For example, Harry and the Alumni Magazine editor spent twenty minutes going around in circles about the editor's away message for his email. The editor was emphatic that it was not working because he was not receiving the notifications in his own email and ignored Harry trying to explain that the email system was setup to prevent receipt of one's own away message. Having your email automatically reply to your own emails with an away message would create a logic loop that would crash the email system. The editor dismissed and talked over Harry's explanation, leaving Harry unable to do anything but silently use his smart phone to test the away message with his own email account. Even then, the editor seemed to give little credence, barely glancing at Harry's evidence and giving an unelaborated "you're done" to signal he was ready for the service call to end. Similarly, during a visit to Dr. Otto, an Emeritus (discussed extensively in Chapter 7), even I knew Isaac was right about the slow death of the professor's computer from a corrupt hard drive, knowing from experience the distinctive thwack of metal against metal that heralds lost data. The Emeritus, however, would not believe Isaac and insisted it was an issue with an application, even when Isaac demonstrated that the application was not at fault. The service call only ended after an hour because Isaac and Dr. Otto ran out of time. In both instances, the ITS workers expressed a sense of defeat as we left these service calls, not simply because they had not been able to fix the technical problem. Faculty's face saving efforts had prevented the Help Desk employee from achieving their pedagogical aims in both cases, because faculty would not accept their own ability to be wrong.

Status threat and diffuse status characteristics were also behind the frequency with which upper-level administrators made decisions about technology without any input from the workers who would be in charge of it. This was not a problem at the H-School, as Sabrina, the CIO, was adamant about collaboration between IT and the faculty. Elsewhere, though, ITS workers were left to pick up the pieces when technology imposed from above proved to be defective. At the P-School, faulty technology in recently refurbished classrooms symbolized the administration's disregard for them, as the ITS workers had not been consulted during the planning and purchasing. The designers had thought an "emergency" button system that sent an SOS from a classroom to the Help Desk would be an efficient way for professors to get IT support mid-class. The flaw, though, as several of the Help Desk employees explained, was that the system functioned by sending an email to Help Desk employees via the P-School's ticket queue system. Users could not be certain of receiving a response immediately, as it required someone to notice a new email had arrived. More efficient was for the user to call the Help Desk, rendering the SOS button useless. The end result was that the SOS buttons were not disabled out of deference to their designers but small signs were added with the contact information for the Help Desk and a suggestion to call if help was not immediately forthcoming. The need to assuage instructors frustrated by the lack of responsiveness of the SOS button system was a lingering reminder of the administrators' disrespect .

At the P-School, the status concerns of the students led to interactional dynamics similar to those between the faculty and ITS workers in other units, and grumbling was directed toward students and faculty. To quote my field notes from my second day: "Amusingly, I haven't met one person yet here that hasn't mentioned how demanding people are around here—totally spontaneously too" (FN0723). I attended a meeting where the P-School ITS workers discussed a

student survey that included several negative comments about how the P-School Help Desk never fixed anything. When the CIO mentioned these comments, he was quickly met with rejoinders that students never stuck around long enough to actually have their computers fixed. The students expected immediate and rapid service and regarded the ITS workers as failures if their solution took more than a few minutes or required a return to the Help Desk. Similarly, Burton told of a student who was having printing issues but rejected the Help Desk's instruction to change his password. The student showed up once a week or so to complain he was having problems, but he would not follow the P-School Help Desk's troubleshooting advice, adamant that he should not have to change his password.   This logic is more akin to a customer-service orientation and prevailed among the students at the professional school. The IT manager there mentioned that graduate students were quick to remind the IT department how much their tuition was when complaining about the IT support they were receiving. An ITS worker in Housing mentioned a similar customer-services mentality among the parents of housing students. In these instances, a sense of entitlement based on being *paying* customers had effects similar to professors' attempts to stave off status threat. Both groups sought to impose their definition of the situation on the Help Desk employees, though parents and students drew on discourses of "customer is king" to elicit deference from the ITS worker while faculty relied on organizational status to ground their claims.

A related interactional phenomenon involved reactions to status threat in which high status individuals did not claim greater facility with computers than they possessed but instead highlighted their other academic skills and accomplishments to distract from a lack of technical expertise. Dr. Elsa, a Full Professor from Europe, combined her request for help setting up Skype with extensive chatter about how she and some colleagues would be calling France for a

research meeting and how she hoped she would remember her French. Similarly, Dr. Fuego's

visit to have his email linked to his smart phone resulted in a full page of single spaced text as he

prattled on about his experiences in the Southeast Asia for more than thirty minutes. No staff

users engaged in such behaviors, likely because they had no need to compensate for a sense of

loss of status brought about by having to acknowledge that the ITS knew more about computers

than they did.

Ultimately, these interactions reproduced the faculty/staff binary. Even if faculty did not

actually prove themselves to be knowledgeable about technology, the distinctiveness of their

face-saving approach vis-à-vis staff reinforced the faculty/staff frame that created different

expectations for each group of employees. Like their experiences with incivility and rudeness

discussed above, ITS workers expected faculty to behave poorly, setting for them a much lower

threshold for acceptable behavior relative to staff.

Entitlement

An individual performs a sense of entitlement when they act "as though they ha[ve] a

right to pursue their individual preferences and to actively manage interactions in institutional

settings," which was "to shift interactions to suit their preferences" (italics in original, Lareau

2003, 6). This manifests itself in multiple ways, though the final product is always their

interactant's validation or rejection of their assertions of high status. Like organizational status,

a sense of entitlement is always abstract and potential until the moment of interaction, until an

interactant agrees to cede the definition of the situation to the individual attempting to control the

interaction. Sherman (2007) shows how upper class hotel guests purchased the right to have

rules bent when they paid for luxury accommodations. Having to abide by the stated rules of an

organization was considered an affront to their sense of uniqueness and individual worth. While

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Chapter 5 focuses on entitlement in relation to queuing and waiting, here I discuss other ways entitlement was performed by faculty and how these interactions served to reproduce the faculty/staff binary as a status hierarchy.

Among the faculty at the H-School, entitlement took the form of believing that the policies of the university and established protocols of the H-School Help Desk could be bent to suit their needs. Very few people tried to explicitly circumvent HIPPA (Health Information Portability and Privacy Act, see Chapter 2), as they knew the possible legal ramifications. More common were challenges to general university rules and rules the user did not realize were governed by HIPPA. For example, one foreign visiting scholar made multiple requests for a wired network connection in his lab for his personal laptop. I watched both Isaac and Harry explain why the scholar needed to use the wireless, though neither seemed to convince him. More common were issues related to free choice and free receipt of tools for their work. Within the university, entitlement as regards technology has its history in the autonomy of professionals to choose their own tools. Related professional discourses that workplaces provide all necessary tools also gave rise to attempted enactments of entitlement.

Entitlement is an enactment of diffuse status because it involves the individual asserting that they know best. This is no more a peer interaction than situations of "constraint" in which one party defers to the authority figure's definition of the situation. The fundamental problem with users seeking exemptions was that they did not always recognize the possible impact of those requests on the ITS worker. Like the surveyed customers who mostly defined "good service" as the bus driver breaking protocol by allowing them to ride for free or make unscheduled stops, users were happiest when ITS workers allowed exemptions. This was dramatized in an interaction between Harry and a university delivery driver, who had watched a

faculty member become annoyed at the Help Desk's refusal to install Word on her laptop with

the university's global license. As the doctor stomped off, saying "You should provide me with

what I need to work," the delivery driver shook his head and empathized with Harry. He said,

"They just don't get how much trouble you guys could get into with Microsoft." In this

situation, the doctor did not engage fully with the ITS worker to understand why she was being

refused the program. Instead, she transferred her irritation at being denied a service because of

university rules to Harry, who had to communicate the rules and enforce them or risk his job.

Though she was not able to actually enact her sense of entitlement, like Dr. Sven above, she was

still able to communicate clearly the tie between high status and attempts to shape institutional

interactions in their favor.

Software and display adaptors for Macintosh Laptops (called "dongles" by everyone at

the university) were both sites of tension. Licensing issues and budget limits meant faculty and

students were required to purchase these things with the same funds that purchased the machines,

albeit at a discount from the computer center on campus. The H-School Help Desk's refusal to

provide dongles for free resulted from ITS workers categorizing them as peripherals no different

from printers, which were also purchased with department money and not provided by ITS.   ITS

workers spoke derisively on multiple occasions of faculty and administrators that seemed to be

offended by being asked to spend thirty to fifty dollars from their own departmental budgets,

those from well-off departments attracting the most opprobrium. Staff, including the ITS

workers themselves, were expected to pay for their personal technology, like smart phones and

laptops, even when used for work purposes, and I encountered no staff protestation of this policy

during my observation or interviews. Relatedly, ITS workers complained of faculty that refused

to upgrade machinery despite the extra attention it required. More than once an ITS worker said,

sotto voce as if they were talking to the professor, "Just buy one." Of course, they did not say this so baldly to faculty.

Entitlement was also regarded as a problem in other departments. When I asked Sam about having to refuse requests, he said "Oh, people don't handle no very well, especially in this day and age. They just don't." He laughs and mimics a user not taking no for an answer: "Why not? Explain to me why I can't do this!" Implicit in such demands for explanation is the user's disbelief that the ITS worker is making claims grounded in their expertise. Nathalie spoke perceptively about the disregard for ITS workers' expertise implicit in some faculty's acts of entitlement in regard to equipment purchasing:

> On occasion, people are ridiculous. Like, someone gives you an impossible task, wants it done immediately and wants it done with no money being spent. Why would ... <stammering> That boggles my mind, to watch a person spend ridiculous amounts of money doing silly things and then the thing that's important, they're not going to give you any money for it, but make it work right away. Or faculty members who come and say "Um, I want this done to my computer." Well, okay it's going to cost this much. "No, I don't want spend that." Okay ... there's not a lot of choices. "Well, you know all these other things are available now, I went looking, I found it cheaper." … So it comes down to setting expectations and with the faculty, when they ask you to do something that's a little ridiculous and then they say "No, I don't want to do that." That's like going to your doctor and the doctor saying "You have, um, cardiac disease and we need to do that." "No, I don't want to do that. What else can I do?" "Okay, well there's some alternatives and none of them are all that great, but you obviously know more because you looked it up on Wikipedia or did a search on Newegg and found new prices."

Incivility arose not in faculty's honest attempts to find useful and cost-effective technologies, but when they would not engage in a dialogue with the ITS workers to verify their knowledge against the ITS workers' expertise. By not being willing to open themselves to criticism or advice from ITS workers, faculty reproduced the faculty/staff binary as diffuse status differences in which the opinions of high status individuals are granted greater weight than low status individuals, regardless of their organizationally-defined spheres of competence.

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Finally, faculty members were criticized for expecting the H-School Help Desk to provide them with technology without regard to cost and then become irritated if refused. The classrooms were a particular source of consternation as faculty sometimes wanted things that could not be provided. Two examples are telling. In the first, an instructor from outside the school, who was using the school's classrooms because of a university wide effort to rationalize the use of space, had raised a ruckus because there was not a single old-school overhead projector in the whole building, let alone the room she was assigned. The Help Desk, including Alice, considered this request fairly laughable as they had actually just gotten rid of the last overhead projector the prior year as part of a classroom upgrade project. They described the professor as stating over and over, "You should provide what I need," which they interpreted as attachment to archaic technology and a disregard for the limited resources of the IT Help Desk. Eventually a *détente* was reached, as ITS workers were able to train the professor to use the doc cam that was in the room, though Ian reported wearily one morning that they were receiving calls from the user again because she had been placed in a different room, which did not have a doc cam. Sue chimed in that the university unit that handled classroom scheduling was not being helpful as they suggested that the Help Desk should just buy the piece of equipment the professor wanted, offloading the problem onto them. This was irritating because it showed high-level administrators' disregard for an established long-range plan for rehabbing the classrooms. The problem was delegated to Ian and the topic was closed for discussion after a few wistful remarks about the hope that Central IT would take over total responsibility for the rooms rather than leaving them for the unit. In the second example, Sue mentioned to the group during a meeting that multiple professors had been complaining about the colors produced by a certain projector and advising the Help Desk to secure a different one. This was not taken seriously, as all knew

the funds were not available in the Help Desk budget and that suggestions that the faculty take

the funds from their own operating budgets would be met with derision. Instead, the matters

were dropped, the Help Desk employees hopeful that rationalization would make these faculty

requests the responsibility of a unit with enough money to fulfill them.

Ultimately, when faculty wanted particular technologies and refused to treat the opinions

of ITS workers as those of IT experts, they were enacting their sense of entitlement derived from

organizational status. I am not suggesting that users, faculty or other, must defer

unquestioningly to the opinions of IT workers. Instead, the goal should be lateral deference in

which the professional expertise of ITS workers is respected and the interactants work together

to come to a solution. Similarly, expectations that professional employers will provide all tools

for a job are unexamined high-status norms. Employees in the building trades buy their own

equipment; ITS workers used their own smart phones for university work. Though faculty are

unlikely to see their requests as (re)producing material inequalities, the effect is to retrench the

resource inequalities that make status inequalities possible (Ridgeway 2011).

Status as Process

The efforts of faculty to (re)produce their high status were meaningless without the

interactional involvement of the Help Desk employees, which psychologists refer to as status

conferral (Rivera 2010, Tiedens 2001). Though ITS workers were sometimes hurt by faculty

rudeness, they tended to rationalize it in a way that reproduced faculty's high status by

naturalizing their right to misbehavior. Kate was explicit about this, saying "Faculty actually has

a tendency to be more disrespectful than staff. I don't know, they're in a different world. I think

a lot of times, they do different things, have different deadlines. You know, so it's a little

different." Note the creation of diffuse status as specific qualities of academia, subject matter

(i.e., "do different things") and temporality (i.e., "different deadlines"), are transmuted into a more general construction of faculty and staff as unequal groups. Something similar was at work in Jamal's response to my question about "problematic faculty or staff":

> I think everyone has bad days. We've had faculty throw equipment <laughs>, but it's not like there's one or two that are always doing it. It's usually when grants and things are due, when there are high stress levels and people need to get something done and usually they need to submit something that day and something's not working. So they're frustrated and some days people can send a ticket in and we can respond to them and -- and again, it's the sensitivity of what the issue is and priority. Some things can take longer and if it's during one of those periods where a grant is due, they may send another ticket in 5 minutes later -- what's going on, I haven't heard back from you.

This creation of diffuse status differences reinforces the existing organizational power and resource imbalances to (re)produce faculty's dominant organizational status.

Although ITS workers occasionally reacted negatively to faculty incivilities, this was not typical and actually a bit dangerous. One woman ITS worker that I interviewed related a story about getting yelled at while repairing a woman professor's computer. Trying to maintain her calm and complete the task at hand, she had asked the professor to leave. What was to the ITS worker a polite attempt to get the user to stop being rude long enough to fix her computer was perceived by the professor and her manager as an act of insubordination. She was told that she should have either endured the abuse without responding or should have been the one to leave. The right of the ITS worker to be treated respectfully was never brought up for discussion, naturalizing the subordination of support workers to professionals.

In general, ITS workers engaged in deference when interacting with faculty, saving their criticism for their understanding colleagues. This ultimately (re)produced the high organizational status of faculty by constructing them as a group of problematic users from whom civil behavior could not be expected. Sometimes this was explicit, as above when Lola was

instructed during training to not expect prompt responses from faculty. Similarly, Isaac's

reaction to a call from Dean's Secretary to figure out for the Dean why he had lost network

access over the weekend demonstrates how status is (re)produced. Though a user ignoring their

email usually brought about grumbling by the staff, Isaac's reaction highlighted status process:

> When he's done, he turns to me and explains that that was the dean's assistant and that
> the dean had been trying to do things from home over the weekend but couldn't. Isaac is
> pretty amused, saying "There was an email went out last week that system would be
> down." Though he is a tad irritated that people seem not to have read the email, he grants
> that the dean "probably got hundreds of emails so he doesn't remember." Thomas
> suggests that he likely didn't consider an email from the IT department important and
> ignored it, though it actually was quite important. Isaac continues mumbling a bit about
> their emails being not read but not in a particularly vitriolic or angry way. (FN0408).

At other times, such remarks were more offhand, like when professors treated as a collective

noun: "The number of doctors that can't push a power button is astounding" (FN0408). Once

Isaac asked Harry about a service call to Dr. Ting; Harry's sole response was "Standard fashion

– don't read emails and freak out" (FN0404). Rather than deal in the particulars, Harry just

flagged the service call as one of many such instances they have come to expect. Harry's

critique, however, was not actually conveyed to the professor, instead being said as an aside to

Jim with no effect on faculty behavior. In contrast to faculty, the staff was rarely talked about as

a homogenous collective, the ITS workers usually being more specific in their criticism of staff.

The P-School Help Desk employees also provided moral support to each other in an

effort to assuage the rudeness of faculty. However, their commiseration was far more vitriolic

than at the H-School and served to unite the ITS workers more strongly together against their

users rather than to excuse problematic, status-based behavior. My first day at the P-School

Help Desk included one of the ITS workers, who had been at the P-School for ten of the thirty

years he had worked in ITS, giving me a short mimeographed screed describing ITS as "among

the worst imaginable in terms of stress." Chris and Geordie at the P-School likened themselves to daycare workers having to endure the tantrums of two year-olds. Having become accustomed to the way the H-School expressed care, concern, and sympathy for their users, the P-School blew me away with their anger and willingness to feed each other's anger. I quote my field notes at length:

> This prompts some general grumbling from among the Help Desk employees about the users, particularly, "They don't read email." At one point Craig makes a snarky remark about people who are so incapable of setting up their own devices that they don't deserve to have a phone; the CIO picks up on this joke and carries it further, mimicking telling a user he was throwing their phone away, validating the complaint in the process. No one steps in to excuse the users. (FN0801)

While such grumbling at the H-School prompted the Help Desk employees to remind each other that users were just frustrated at their computers and being rude was collateral damage, not something to be taken personally, no such attempts to temper each other's critiques were made at the P-School. Instead, the ire of the P-School ITS workers strengthened and the faculty/staff binary was refigured as faculty-versus-staff.

In the end, faculty sometimes (re)produced their dominant status by tacitly answering Zabusky's question "servant or professional" (discussed in Chapter 3) with servant. As many have noted about service workers and secretaries, evaluation by customers and bosses is as much about responsiveness and demeanor as objective skills (Moss and Tilly 2001, Kanter 1977). ITS workers are subject to a similar metric in terms of how their work was evaluated. Resolving a user's problem was only the baseline for a good service interaction; the user's affect had to be positive upon the ITS worker's departure for the service call to have been a success. On the issue of servility, Barley (1996) says: "Most computer users implied that computer technicians should be handy helpers who appeared on a moment's notice, resolved problems without delay, and

disappeared as quickly as they came" (430). The users Barley encountered described the ideal

technicians as "well-behaved, responsive and complacent" (1996, 430). Isaac made a similar

comment about faculty's display of irritation related to problems with the implementation of

electronic patient records:

> They don't want to talk to you because they're like, "Okay, you made us have [electronic patient records] in the first place, so now you fix it." Because the way they view technology and us ... Some of them expect for us to be super, just show up and fix it in a certain amount of time. And if that doesn't happen, they're like, "Why are you here?" And that's because they don't really understand how [problem solving] works. … They expect you to fix it. They don't want to talk to you; they just want you to fix it.

Isaac's description coheres with archetypal understandings of good servants as unobtrusive,

quiet, and quick to appear and disappear in accord with the preferences of the employer (Romero

1992, Rollins 1985). For users seeking help in ways that do not challenge their understanding of

themselves as high status, treating ITS workers as "servants," or low status service workers,

instead of peer professionals provides an easy enough way to stave off status threat.

Conclusion

Though ITS workers were highly critical of faculty's foibles, like face saving and

attempted enactments of entitlement, they were far more likely to develop justifications for

faculty's poor behavior than actually call out particular users for incivility or rudeness

(Hochschild 1983). Though ITS workers did not understand some of the peculiarities of

academic work, like that students cannot be expected to stay past the end of class, the pressures

of "publish-or-perish," and the dislocation of professors' work from any physical workspace, ITS

did have a sense of the uniqueness of the academic's expectations and pressures relative to those

staff. Much effort was expended by ITS workers they tried to legitimate the bad habits of users,

faculty and staff alike, including not reading important emails about service changes or not being

able to properly restart their computer. Like many of my interviewees, they would sympathize with (rather than mock or become irritated with) inept users, acknowledging that their own computer knowledge was learned rather than innate.

The importance of status for effective help seeking is symbolized in the niceness premium that faculty but not staff could use to their benefit. Faculty liked by Help Desk employees were often excused for poor behavior, often with apologist explanations of the faculty's bad behavior. The example of Dr. Catalana, beloved by the staff for being happy and appreciative, is instructive. My introduction to Dr. Catalana came when she called the Help Desk about problems accessing the server. I had been observing the H-School Help Desk for nearly two months at that point and was still learning who some of the frequent visitors were. When Jim ended the call, I asked who had called, fingers poised to put her information in my field notes. He gives me her name and department and then,

> Describes her as very, very nice. I tell him I wouldn't have guessed she was faculty from the tenor of the conversation. He says she's one of the nicest and most polite people in the school. Laughing, he says she's what he calls "sunshine people" that just are so happy and smiley that they light up whatever room they are in. He says it can actually be "unnerving" that she is so consistently cheerful and understanding.   He said she can come in with a problem and not be angry at all. Pretending to speak to her, he says, "You're having a terrible day, your stuff's not working. You have a right to be angry. Get angry." (FN0423)

By contrast Harry's similar remark about a staff member did not include the suggestion that she should get angry. Walking to a service call, Harry described the user, a mid-ranked woman staffer, as someone who, should you have the bad luck of breaking her computer in front of her, would not get angry or curse as others had been known to do. He stops short, however, of extending to her the right of negative emotional expression, (re)producing the role of organizational status in structuring interaction and emotion. Whereas Dr. Catalana benefitted

from an interactional style superior to the average faculty, the woman staffer simply avoided a negative appraisal.

The niceness premium paid off when Dr. Catalana wanted monitors from a non-preferred vendor. Despite saying explicitly that she would happily take monitors from the preferred vendor, Isaac and Harry told her to not worry and they would get her exactly what she wanted. Kerry knew about and did not challenge their decision to source her monitors through what amounted to a loophole. Similarly, when the CIO addressed the P-School Help Desk about changes to the service provided to Blackberry phones, Nathanial piped up that a particularly well liked professor had two such devices and would likely be unhappy were he told he could not use them for his university email. Everyone, even the grumpiest among them, concurred that he should not be asked to give them up. The next five minutes were spent brainstorming how to contact the professor and keep his devices in working order. In contrast, less-liked faculty had the rules enforced upon them and did not have loopholes proactively found for them. Though faculty were unlikely to be rebuked in the moment for rudeness and incivility, the ITS workers could and did enact tacit resistance by avoiding engaging in creative problem solving to the benefit of the faculty.

In the final instance, though, niceness was no substitute for status. For staff, being nice reaped polite and respectful treatment from the Help Desk employees but little else. No extra privileges were extended. Material benefits were minor, like a new computer keyboard for an administrative assistant provided with no questions asked or formal request submitted as it was pulled from a stack of fifteen spares just like it. For faculty, being nice was worthwhile for all but those at the very top. Having high enough status (e.g., Assistant Dean) meant one could have rules bent and pursue loopholes without needing to be regarded as "nice" by the ITS workers.

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All that was required was a willingness to complain to the IT Manager and/or CIO and enough organizational power to have one of them defer to their definition of the situation.

Instances in which faculty sought exemptions from ITS protocol replicate managerialism's assumption that individuals with high organizational status know better and have a right to govern the work of those of lower status. This suggests faculty rejects managerialism only when applied to the professoriate. The relationship between faculty and staff has historically been an asymmetrical one. Once upon a time, before the personal computer provided word processing technologies that mainframes had not, faculty relied on corps of department secretaries as well as women students and relatives to type their papers. Though few histories exist of these women workers, disappeared as support workers usually are, one may surmise that few were treated as peers. Similarly, Human Resources, Facilities, and other support departments have been organized under the sort of managerialist methods that faculty today critique.

Ultimately, help-seeking involves far more than deciding to ask for help. They are interactions in which users perform organizational status through how they ask for assistance, which may or may not be validated by the ITS workers. When faculty engage in rude or uncivil behavior and ITS workers do not challenge them, the dominance of faculty is (re)produced. The same goes for when staff apologize for "bothering" the Help Desk workers when requesting help to which they are entitled. In nearly every instance I observed, the technical efforts of ITS workers were accompanied by interaction rituals that reproduced the faculty/staff binary as diffuse status.

Chapter 5: "Unreasonably Impatient": Waiting, Queuing, and the (Re)production of Organizational Status

Jim tells her he'll put a ticket in and call her when her problem's fixed. She replies: "When do you think that is going to happen? I need system access now *for students. I already needed it."* (FN 0402D)

<p style="text-align:center">*******</p>

Around noon on a Thursday before a long weekend, Lola was stationed at the H-School Help Desk when an obviously frazzled post doc came to ask for help with a dead power supply. Already reported via the ticketing system, the post doc pled with Lola to have someone work on her machine right away instead of Monday as the email from the Help Desk had indicated. Lola was sympathetic but simply could not send anyone. She calmly explained to the post doc, "Well, Isaac is at lunch, Harry is tied up, and Sue at lunch, and that is all the staff, so no one can really help you at this moment." Lola herself was unable to leave the desk since she was in charge of answering the phone and fielding walk-ins. The post doc reacted quite negatively to this and spent the next twenty minutes trying to badger Lola into sending someone to look at her machine right away. (This interaction and its outcome discussed in much more detail in Chapter 6.) A bit more abrasive than many of the individuals who came to the H-School Help Desk seeking assistance, the post doc's protestations at being asked to wait were nonetheless quite common.

Some users took being asked to wait in stride, but many others challenged the ITS worker in pursuit of increased priority and a shorter wait. Like the distinct high- and low-status interactions that accompanied help seeking, reactions to waiting served to (re)produce the

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faculty/staff binary as diffuse statuses. While Chapter 4 examined the interactional processes and importance of organizational status for how help is requested, this chapter looks at the next phase of the service interaction. Focusing again on the importance of organizational status for support work interactions, I show the similarities and differences in how faculty and staff members reacted to the bureaucratic requirements of queuing and waiting. Though all users shared a common desire to have their requests acknowledged and dealt with quickly, only high status users engaged in strategies meant to convert their organizational status into entitlement for immediate and personal service. Low status users, in contrast, rarely attempted to manipulate their wait times.

Queues and waiting are the social and organizational processes through which distribution of scarce resources is effected among claimants, or people requesting a given resource. A queue is not simply a supply-side ordering of claimants by a context-specific logic of prioritization, but "a relationship in which those who seek a good or service (the clients) must await those who provide the good or service (the servers)" (Finlay et al 1990, 292). I use the term "triage" to describe the iterative process by which a continual influx of requests for assistance are arrayed into an ordered list, or status array, from highest to lowest priority. This order is iterative and thus fluid, as each new claimant added to the list requires a reconfiguration of the entire array (White 2008). For example, a queue might change from 1) User A, 2) User B, 3) User C to 1) User D, 2) User A, 3) User B, 4) User C if new claimant User D is triaged as greater priority than all the existing claimants. Alternately, a queue might change from 1) User A, 2) User B, 3) User C to 1) User C, 2) User A, 3) User B, if the situation of existing claimant User C changes and the service provider reevaluates them to have a greater priority than all the existing claimants. As I show, for the ITS workers I encountered, organizational status played as

a crucial role as the kind of request made by claimants in how queuing operated in practice, ultimately reproducing the organizational status hierarchy of faculty over staff.

While a queue is a means to organize claimants via triage, waiting is the by-product of a claimant's place in a queue, the length of a claimant's wait a manifestation of the priority assigned by the service providers. Being assigned a place in line other than first necessarily means being asked to wait. Following the conventions of users, a wait is defined in two ways. The first phase of waiting is defined as the lapse between attempting to initiate a request and contact with a specific ITS worker. For example, a walk-in defines a wait as the interval between joining the end of a physical line and speaking with the Help Desk employee on duty; for individuals calling a Help Desk, the wait begins with dialing and ends with speaking to a human. A user submitting a request via an electronic ticket system defines a wait as the interval between inputting the request and being contacted by a particular ITS worker, either via email or phone; receiving an automated reply is not considered an end to the wait. The second phase is the wait between reporting the problem to an individual and its resolution. Waiting and queuing are distinct yet overlapping interactional achievements in which users and ITS workers negotiate over wait times as well as status. Waiting refers to the passage of time experienced by an individual seeking a good or service; queuing refers to the (often unspoken) processes by which people are placed in a sequence for to create order out of multiple claimants. Long queues are experienced as long waits. Crucially, most people do not perceive a benign logic to either. People take waits and queues personally, interpreting them as evaluations of the self rather than part of larger organizational and institutional processes, attributing their wait to the kindness or malice of the service worker, not the needs of the organization to logically prioritize multiple claimants. Among high status individuals, the request to wait is often experienced as a status

threat as discussed in Chapter 3, resulting in interactional strategies meant to ensure conferral of high status.

Faculty users often expressed the belief that they had a right to immediate service, which was evinced by some users' habits of bringing computers late in the day without any forewarning and assuming the ITS workers will be able service them on the spot before quitting time. Expectations of immediate service are acts of entitlement, because the user presumes that the ITS worker will capitulate to their individual belief in having the most important problem in need of attention. As discussed in Chapter 3, a sense of entitlement to immediate help results in interactional efforts to impose that definition of the situation upon the ITS worker. Such attempts can be defined as incivilities because they disrespect the knowledge and expertise of the ITS worker and assume the higher status individual can decide for the ITS worker what the appropriate prioritization of requests should be.

In this chapter, I discuss theories of queuing and waiting and then discuss two reactions to queuing and waiting. One was an emotional reaction, not tied to status. The second was a status-based reaction in which individual sought more advantageous positions in the queue. Ultimately, users' behavior while waiting and queuing coupled with ITS workers' reactions were an interactional arena in which organizational status was (re)produced or challenged.

Queuing and Waiting Theories

In organizations where limited resources (here, computer "help") must be distributed across multiple claimants and some claimants informed that they cannot receive what they are asking for, systems for organizing individuals' receipt of services must be developed (Mann 1969). Called queuing, how this happens varies with the organization: stores may have first-come, first served lines, like grocery stores; some may give tickets to permit not standing in a

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physical line, like bakeries; some may have appointment slots handled by receptionists with computer software, like doctors; lotteries may determine some orders, like getting a good parking space in a university lot; waitlists may govern others, like openings for preschool. In all instances, queuing combines a bureaucratic effort to rationalize the mass of claimants with a situation-specific approach to extending priority in line with organizational goals (Gaspirini 1995). Supply and demand alone cannot explain the distribution of waiting. Status, organizational rank, material resources, social capital, and myriad other factors come together to shape local processes of triage. Barry Schwartz's foundational research shows how status gives individuals a right to immediate service as well as how waiting (re)produces status. He states: "To be kept waiting—especially to be kept waiting an unusually long while—is to be the subject of an assertion that one's own time (and, therefore, one's social worth) is less valuable than the time and worth of the one who imposes the wait" (1974, 856). More succinctly, Schwartz asserts, "Waiting is patterned by the distribution of power in a social system" (1974, 843).

Armando Lara-Millan (2014) provides a fascinating look at the social and organizational logics that organize waiting and queuing. Using the example of triage in public emergency rooms, he shows how inmates under the control of police are admitted much more quickly than objective sickness or time of arrival would suggest. This is not for the benefit of the prisoners, though, but a professional courtesy extended from the nursing staff in charge of triage to the police officers, who the nurses know are required to remain with patients. The inadvertent result is that the general population has less access to health care because of spaces taken by police-accompanied intakes and resulting efforts by nurses and security guards to passive-aggressively get people to relinquish their place in the queue. Ultimately, a triage system meant to distinguish between urgent and non-essential care incorporates status and power differences in ways that

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subvert the original aims (868). The organizational status of public safety officials, like police

and jailers, comes to dominate. The health of the poor not currently in police custody, by

contrast, suffers. Javier Auyero (2012) provides a similar analysis of how power structures poor

people's waiting for social and administrative services in Argentina, arguing that waiting serves

the social control goals of the state.

Melville Dalton's *Men Who Manage* (2013[1959]) has the social operation of queues and

waiting at the center of its narrative as well. Dalton's observation of the way interpersonal

relationships undermined organizational efforts to rationalize machine repair led to his key

insight that a formal organizational chart is in actuality a "chart of expectations" that "do not

quite hold individuals to routine actions and assured compliance" (2013[1959], 18). A service

queue developed by the administrators was subverted by informal alliances that made social

capital, rather than order of request or urgency of repair, the preeminent determinate of the order

service. An attempt to clear hundreds of outstanding requests revealed that "the backlog

belonged almost entirely to the less aggressive and less astute [department] heads," whereas

department heads with strong cordial ties to the machine shop had no unfinished requests

(2013[1959], 34). As Dalton shows, queuing and waiting for service from support workers is an

interactional process whereby organizational status, not simply official rank or power, mattered

greatly to the order in which requests were completed.

Outside particular organizations, sociologists have examined the unspoken rules about

line creation, individuals' ability to array themselves into queues without explicit instruction a

marvel of social organization (Mann 1969, Schwartz 1974). David Gibson's research on "line-

joining rules" uses the example of people lining up for Amtrak trains to show how strangers'

interactions while queuing produce "social order when there are competing demands on some

scarce good" (2008, 208). Gibson emphasizes the visual yet abstract "geometry of a waiting

line" in which newcomers take a place in line geometrically behind the last person such that the

newcomer is not closer to or as close as the last person to the next to last person (2008, 216).

This relative positioning ignores the objective distance between an individual and the goal,

allowing the creation of curved or even zigzag lines. Problems arise in queuing, though, when

claimants are unable to determine the end of the line or asked to position themselves somewhere

other than behind the last person in line (Mann 1969). When confusion arises about where

individuals should position themselves (e.g., lack of clarity about where the end of the line is),

tensions can flare. Waiting was not just about the time elapsed between asking for help and

receiving it, but about the subjective experience of time. Individuals experience "protracted

time," or intervals that seem longer than the objective measure, under specific conditions,

including suffering, intense emotion, or boredom (Flaherty 1999, 43).

As a result, queuing has been extensively researched in marketing and psychology, where

the focus is on how to create queues and waits that are short, bearable, and "fair" (Zhou and

Soman 2003; Rafeli, Barron, and Haber 2002; Nie 2000). Marketing research shows that people

tend to negatively evaluate their wait time when not certain of their place in a single line. For

example, individuals in two lines imagine their wait longer than those in a single line –

regardless of actual wait time (Groth and Giliard 2001). In general, waiting is marked by

anxiety, especially when users cannot be certain they are receiving "fair" or appropriately swift

service (Alexander et al. 2012, Allon and Hanany 2012).   Lara-Millan describes the

unpredictable "8- to 18-hour" wait of individuals seeking admittance to public Emergency

Rooms as "harrowing," not just for the noise and chaos of the waiting room, but for waiting with

little sense of when one will finally be admitted (2014, 871). Redden (2012) provides a similar

analysis of airport security lines, showing how interactional aspects of waiting and queuing impact individual affect. Airports are highly emotional sites, a fact exacerbated by heightened security concerns over the last decade. Travelers must maintain their composure and positive affect while queuing and waiting, particularly in interaction with TSA agents who hold power over the traveler's movements (Redden 2012, 138). Maintaining a placid emotional tenor and smoothly moving queues are thus interactional achievements within asymmetrical power relationships. The expectation that travelers suppress the negative emotions that arise from waiting underscores the general link between queuing, waiting, and hostility identified by sociologists.

As regards emotions and queuing, hostile waiting has been widely documented. Business research documents how customers direct expressions of their anger at their treatment or having to wait toward customer service individuals based on their belief that a frontline worker treated them unfairly (McColl-Kennedy, Sparks, and Nguyen 2011). In particular, research on waiting rooms in hospitals and similar health care situations has shown how patients may take their frustration at waiting out on the receptionist staff (Akerstrom 1997, Strathmann and Hay 2009, Ward and McMurray 2011). Individuals may interpret their wait as personal, the result of a particular receptionist to refuse to let them as an individual see a doctor who would be happy to see them if only the doctor knew the patient was there. Strathmann and Hay (2009) make the excellent point that patients are both right and wrong when they accuse receptionists of "blocking the way" to doctors. Irate patients are incorrect in thinking that receptionists are making deliberate, personal digs at them in refusing to let them see a doctor who would see them if they only knew the patient was there. They are right in a more abstract sense; receptionists are a key mechanism in "regulating patient access to physicians … keep[ing] patient flow orderly"

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(223). In such instances, the individual confuses the infrastructural support role of receptionists to create an orderly flow of patients for the doctor with actual power to grant access to the doctor or not. Hostile waiting was not frequent, though I did observe it (see Chapter 7 for more details). My focus in this chapter is on more common strategies meant to obviate the need for waiting.

Having discussed the existing literatures on queuing and waiting, I turn now to the experiences of ITS workers and their users. I discuss the unique aspects of waiting and queuing at the H-School and for university ITS services generally.

Waiting at the H-School

"When the Dean calls, ten minutes later you're up in his office, right?" – Wallace

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During our first meeting, Alice gives off a nervous laugh as she explains the Help Desk's system of assigning priority to users' requests for IT Support: "Unlike other departments around the university where faculty are prioritized, we give priority to classrooms and clinics—we can't let patients and instructors wait." She leaves unsaid what will later become obvious: This can cause problems because graduate students and other non-faculty may receive help before professors, making faculty wait and thus violating common organizational norms that give high status workers a greater right to the time and effort of support staff than lower status workers (Sherman 2007). Waiting is ubiquitous in bureaucratic institutions and saturated with meaning, especially about status (Schwartz 1974, Nie 2000).

An IT manager at the university for more than twenty years, Alice knew other ITS Departments categorically gave highest priority to faculty. In contrast, she strove to create a more democratic ethos at the H-School Help Desk that combined a "first come, first served" model with a customer-oriented priority system that valued above all not wasting patient or

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student (i.e., instructional) time. The organizational status of individuals seeking assistance, which I refer to as claimants, was downplayed, though not removed from consideration. Waiting and queuing were necessitated by limited resources that meant that at most five Help Desk employees were available to support more than 800 users. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Help Desk had an electronic ticket system that organized users' requests. All user requests were routed through the ticket, though people's willingness to use the ticket system and how they did so were influenced by status.

At the H-School and across the university, IT support unit managers assigned the highest priority to time-sensitive issues, defined (depending on the function of the department) as classrooms, clinics involving patients receiving services, and individuals trying to submit applications (e.g., grants) before a strict deadline. Douglas, an ITS worker in a sciences department, remarked:

> Students are supposed to come first but -- and they usually do with our department because if there was a class going on and there's a choice between the director and the students, we would help the students first because they're our main customer. I mean, without them, the university really can't function. So they're our top priority.

In most cases, ITS workers were dispatched to service classroom or clinic problems before a ticket was prepared, waiting until the service call was complete to engage in the time consuming activity of entering the request into the ticket system. There was consensus that calls for help with classroom technology should be dealt with as quickly as possible, a five minute response time being the maximum considered reasonable by most ITS workers I encountered. Many criticisms of the Central IT unit and dissolution of decentralized services focused on the impossibility of workers travelling across campus quickly enough to meet the expectations of both ITS workers and users to swift resolution of problems with classroom technology.

At the university, including the H-School, ticket queues (discussed extensively in Chapter 2) have replaced an informal mode of placing service requests I refer to as "ad hoc." Ad hoc requests take two major forms. First, interactions where a user encounters an ITS worker outside a Help Desk context and spontaneously makes a request for assistance. Requests from walk-ins at an established Help Desk would not count as ad hoc, though requests to ITS workers in person when there is no formal mechanism for taking walk-ins would. Second, "queue circumvention" where a user contacts a particular ITS worker to place their request for service rather than using the official queue. Ad hoc methods of request are problematic, particularly because the individual's desire to be acknowledged as needing help can ironically leave them unhelped (see Chapter 5 for an extended discussion of this problem). ITS workers often agreed to provide a particular service when face-to-face with the user but asked that they still submit their request via the ticketing system despite their conversation. The ITS workers utilized the queue to keep from forgetting promises they made to users.

When ITS workers moved through the hallways on service calls, it was not unusual to be stopped two or three times by users. Sometimes users just said hello, but often there was some "small" issue needing attention to. Users misinterpret ITS workers walking through the halls as someone without something to do and thus available to serve them. These sudden requests disrupt a Help Desk unit's attempt to coordinate multiple workers. Sue spoke negatively of Wallace's habit of disappearing for two or three hours, because his willingness to fulfill ad hoc requests could turn a service request requiring only thirty minutes into the completion of four different requests. When ITS workers attempt to function as a team, such behavior is akin to going rogue. Rather than subject all requests to triage, some requests get to jump to the front of the queue simply as a consequence of chance encounters. The end result is a variation on

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"cherry picking" whereby requests are done out of order. "Easy" service calls get completed by virtue of their being easy, not as a result of being subjected to triage. Though of benefit to the individual user, the result is disruption of the ITS workers' overall efforts to organize their work.

The overarching problem with queuing for IT support was that users had very little sense of their position in the queue. Unlike the lines often studied by researchers, the queue for assistance from ITS workers was invisible to the user. Lines may be physical, like a gas station, but they may also be intangible, like the voice that tells you that you are fifth in line when trying to reach a customer service operator. Following Mann (1969), Gibson (2008), and Lara-Millan (2014), I argue that an important difference among queues is not their form but the waiter's ability to know where in line they are. Although Help Desk lines were sometimes "real," like when multiple walk-ins requested help and a physical queue was established to assist them on a first-come, first-served basis, even that line did not truly represent the queue of users. Walk-ins were only one of many ways help was requested; phone calls, emails, direct entry into the ticket queue, and ad hoc requests were all acceptable methods for placing a service request. As a result, the queue was obscured from the users and their place in it fraught with uncertainty, which could compound their existing frustration with their computers and extend it to the ITS as well, a phenomenon that recalls how patients in waiting rooms interpret their waits as hostility from the receptionists rather than the effect of bureaucratic structures (Strathmann and Hay 2009).

Users did not see their desire for speedy assistance as possibly (re)producing to status or even uncivil, but as the simple desire to have one's problems resolved immediately. This desire was at cross purposes with the ITS workers' need to triage requests according to organizational priorities, logically structure their work, and coordinate multiple workers. While the requirement

to wait exacerbated users' frustration with their machines without regard to status, how users

reacted to being asked to wait re)produced the organizational status structure of the university.

Emotions and Queuing: A Status Irrelevant Process

"And she was yelling and she was, like, almost crying, because I had to explain [why I had to refer her to another ITS unit] and I was like, just calm down." - Nina

Waiting and queuing are generate intense emotions. As discussed above, waiting for

service can catalyze feelings of hostility, nervousness, enervation, and despair, all of which are

amplified if claimants are unsure about their place in line. As a result, the interactional

achievement of waiting and queuing involved a degree of emotional labor in which waits were

assigned in interaction rituals meant to calm the user and assure them help was forthcoming.

Users' frustration (see Chapter 7) with computers or technology were compounded by

uncertainty as to whether or not their request had been received and was being worked on. Users

worried that requests submitted by impersonal methods, particularly web-based ticket request

system, would be lost, ignored, or found too late. A survey of the H-School users, conducted

right before my arrival, found that people were commonly frustrated by a lack of knowledge

about the status of their service request. Users did not like being uncertain about ITS having

received their request, let alone when they would receive service. This was a theme repeated in

my interviews, as many ITS workers said that users were resistant to reporting problems through

the ticket queue because they were unsure if their request had been heard. In contrast, talking to

a trusted ITS worker diminished negative emotion. As a result, users sometimes layered modes

of request on top of each other, combining a ticket with a call or visit to calm their own anxiety

about (not) being helped. What was logical from the perspective of the user was collectively

irrational as requests were taken twice.

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Unlike many other interactional processes of help seeking discussed, users' desire to be calmed down was not limited by status. The ITS workers I encountered saw impatience on the part of users as a generalized condition. Examples were given of users of all statuses, from administrative assistants of high level administrators to assistant professors, from clerical workers in grant departments to department managers. Isaac described a woman department manager who had a reputation for being less than patient. He described her behavior thusly: "If 5 minutes pass and no one is in her office, she'll call again." Gemma made nearly identical remarks about staff in the grants and contracts office her unit provided services for: "If it's during one of those periods where a grant is due, they may send another ticket in 5 minutes [after their first ticket or call to the ITS unit]. 'What's going on? I haven't heard back from you." Similar remarks are embedded in examples throughout this dissertation; there is no consistency in the organizational status of the individual discussed.

The strategy for ITS workers was to engage in emotional labor by letting individuals know when their problem would be attended to and assuring them that they were not forgotten, especially when it was taking longer to solve problems than the ITS and/or user thought it should. Sue spoke to the importance of communication about waits to users' affective state:

> Even if you tell them, it's broke, [another ITS worker] lost it, whatever .. but they understand they can't be upset. So I think the most important thing is really follow through commitments made. If you say you're going to be somewhere today then we need to be there. Emergencies come up, but whatever, is like our email in the queue, oh we can't make it today as opposed to personal contact, pick up the phone and say we can't make it today. And as long as we do those things, people don't care if we wait 2 or 3 weeks as long as we are open and honest in communicating with them.

Other ITS workers made similar remarks about how users were not opposed to waiting days or even weeks for a service request to be completed if they were kept informed of the status of their request and given acceptable explanations for why a request is taking the time it was. This

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underscores the links between waiting, queuing, and emotions, as well as the emotional labor aspect of using a ticket queue to organization requests.

Ultimately, users' frustration with impersonal methods of requesting IT support spanned all organizational statuses. Both faculty and staff had emotional reactions to queuing and waiting and sought direct contact with and ITS worker to be sure their call for help had been received. As I discuss next, however, organizational status influenced users' attempts to avoid waiting altogether.

Queuing and Status Threat

Even with ITS efforts at communication, the ambiguity about one's place in an invisible queue seemed to raise the specter of status threat and catalyze status projects among some high status individuals. Of course many professors waited patiently for their turn and staff could also be visibly frustrated if told to wait, but faculty predominated among those who used waiting periods as a time to perform status through demands for service. As mentioned above, people seem to feel they are being made to wait longer than they "should" unless they know their precise location in the queue. For individuals of high status accustomed to prompt service (Sherman 2007), being asked to wait at all may be considered an affront to that status. In turn, efforts may be made not simply to save face but to actively assert dominance, like a professor refusing to leave the Help Desk until someone agreed to attend to their problem. In such instances, the user tried to force the ITS workers to validate their organizational status by forcing the Help Desk employee to make their problem the unit's number one priority. Sometimes users succeeded. As Michael Lipsky shows in *Street-Level Bureaucrats* (2010[1970]), individuals can occasionally move to the front of the line if they are willing to complain loudly and at length. As my research shows, status mattered for how much complaining was required. Though these

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behaviors could be effective, they often lowered the ITS workers' estimation of the user as unfairly capitalizing on their organizational status at the expense of others.

Thus, in line with the research on waiting and queuing discussed above, status mattered for the order in which tickets were completed at the H-School, irrespective of Alice's attempt to give clinics and classrooms priority over faculty. When faculty engaged in strategies to increase their priority and shorten their wait, they reintroduced status into the logic of the H-School ticket queue. The result was an infrequently acknowledged confusion over just how important organizational status was for the operation of the queue. Users were identified in the ticket system only by their email address; status was not recorded. Thus, awareness of the organizational status of individual users and the importance of that status for service depended on fine-grained knowledge that took time to acquire. This was made explicit one day by Lola when I asked her how she was getting accustomed to the job: "I think one of the challenges for me is to know priority. Now that Sue is back, it's easy because she can move things in the queue, so we know, but um ... there's like a status or something, I've noticed. You have to help certain people because they are friends of the dean or ... I don't know. There are some dynamics that I'm still trying to figure out." Part of what Lola was still figuring out was that university's status structure meant "friends of the dean" were always faculty or administrators, not staff. To be successful, Lola needed to understand how the status structure of the H-School influenced waiting times in frequently tacit ways.

Maggie underscored the importance of organizational status for how users treated the ITS workers. She related her experience with a faculty member whose mode of interaction with her shifted after he moved to a high status administrator position:

> We had another faculty member, somebody that I had a really good working relationship with, until he became chair and then he got really demanding. And I get, as chair, you don't have time to do anything, like I really get. But there's some really fundamental things IT related that everyone needs to learn how to do. … Yea, there were some really simple things that I had to show him how to do over and over again. Like, if he would just take the fucking notes, then fine.

Key in Maggie's narrative is a noticeable shift in interactional rituals as the user's organizational status shifted from faculty to a higher status position as Chair. Increased organizational status coincided with new behaviors and an increased sense of entitlement to swift service. Though Maggie understood the increased pressures that came with an administrator position, she did not consider it an excuse for incivility. In contrast, Nathalie described graduate students as generally compliant with queuing and waiting because they are "unsure of their status." Almost all of the ITS workers I encountered referenced the salience of status for how users reacted queuing and tried to mitigate their wait and nearly all mentioned high status individuals' strategies for exempting themselves from the queue and waiting.

Ultimately, status helped organize queuing and waiting even if downplayed in official queue operations. Who a requestor was not incidental to how quickly a service request was answered. Though ITS workers sometimes prioritize high status users, in other instances faculty users deliberately engaged in strategies to shorten their waits and avoid queuing. When initiated by faculty, these efforts could backfire, quicker service being accompanied by a lingering resentment of the faculty member involved.

Lola and Dr. Cleve: A Fable of Status

The importance of organizational status to for the distribution of IT support was brought into relief during the training of a new employee. Lola was hired from outside the university and had worked IT Support in private industry; she was technically skilled but by her own admission

not fully comfortable in English. As was common training practice for the H-School Help Desk, Lola, being the newest, was stationed at the Help Desk, splitting her time between reading the unit's manual and dealing with the basic needs of walk-ins (e.g., password resets, connecting to the internet).

Sitting at the Help Desk one June afternoon, Dr. Cleve, a black professor, comes in, greeting us with a cheerful hello and how-are-you. Lola stumbles some, asking him how they can help him but backtracking to answer his salutation. Dr. Cleve says fine and then tells her that he is having issues connecting to the network, meaning he cannot work on his research since the data are stored online. Lola nods, asks what type of computer he has, and then says she will put in a ticket, saying "I'm sure someone will come help you soon." Dr. Cleve asks if he needs to be present, and when she says yes, he informs her that he will be in his office for another two hours but will be leaving after that. She nods, and Dr. Cleve says thanks. Still smiling, he leaves the Help Desk. Lola puts in the ticket as she has been instructed and turns to the service request she had been working on before Dr. Cleve's appearance. I do not hear anything about the ticket again that day.

Not hearing anything about the ticket turns out to be bad news. It meant that Dr. Cleve's ticket had been quietly placed at the end of the queue, as she had been instructed by Sue and the others in the course of her training, where it remained unnoticed until the next day. Notice only came because Dr. Cleve called angrily to ask about the help he had been promised. In a symbolic display of power, Dr. Cleve had his administrative assistant make the call to the Help Desk, necessitating that Harry wait while she transferred the call to Dr. Cleve before they could speak. Talking loud enough that I could hear him through the phone despite Harry holding the receiver, the doctor's unhappiness with the Help Desk for having forgotten his computer the day

before was clear in his voice. Dt. Cleve dominated the conversation, which was a report of how "someone" had taken his request and promised that someone would be up to take care of him and how he had waited for two hours to no avail. (Significantly, Dr. Cleve did not call back to the desk when the promised help did not arrive.) Harry spends most of his call listening to the doctor, his brow furrowing more and more as he listens to the doctor. Harry's contribution is only saying quickly "I'm going to send somebody up right now" and ending the call with clipped departing pleasantries. Harry does not spend time apologizing but simply promises to have the problem taken care of immediately.

He rushes into the back office and reports Dr. Cleve's call to the other Help Desk employees, describing the doctor as "frustrated" with having been stood up the day before. His face makes clear he has chosen to be diplomatic in his description. Lola, whether having forgotten her interaction with Dr. Cleve the day before or simply too scared to claim culpability, says nothing about her part in his frustration. (Although I knew the full story because of my field notes, I kept quiet because I did not want to cause Lola injury.) Sue is dismissive of Dr. Cleve's complaint, ignoring the issue of being stood up and asking whether or not he had restarted his machine, thus offloading some blame onto the professor himself. Isaac agrees to handle the call. Harry is relieved that Dr. Cleve will be dealt with quickly and lets out a sigh of relief as he returns to the Help Desk.

Isaac consents to me and Lola tagging along, so we head to the elevators together. Lola and I trail Isaac through the halls, chattering about the building's confusing layout. Upon reaching Dr. Cleve's office, Isaac knocks quietly. We hear a muffled "come in," and Isaac cracks the door just enough to poke his head in and tell Dr. Cleve he is there to help. Dr. Cleve opens the door, welcoming Isaac warmly, but seems baffled as Lola and I also enter. Lola sees

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his face and remarks that she's in training. (Isaac tells him I am a social scientist, which received a nod of recognition from Dr. Cleve but nothing more.) Dr. Cleve's irritation bubbles to the surface as he retorts wryly, "Me too … that's what I get." Exactly what he meant was unclear, as he was an assistant clinical professor who had been with the department for several years.

Isaac performs much emotional labor during the service call, trying to assuage Dr. Cleve's irritation at being forgotten the day before. Lola, in contrast, makes reference to having talked to him the day before but does little to apologize for having left him waiting. Indeed, one of her first technical comments, after Isaac sat down at the doctor's computer, was to ask if he had restarted his machine, following up on Sue's question earlier. With a hint of irritation in his voice, he tells her that he did restart it to no avail. He describes his problem thusly: "I was using it, went to lunch, came back, and then, no access." Lola goes quiet but Isaac sympathizes with him about the vagaries of technology, the frustration of being unable to work, and how he wishes that they could just throw all the computers out the windows, all the while clicking through screens as he troubleshoots the problem. Dr. Cleve eventually calms amidst Isaac's cheerful chatter and after a while begins to joke back, responding to Isaac's remark about having a hard time detecting the exact problem with a self-deprecating "Did I say something wrong?" He laughs and then the room goes quiet. Lola and I watch Isaac; Dr. Cleve turns his full attention to the soup he is eating.

After about six minutes, Isaac announces that he's found the problem and that Dr. Cleve was an unfortunate victim of the system administrators' accidentally removing some computers from the network the day before. He tells Dr. Cleve that he will speak to the Sys Admins and get his access restored. He then secures Dr. Cleve's permission to institute a work around involving connecting him to the wireless internet. Dr. Cleve is pleased with this and agrees readily. Isaac

works quietly for another minute and then gets out of the doctor's chair. He asks Dr. Cleve to try and log onto the network and locate his research. When this is successful, Dr. Cleve beams ear to ear, remarking: "How did you do that?" Isaac dismisses the doctor's compliment with a quick smile and remark that it was easy once he figured out what was wrong. The doctor's mood lightens considerably at that point, and he maintains his smile as Isaac finished putting everything in order. Once he's done, Isaac bids Dr. Cleve farewell; Dr. Cleve replies with a sincere "Thank you and have a good day" as we file out behind Isaac.

We wend our way back through the halls to the Help Desk, Isaac explaining to Lola some of the finer points of the wired versus wireless networks in the building. At no point does he discuss the display of status we just experienced, leaving unsaid anything about faculty's expectations for quick service. Since he does not seem to have picked up on Lola's remark about having taken Dr. Cleve's request, he does not discuss unit protocol or the problem of telling someone that an ITS will be there at a particular time and then not sending anyone. Lola does not bring this up herself, instead making a comparison of the network at the H-School with the network at her previous job. About half way back, Isaac remarks that they need to be sure to turn off the wireless for Dr. Cleve's computer once it is back on the network, as the computer cannot access the local network with it turned on. At first Isaac suggests writing Dr. Cleve an email but decides that he should just do it himself to insure nothing goes wrong. We fall silent as we continue through the halls.

When we enter the Help Desk, Lola goes to the back and I take my stool. Harry looks up and with a worried face asks Isaac how the call went. When Isaac smiles broadly and tells him what was wrong and that Dr. Cleve is back at work for the time being, Harry begins to smile himself, clearly relieved that crisis had been averted. He remarks seriously to Isaac: "He seemed

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a little angry on the phone," upping his description from the more neutral frustrated used before the service call. They both giggle about this without saying anything else and Isaac goes to the back to put the necessary information in the doctor's ticket.

Most glaring in this scene was the overt silence about Dr. Cleve's right to be angry, his right to priority, or the complex status structure of the university. Although not the only incident requiring assistance at the moment, the ITS workers moved quickly to take care of him, bumping him ahead of other requests. Neither does anyone suggest to Lola that she should have notified the team of the ticket after its entry, rather than letting it sit in the queue, waiting for an answer. At the same time, though, the speed with which the Help Desk employees took care of his problem after his second "angry" call made it clear that "first come, first served" was not an accurate a representation of the triage schema as it operated on the ground.

Users' understanding of the intersection of organizational status and waiting is made most explicitly in Dr. Cleve's off the cuff remark about also being a trainee. While it was unclear as to whether he was equating low-status to the failure to get prompt service call or the general fact of computer problems, either interpretation is girded by a fundamental equation of status and receipt of services. Poor service and/or dysfunctional technology are delimited as the province of the organizationally low status; implicitly he was announcing his own high status, as even Lola was aware he was a professor, making the remark ironic, even if not consciously intended as an attempt of status conferral. Though Dr. Cleve's interaction with Isaac quite civil, particularly in his explicit expression of thanks, the overall effect was still to reproduce the faculty/staff binary as diffuse status characteristics.

High Status Approaches to Queuing and Waiting

Having discussed the emotional dimensions of queuing, I now discuss three approaches to queuing and waiting often engaged in by high status individual: trumping the queue, queue refusal, and queue circumvention.

Trumping the Queue

In the H-School and across the university, service was organized according to Schwartz's dictum that "powerful clients are relatively immune from waiting" (1974, 848). Among the highest ranked administrators, like Deans, Provosts, and Vice-Presidents, ITS workers' expectation that users would report their problems via the ticket queue were relaxed or even suspended. This typically meant allowing an administrator to submit their work request directly to an ITS unit manager or even the CIO. This is distinct from what I term "queue circumvention" (discussed below), because the individual contacted has the organizational power to put the request at the top or near top of the queue, making status, not urgency or type of problem, the deciding factor in triage. For example, the Dean of the H-School occasionally routed requests through Sabrina, the CIO, with whom she shared the executive suite, rather than contact the Help Desk directly. ITS workers always gave priority to requests from the CIO, in large part because she was their ultimate boss after their local manager. Thus, when the CIO submitted requests for an elite user, she activated her status to secure priority for their problem, (re)producing their high organizational status in the process. Only the highest level administrators were permitted this, as evinced by a discussion in which Alice told the staff in no uncertain terms that they should enter a particular professor's direct requests in the ticket queue and have them be distributed from there.

That high status users expected speedy treatment was obvious at the P-School as well. Burton told of an afternoon during which the Dean had tried to contact the Help Desk but had the wrong number, so no one heard the two messages he left with another ITS unit. The Dean was, to use Burton's words, "pretty angry" and an Associate Dean had stormed into the Help Desk to request help in person and complain to the Help Desk's manager. Like Dr. Cleve above, the right of the Dean to speedy service and his anger about its lack were not questioned. Burton remarked, "How do you tell the Associate Dean they didn't call the right number? You can't. Better just to say you're sorry, we'll fix that" (FN 0722). Similar behavior was documented in other units, like an IT manager in a P-School who watched the queue for requests placed by upper-level administrators and ensured they were completed quickly. No ITS unit wanted to experience the wrath of an administrator left unhelped. This concern ultimately guided the process of triage in ITS units in obvious and not so obvious ways.

Though no one explicitly challenged the upper level administrators' use of these strategies, they often came in for opprobrium from the ITS workers. Sue spoke critically of these practices, which she saw as a criticism of the workers' professionalism:

> There's certain individuals that will, because Sabrina will throw a ticket into the queue because she got a email last night at eight o'clock from a user that wants some software installment. Why are you emailing the CIO? It's either, you don't think highly about us here or—I don't know. So a lot of the higher levels will email the director because she always pops it into our queue.

Again, individual strategies to limit waits and increase their priority were regarded as uncivil criticisms of the ability of the ITS workers to manage and pace their own workloads. Moreover, ITS workers interpreted this as an inaccurate assessment of their ignorance of the university's organizational status structure, matters with which they were quite well versed as I have demonstrated. As Jim remarked, seasoned ITS workers knew who they had to jump to attention

for; they did not need anyone to remind them. Reminding them was tantamount to calling them incompetent.

When ITS units are large enough, the prioritization of elites does not cause major problems, as others are available to handle urgent requests already in queue. In ITS units consisting of only one or two people, elite's right to immediate service can cause others to wait longer than if status were not a factor in triage. In both cases, regardless of whether or not ITS workers' capitulated to elites' expectation of speedy service, the expression of entitlement by high status users (re)produced the university's status hierarchy.

<center>Queue Refusal</center>

Nearly every ITS worker I encountered related stories of users unwilling to engage with the ticket system, who always opted for direct contact with their department's IT support, whether an email to a particular individual or a "pop-in" to their local Help Desk. Though some of these recalcitrant users were staff and students, faculty were far more likely to refuse to use their department's ticket queue. For example, one whole administrative unit simply refused to utilize the queue initiated by their ITS worker, causing him to eventually abandon it. Tellingly, the most senior faculty were the least willing to submit tickets. As discussed above, some refusals to use the queue arose from the desire for reassurance (i.e., emotional labor). This section, in contrast, discusses users who attempted to enact high organizational status by avoiding the queue altogether.

High status users were usually passive aggressive about refusing to use the queue, continuing to place requests in ad hoc manner and not heeding instructions about request systems. Some users, however, could be rude when refusing to engage with the ticket queue. Andre described a clinic manager who consistently refused to engage with the queue: "She's

been there for a while and she expects everything to be done yesterday and that she is above tickets and she's never had to put in a ticket before ... and just very nasty." When Lola clashed with an unreasonable post doc (see Chapter 6), the post doc averred that she had never been required to put in a ticket before. These claims to never have had to engage with the ticket queue before were not uncommon or inaccurate, though they embodied a false logic that interpreted their participation in the previous ad hoc system as an exemption from currently using the ticket queue. They incorrectly considered having not previously put in a ticket as their entitlement to refuse to use the ticket queue or wait, full stop. Instead, they more likely either had not been asked to wait on a previous occasion because there was an ITS worker free to assist them or had been indulged in their failure to use the queue in hopes that gentle encouragement would have them use the queue the next time.

While ITS workers were typically sympathetic to users without advanced technical skill, continued defiance of the ticket queue caused a withdrawal of sympathy and emotional labor. Maggie's opinion of one such individual sums up the intersection of waiting and status: "Only you know, this one faculty member, she refuses to put tickets into our ticketing system. You know, her excuse is that she doesn't do it often enough, so she forgets how to do it and to find our website, blah, blah, blah. You know what, you have a PhD." Similarly, Greg criticized faculty users who wanted their machines repaired but were unwilling either to meet with the ITS worker to explain their problems or to follow the instructions posted on the website. His imagined retort was to tell the faculty member to "use your education" and repair the computer themselves. In these and many similar remarks, ITS workers turned the assumptions of faculty as more intelligent than staff against the users' attempts to seek exemption from queuing. Rather than allow a professor to play dumb about how the queue worked, the ITS workers invoked the

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education that is the foundation of faculty's diffuse status as belying these strategies for queue refusal.

Even more frustrating for ITS workers were users who did not report their problems and then expected to be given immediate service. By delaying their request until it reached the status of emergency, like a broken program reported only hours before a grant deadline, the user could force the hand of ITS workers to serve them immediately. This, of course, disrupted the ability of ITS workers to organize their own efforts:

> Geordie then returned to his fireman metaphor, talking about a call that had recently come in about a problem the user claimed was ongoing but about which they hadn't heard anything. This was corroborated by there being no ticket related to the issue, opened or closed. He said that the problem likely was an on-going one but that rather than report the issue to them, the individual had developed a workaround that had functioned until crunch time. Now, it is crunch time and it becomes an emergency that requires immediate attention, at least as far as the user is concerned. [Here we see the collision of different priorities under the sign of Frederick Taylor.] Geordie characterizes the user as putting off informing the IT department of an issue and then getting upset when they need something to work and demand it be repaired immediately. Geordie said firmly, "The user's job is to tell us about problems. You don't have a heart attack and then tell the doctor two months later." He makes an extended metaphor out of this as well, ranting about faculty and staff not understanding that they need to be proactive and preventative, not merely reactive and over-reactive. (FN0801)

Geordie's story demonstrates the ultimate attempt to refuse to use the queue: an illogical expectation that ITS workers will fix problems they do not even know to exist, then complaining about a lack of attention. In similar instances, ITS workers could do little more than agree with the user about their emergency and then withhold emotional labor from these users as they repaired the machine. Users were not chastised for this behavior, ITS workers' efforts going instead to solving the problem quickly.

Ultimately, refusing to use the queue was a performance of status in which the user declared themselves better than the rules and those who are obliged to follow them. These performances of status were overturned when efforts to avoid the queue were stonewalled.

Queue Circumvention

They don't mean anything by it. They just want what's best for them[selves].- Isaac

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In an attempt to exert control over their wait, some faculty users engaged in individualistic strategies designed to avoid having to queue. Relying on ties to individuals engaged in scheduling and/or service provision, some individuals may subvert queues by contacting an individual directly and requesting the favor of an appointment. I use the term "queue circumvention" to describe some users' patterns of contacting an ITS worker directly rather than submitting through the queue system. Though logical for the individual user, such strategies undermined the priority system and work processes of a department, squelching the manager's attempts to create a queue with a particular logic. Moreover, these acts could be interpreted as incivilities by the ITS workers. In their examination of queuing in a veteran's hospital Finlay and colleagues ignore the impact of doctors' actions on schedulers (i.e., support staff) when they say, "The consequence of overbooking [queue circumvention] is an increase in queue pressures … In obtaining an overbooking, residents are in effect declaring that orderly queuing is less important than providing prompt and effective medical care" (1990, 299). They ignore the impact of queue circumvention on the workers who manage and administrator the queue. At no point do they consider whether the schedulers might be reprimanded for violating protocol or if the doctors' caused patients with worse problems to wait even longer. Similarly,

faculty users could not see how exempting themselves from the ticket queue affected the operation of the ITS unit as a whole.

This tension is obvious in the H-School Help Desk employees' reaction to a customer service survey response. A user's boast about queue circumvention provoked collective grumbling from everyone gathered, including the Sys Admins. I quote my field notes at length:

> Alice then read another that said, "I don't routinely call the service center because I have self-identified the people who are the most capable and contact them individually rather than go through the service center who have less accountability." She then says, "Any time Dr. Wes calls someone individually, his request needs to be put into queue. If you don't as a rule, we will get burned. We need to keep reinforcing this, though he'll never pay attention." (FN0329)

Harry's response was to sigh and say he had been trying, loading the requests into the ticket queue and then communicating with Dr. Wes that way. Unfortunately, the doctor would not respond to emails routed through the ticket, only emails from Harry's personal email account. This was frustrating for all involved, because the professor was actually creating more work for Harry, not being efficient as he thought. When faculty users persisted in this behavior regardless of ITS workers' attempts to enforce use of the ticket system, they engaged in incivility, ergo actively (re)producing their dominance over staff.

Like queue refusal, queue circumvention was a problem common to nearly all the ITS workers I encountered. In every department this occurs, sometimes with disastrous results. Zoe talked about someone emailing her months after she had left an IT unit in a P-School to take a position in Central IT. On vacation at the time, Zoe did not get to the request until a week after it had been placed. She replied to the user and provided her the contact information for the P-School's Help Desk, politely directing her to the unit responsible for the machine. Zoe's sympathy for the woman was cross-cut with her irritation at the users' failure to read the emails

that had been sent about Zoe's departure. Being liked was nice, but it did not excuse the failure to read communications from the ITS department or attempted queue circumvention, acts considered inconsiderate. In other stories, users were left unhelped because the ITS worker they tried to contact was at lunch or sick at the time. Ironically, the impersonal ticket system that raised the specter of being ignored was more likely to ensure a timely response than individual strategies meant to avoid uncertainty.

Though the utilitarian aspects of queue circumvention are obvious, they can be overstated. Recalling the discussion of emotions and queuing above, some users avoided using the ticket system because they wanted to ensure they were helped by a particular individual with whom they had developed a positive relationship. With repeated interaction, users and ITS workers came to develop understandings about how to best interact. The result was that queue circumvention was not an uncommon practice. As Sue said, "everyone has their favorite." Isaac elaborated:

> Part of desktop support is sometimes people tend to like certain people and even though Alice discourages that, it still happens. I have people that will call and just say, I want Isaac but if I'm not there they will get whoever is there. Certain people will come [and receive assistance from a particular ITS] and it works out for them and they like receiving that [person's] sort of service and then when someone else shows up, they kind of get shown the cold shoulder. <chuckles> Alice has really tried to say to just take it if somebody calls, but people bypass that. They find you working and they say, can you come tomorrow and look at my stuff? And I do that once and then it's you that they're trying to find.

Again, like queue refusal, users were engaging in rational strategies that benefitted them, guaranteeing the type of service they wanted from someone with whom they could communicate. However innocent it might be, queue circumvention caused two major problems. First, the rationalized system for triaging requests was undermined. If a particular ITS worker became popular among users, what began as flattery could produce an unevenly distributed workload

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within the unit. For example, Harry was well liked by an administrative unit and the managers routinely sought his assistance. When he acquiesced to this queue circumvention, he added to his workload tasks that might have been better assigned elsewhere. Users only wanted what was best for themselves, but these benign intentions did not diminish their impact on ITS workers' ability to organize requests according to unit protocol.

Second, status differences, including the gender and race of ITS workers, could play a greater part in the distribution of help than when ticket queues were used. Some departments gave in to users' desires about whom to work with, though this could cause problems. For example, an all woman administrative unit in a different health care and research college manifested their preference for men ITS workers in incivility toward women ITS. Rather than trying to tackle this problem head on, the IT manager capitulated to their preferences and did not send the woman ITS worker on service calls to that department. In contrast, Alice's group was explicitly instructed to prevent queue circumvention. In one particularly notable example, Sue said that she had a terrible first interaction with a woman doctor and her first instinct was to avoid contact with the doctor from that point forward, meaning only men would service her. This was rejected, though, and Sue worked to repair the situation and eventually became friends with the doctor.

Contrast this with different health care and research school within the same university, where the IT Manager Jamal did not enforce random assignment. He describes it thusly:

> [People have] different styles, so you have to figure that out. So we may send certain people to certain faculty and sometimes, depending on who they're comfortable with you know. Let's say, I'm just going to make someone up -- one of the faculty is comfortable with Trinidad, so we may send Trinidad to do those. Ideally we want anyone to be able to go and we're working towards that. But if there's a comfort level there, we may send this person instead of someone else. Sometimes you get better affirmation and it's easier to

get the problem solved. We've had cases where we send three people to one person until they get who they want.

Elsewhere Jamal talked about how his unit's woman ITS worker received the worst evaluations of all the ITS workers; taking the two remarks together, there is a suggestion that users rarely sought out the woman ITS worker. As this suggests, queue circumvention can reproduce gender and other inequalities if the relationships valorize one group's skill with ITS, like men, but not another, like women. Gemma alluded to this when I asked, "Do the women ever end up being anybody's favorite?" She tried to articulate a sense gathered from user feedback surveys that gender mattered for the evaluation of ITS workers:

> I would say not in the same way, right. … [Users] just speak differently about the men and women. ... What pleases them, when they're talking about a woman, when they're talking about Patti as opposed to when they're talking about Oliver or Trevor. It's a different voice, I guess is the best way to put it.

Thus, when users are allowed to choose who would help them, however benign their intentions, categorical inequalities can be retrenched. By contrast, enforced uptake of the ticket queue could diminish the importance of categorical identities as suggested by my experience at the H-School Help Desk.

Overall, queue circumvention reproduced the faculty/staff binary as diffuse status characteristics, these individuals were positioning themselves as more important than other users (about whom they rarely knew anything) and delegitimizing the ITS workers' professional skill at triaging computer problems. To say one deserved to go ahead of others is to deny the ITS workers' professional knowledge of the complex matrix of queue place, need, time required, and actuality of emergency that guides the order in which users are attended to. They valued users who understood that they were responsible to hundreds of users and thousands of computers and peripheral devices and that being asked to wait was not meant as a personal affront.

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Discussion

The primary problem with individual strategies to avoid queuing and waiting is that they undermine the efforts of the ITS workers to exercise the professional's prerogative to organize their own work. In some instances, faculty allowed their individual desires for swift service or entitlement to intrude on the ability of ITS workers trying to organize multiple people to respond to unceasing calls. As discussed in Chapter 3, the social division of labor does not necessary embody diffuse status characteristics. How professional/core employees treat support workers creates the faculty/staff binary as status hierarchy. When core/professional employees, like faculty, attempt to dictate to support workers how to do their jobs, whether explicitly like through advice giving, or implicitly, like underestimating the time required for solving problems, they reproduce the managerialism for which the faculty criticizes administrators so vehemently.

The most stunning example of a negative outcome of dismissing ITS workers' efforts came in a story related by Gemma, who had worked for the university's Human Resources department before taking a managerial position. A staffer that worked on grants had blocked Gemma's attempts to upgrade her computer for weeks, frustrating Gemma's large scale overhaul of the unit's computers. Claiming she had too much work to do, the woman would not allow Gemma to take her computer from her for even a few hours. The user kept putting Gemma off until she agreed to make the woman's computer last. Ironically, this promise could not be kept as the woman's computer randomly caught fire one day, necessitating an immediate replacement. Had the user permitted Gemma to overhaul her computer on schedule, her computer would have met a much more peaceful end.

A key problem in users' attempts to impose their own sense of priority upon the Help Desk employees was that users rarely had a realistic understanding of the amount of time

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required to solve a problem. Users were far more likely to underestimate the time necessary to

fix a problem than to overestimate. As a result, they criticized the ITS workers for taking longer

than they thought they should, going so far as to dismiss ITS workers' skill. Douglas described

this mental process: "Some people like to stop by and do the whole in-person thing, like 'Hey, I

have this problem, and it should only take five minutes.' It almost never does." Alice made a

similar remark, "If we could fix the electronic patient records on the first try, we would."

Though ITS workers understood the intense pressures on users working to deadlines, this did not

excuse users from uncivil attempts to dictate work processes about which they were not

knowledgeable. I quote from my field notes Isaac's discussion of time, which emphasizes the

extent to which users underestimate the messiness of problem solving in IT support:

> Isaac's explanation of fixing Romy's computer turns into a meditation on the temporality
> of problem solving: "Sometimes things do linger because there's no definite solution.
> Solutions come with time, talking to others." Thomas then reflected on some problems
> with users as regards temporality and speed: "Customers don't really get this [the time
> required for problem solving]. They don't understand that if it's not working [at the
> moment] that doesn't mean it will never work. It takes time to get the right approach and
> techniques figured out. Some stuff takes more time to solve than others. But, you never
> get to point where nothing works. There's always eventually a solution." (FN0425)

Geordie made a very similar argument:

> He then started talking about how you never know when you go on a call how long
> something will take. Though it could be a simple problem, it could also be one that
> becomes crazy. Any small problem can spiral out into more problems that result in the
> ITS worker being gone forever from their desk. He connected this uncertainty to
> problems that can arise when ITS workers are unable to have things returned to their
> users in the time they thought they could. He remarks that "You can't tell faculty
> something else came up. Some are understanding and realize we're busy. Others, not so
> much." This problem reveals itself when people ask when they can expect to get their
> computers back. The honest answer is always "it depends." The goal is to get it back to
> them as soon as possible, but something else could always blowup. (FN0801)

By not recognize the complexity of problem solving, the need to engage in trial-and-error as well

as conduct research and talk to colleagues, users downplayed the creative thought and skill

required of ITS workers. As discussed in Chapter 3, when users evaluated ITS workers

primarily on response time, they treated them as servants rather than professionals. The

(re)production of the faculty/staff binary as diffuse status characteristics was thus effected

through a form of latent managerialism in which high status users with no direct power over the

Help Desk employee attempted to dictate their work processes.

Conclusion

Like the other status-based interaction rituals discussed in this dissertation, the routine

capitulation to faculty's demands for immediate service and queue avoidance helped (re)produce

the faculty/staff binary as organizational status hierarchy. Waiting and queuing are interactional

achievements whereby support workers and core/professional employees, already in an

asymmetrical power relationship, negotiate over acceptable waits and the outcomes of triage.

When faculty refused to engage with the queue or manipulate their waits, the frame of

faculty/staff as diffuse status characteristics was reproduced. ITS workers constructed faculty as

a group that was "unreasonably impatient" to quote Alice, who accompanied her criticism with

an imitation of a professor tapping their foot in frustration of a wait. Staff and faculty could

become similarly emotional when waiting and avoid informal ticket queues to insure their

request was heard, but only faculty engaged in strategies meant to avoid queuing and waiting.

Both faculty's use of these strategies and staff's avoidance (re)produced the organizational status

structure.

The biggest problem of high status users' attempts to obviate waiting and queuing is that

it dismissed the expertise of the ITS workers. Not only does it undermine ITS workers' ability to

control and pace their workload in accordance with their preference, but it also attempts to

impose the higher status workers' understanding of what is required to solve complex

technological problems. As discussed, users often underestimated the complexity of their

problems, in turn evaluating ITS workers by their own presumptions of what should be required

to fix an issue. In this situation, high status workers (re)produced their organizational status as

diffuse rather than specific; their knowledge of a specific subject area as represented in their

status as PhDs and MDs incorrectly interpreted as knowledgeable about things outside their

particular bailiwick, like when professors incorrectly instruct ITS workers on what's wrong with

their computers and how to repair them. In a proper scientific managerial context, the manager

has designed and does know what is required to do a particular worker's task. For ITS,

professional/core employees may lack training in technology, making their acts of managerialism

even more similar to the deprofessionalization of faculty by non-academic managers that critics

lament. Thus, faculty's unacknowledged privilege allows them to engage in precisely the

behaviors for which they condemn non-academic administrators, revealing the blind spots in

critics' analyses caused by ignoring low status staff.

Chapter 6: "Sometimes 'Yes' Is Not the Best Answer": Service Work and Status (Re)production Despite Refusal

Joan: "There are definite security vulnerabilities with Dropbox, but people want to use that, and we're like, "We can't do that. We've got alternatives, here are your alternatives." We recently had one person who said, "Well, [those alternatives] won't work because I've been using Dropbox for years." And it's like, "Well … then in that case, you'll be talking to my supervisor," because he's going to have a bigger stick in enforcing the policies.

Lotus: Is that usually your strategy?

Joan: Yeah, it's like, um, "I'm really sorry that you feel like you have no—that these other alternatives aren't going to work." Without ever trying them, of course. But it's like, "I'm sorry, you can talk to my supervisor, you can talk to the head of security for the university. At this point my hands are tied."

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As the sociological research on interactive service work, or "jobs that require workers to interact directly with customers or clients" (Leidner 1993, 1), has matured over the last few decades, the power dynamics of customers and service workers have been a major focus. Labor process theory highlights how service work complicates the boss-worker dyad of factories by creating a triangle of boss-worker-customer in which the balance of power is more fluid. Sometimes customers ally with bosses to discipline workers; at other times the boss and worker join forces to elicit desired behaviors from customers (Lopez 2010). Other researchers have extended this research to deal with the interactional production of status through the service work interaction, like how luxury hotel workers socialize guests to upper class privilege (Sherman 2007).

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Taking advantage of the deference demanded of interactive service workers has been understood as a key means through which customers perform and claim identities, particularly classed ones (MacDonald and Sirianni 1996, Hanser 2012, Korczynski and MacDonald 2009). The working poor customer who berates a fast food worker to feel better about their own marginalization (Newman 1999) and the rich customer who performs entitlement to the labor of luxury hotel staff (Sherman 2007) are both using the service interaction as a site for status (re)production.

An archetypal service worker has emerged in the literature: a female and/or ethnic or racial minority in a low-status position that demands the performance of deference to all individuals with the money to be customers (Glenn 1992, Hughes and Tadic 1998, Kang 2010, Korzynski and Evans 2013, Macdonald and Merrill 2009, Otis 2012, Nixon 2009). From McDonald's workers that "have to put up with whatever verbal abuse comes across the counter" (Newman 1999, 89) to flight attendants who must keep smiling however drunk and grabby the business men get (Hochschild 1983, Williams 2003) to Chinese department store clerks required to endure customers' tirades in silence (Hanser 2008, 109), interactive services workers are depicted as being deferential to the point of being incapable of saying "no."

The overwhelming focus on deference as never saying no obscures instances when service workers actually do say "no," which I term *refusal*. Researchers often allude to service workers' performances of refusal, but interactive workers' strategies for saying no and customers' reactions are typically absent from the data they present, focusing instead on acquiescence and obeisance. Acts of resistance, like a flight attendant spilling a bloody mary on a passenger's white pantsuit (Hochschild 1983) or a waitress engaging in only the minimum necessary pleasantries (Erickson 2009), more commonly take center stage as the foil to

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deference. By not looking closely at refusal, though, researchers miss a unique vantage point on the interactive processes by which individuals are (re)produced as classed individuals even when told no.

Using the example of H-School faculty and IT support workers' interactions, I show how individuals performed class and occupational status in their response to support workers' refusal of their requests. Refusals had two bases: First, the H-School was a teaching college with patients, which required them to comply fully with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA, pronounced hip-ah), a federal law enacted in 1996 meant to insure the absolute privacy of medical patients' health information. This meant the Help Desk employees were tasked with enforcing two unpopular rules: that all employees change their passwords every three months and that only computers that had been purchased with organizational funds could access the secure network. Second, a limited staff and budget combined with the IT director's commitment to avoiding triaging based primarily on organizational status (see Chapter 5), meant ITS could not always respond immediately to every request for assistance. Instead, the user would be told to wait, something that was not always taken in stride by the user, especially those of higher status. While low status staff did not challenge these refusals in any serious ways, however much they grumbled about them, high status faculty often engaged in creative strategies to try to circumvent or moderate a refusal or wait. As I show, this (re)produced the faculty/staff binary as status hierarchy and diffuse statuses.

Operationalizing Deference as Never Saying No

As discussed in Chapter 3, Erving Goffman's (1956) classic essay on deference defines it as "a symbolic means by which appreciation is regularly conveyed *to* a recipient *of* this recipient,

or of something of which this recipient is taken as a symbol, extension, or agent" (477). Though

he avers that deference differs from "obeisance, submission, and propitiation" and that it can be

engaged in by equals (what scholars call lateral deference, Fragale et. al 2012), service work

scholars focus power asymmetries. Hochschild argues that these courtesies are part of what

customers purchase in the service interaction, arguing "The passenger, unlike the real friend or

guest in a home, assumes a right to unsuppressed anger at irritations, having purchased that tacit

right with the ticket" (1983, 110). (See Chapter 7 for an extended discussion of emotions and

status).

Marek Korczynski (2005) argues that the interactive service work relationship is a variant

on the master/servant relationship given that deference is the hallmark of interactive service

work. This logic is manifested in the "customer is king" discourse that makes a refusal

antithetical to good service; workers are often told that "no" should not be part of their

vocabulary. McDonald's is paradigmatic: workers are allowed to solve two problems

themselves and all other problems must be referred to a manager. Ideally, McDonald's counter

workers never engage in refusal, a right given only to the organizationally powerful (Leidner

1993). Similarly, Erickson (2009) discusses a chain restraint where the wait staff is instructed to

never say "no."

Sherman (2007) extends these insights about the master/servant relation to show how

deference is part of an active process through which people construct themselves as high status

and deserving of others' labor. Key to luxury hotels' role in status (re)production is "a

willingness to break rules," which is a way the organization enacts "personalization," or treating

guests as unique individuals, which is also a hallmark of class/status (28). Sherman says "Guests

approved of the idea that rules could be bent or broken for them and they often saw a willingness

to transgress as a defining feature of luxury establishments in contrast to midrange hotels" (37).

Inversely, low status is marked by hotels' refusal to accommodate the individuality of the guest,

which means holding them accountable to the same impersonal rules as the rest of the unwashed

masses. Tellingly, a guest refers to these midrange hotels as "bureaucratic" (41).

Refusal appears briefly in Sherman's text *Class Acts* (2007), where she makes mention of

the interactive processes involved in service workers violating the norm of deference through

engaging in refusal. Refusal makes an appearance in her chapter on Burawoy style games. She

explains that saying "no" in such a way as to not upset guests is considered a learned skill among

hotel workers. "Saying no as expertise" at the hotels is contrasted with the structural ability to

say no implied in the worker who contrasted the hotel with a bank where she worked and had the

ability to say no (121).

Similar instances of refusal are littered throughout the research but rarely discussed in

depth. Korczynski and Evans (2013) focus on workers' and managers' unwillingness to

challenge customers' behavior for fear of losing income; they give a few examples of successful

attempts at getting management to discipline customers, but these are dealt with briefly as

exceptional events. Sherman's elite customers compare the rule-bending of luxury hotels to the

rigidity of mid-range hotels (2007). Leidner discusses how McDonald's employees sometimes

must help customers understand how the restaurant operates, and Erickson implies that bar

patrons are occasionally "cut off" and refused more alcohol (9). None of these are dealt with

extensively and little information is given about workers' different strategies for saying 'no or

the responses of customers.

Christine Williams' *Inside Toyland* provides one of the only extended discussions of

refusal. She suggests several ways that high-status individuals deal with refusal in passages

about the high-status toy store she studied. Advice giving: While complaining about his wait, a man suggests to Williams that she "should fire" the absent employees (126). Threats: "A business professor in town for a professional convention was upset because the Barney sippy cup he wanted to buy was missing its price tag and I couldn't find it listed in the store inventory. He made me call over the store director and subjected us both to a critique of store operations, which he threatened to write up and submit for publication to a business journal." At the big box toy store, she discusses the displays of anger by white women and the store's willingness to appease them: "A shouting white woman got whatever she wanted and a black shouting man got threatened with arrest" (131). These instances provide a glimpse at some elite's reactions to refusal; my research provides a fuller picture of refusal as a means of status (re)production.

Saying No?: ITS Engaging in Refusal

Within the H-School, IT policy was built around substantial legal and material constraints. Of foremost importance was compliance with the strong network security demanded by HIPPA (discussed above). One of the H-School Help Desk's strategies for fulfilling these federal mandates was a two-tiered internal network that segregated patient information from other activities on the network, complemented by absolute restrictions against placing personal computers on the network that stored health data and financial records. These policies, combined with the H-School's limited budget and the university's policy of using "preferred vendors" for tech purchases (discussed more in Chapter 7) meant that ITS workers could not function without sometimes telling users no, whether to a particular computer, network access, or immediate service. This pushed ITS workers to engage in refusal and emotional labor as they enforced the organization's policies and tried to ameliorate any irritation on the part of the worker. For example:

Call (11am) – Jim: "Desktop support this is Jim." [Caller is a woman staff member]. I don't hear her half but his half makes the situation clear: "So when you go to save, it's freezing for while?" Her: Yes. Him: "About a minute?" Her: Yes. Him: "Then it's saving, through. Just taking a while?" Her: Yes. Jim: "First I've heard - we usually get a few calls if something's down. When you have a moment restart your machine. That can reset some of those pathways and make it go faster." He explains he can't help her: "As long as it's functioning and still saving there's not much we can do." He gives her some more advice and ends the call saying, "No problem, you too."

When the call is done, he explains to me: "They complain that the network's really, really slow – there's nothing I can do. If it's still working, there's not a lot that can be done" (FN 0423).

Here we see Jim interact with a staff member in a service call that prompts him to refuse the clerical worker's request for assistance by rejecting her claim that her computer is having issues. He engages in the pedagogical labor of explaining how restarting her computer may solve her problem but does very limited emotional labor given his interpretation of the problem as user impatience (see Chapter 7 for an extended discussion of the types of labor involved in IT support). When a different member of the same department calls with the same problem less than 20 minutes later, Jim is again largely unsympathetic and repeats his instructions on how to restart the machine. He softens some this time, though, and says to the second caller, "If the problem continues, call back and we will take a closer look. The ends with him saying "No problem" as a reply to the caller's "thank you." Though each woman protests a little that her problem is real, they accept his claims and do not argue back. As neither woman calls the Help Desk again that day, Jim assumes that the matter was resolved.

Like the examples above, most interactions rituals involving staff and ITS works involved lateral deference as discussed in Chapter 4. Notably, when staff attempted to refuse a refusal, they were described as acting like faculty, meaning they were not treating the ITS

worker as a peer but attempting to perform high status through enactments of entitlement regarded as uncivil.

Elite Responses to Refusal

While the lowest ranked workers grumbled some about the rules, they almost never challenged the ITS workers or the policies (see Chapter 6). In contrast, high status faculty, especially the senior doctors, prominent researchers, and the highest levels of administration, were not so willing to concede to a first refusal by Help Desk employees (see discussion on entitlement in Chapter 4). Given that these are of the class of individuals that stay at the sort of luxury hotels discussed by Sherman, the members of the elite are accustomed to having their high status validated through the bending of rules. The passage below discusses Jim's thoughts on the importance of status differences for how users interact with the ITS workers refusing to accede to a special request. After we watch a disgruntled professor, who has been refused the IBM he wanted because IBM was not a preferred vendor, leave with his student trailing silently behind:

> Jim begins to give his thoughts on the different types of users they deal with at the college. First, he says there are "Lots of milquetoast faculty that are submissive." He describes as them as nice, polite, understanding of the IT group's workload, and generally undemanding. He implies that their demure behavior results from their understanding of themselves as low status within academia. He compares these faculty with "The successful ones, who are really kind of <stammers> understanding" or those who aren't so nice or polite because they are enacting their higher status. Jim describes these professors thusly: "He's a very important man. He's aware he's an important man" (FN0423).

Jim saw organizational status directly linked to faculty's enactments of entitlement. Faculty with little status are described as rarely challenging the service they were provided, while those who considered themselves "important" were likely to treat the staff in an imperious manner. These users were regarded as "high touch" (a frequently used euphemism for "high maintenance") by

the ITS workers on account of their expectations that ITS workers acquiesce to their demands, perform deference, and serve them immediately. (In contrast, staff described as "high touch" were being criticized for needing repeated hands-on help with simple tasks, like saving to the server. ITS workers criticized this behavior, which they interpreted as the users' unwillingness to take responsibility for learning how to use their computer.)

As I illustrate below, high status users responded to refusal in a limited number of ways: acceptance, advice giving, refusing to leave, being rude, and going over the head of the ITS worker. While acceptance involved performances of lateral deference, the remaining were strategies to neutralize status threat.

Acceptance

Maggie: So, it feels to me like in the last year or so, my most common answer to people is, "I can't fix that" or "the university doesn't support that" or "that's not offered as a feature in Google," so I feel like I'm telling people a lot, "I can't help you."

L: Right. How did they take that?

Maggie: Um, mostly just a sigh and a shrug. You know, there's a certain amount of resignation.

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As Jim's comment on "milquetoast" faculty as well as Maggie's appraisal of her own experiences of refusal, not all high status individuals in the H-School reacted negatively to refusals by the ITS workers. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge those faculty members who took refusals in stride and did not try to persuade the ITS workers to do what they had stated they could not do. For example, some faculty politely and appreciatively accepted the Help Desk employee's directions on how to call Central IT to have their machines repaired. Others did not protest when instructed to select their computer from a "preferred vendor." Faculty who engaged with the Help Desk employees in this manner were typically well liked; as discussed in

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Chapter 4, being very nice when so many were not could benefit the faculty user by encouraging the ITS worker to proactively find ways to get what those faculty wanted when those preferences conflicted with a more flexible protocol.

That this was uncommon was highlighted by the relief that ITS workers expressed when their refusal to faculty was met by acceptance. A telling occasion was the general surprise that greeted Lola's report that a professor did not challenge her when informed that his request that both Windows and Macintosh operating systems be installed on his laptop (i.e., dual boot) was denied and he would have to choose one or the other. They had anticipated a protracted argument arising from the refusal. The Help Desk employees tended to be a bit nervous about relaying such information, as faculty were not opposed to berating the messenger. ITS workers did not think that users should always acquiesce unquestioningly to their refusals, but they did prefer that any creative problem solving take the form of discussion among peers with different realms of expertise, not faculty's attempts at status conferral.

Advice Giving

Sometimes faculty engaged in a passive aggressive form of acceptance meant to neutralize the status threat of being asked to wait, being denied a purchase request, or being refused a service. While not rejecting the ITS workers' refusal outright, they expressed their displeasure by giving the ITS worker "advice" about how the Help Desk should be run. On more than one occasion I heard a faculty member remark caustically to the ITS worker after having been denied a peripheral or software, "You should provide what I need." This was uncivil for several reasons. First, by saying "you," the user conflates the ITS worker and the organizational policies they must uphold. The refusal becomes at least partially personalized. Even if the user is complaining just about organizational policy by using you in a plural or metonymic sense to

refer to the ITS unit as a whole, it still collapses the support worker and the policies developed by administrators. Help Desk workers have to work hard to not take such statements personally, something I discuss at length in Chapter 7.

Second, the speaker's use of "should" makes the statement an imperative sentence that gives an order. Recalling my discussion of faculty's responses to status threat in Chapter 4, advice givers reaffirmed their high status as well as the faculty/staff binary as diffuse statuses. Faculty users often overestimated their facility with computers, making their advice not only presumptuous but often factually inaccurate. Alice bristled with irritation when she told me about a faculty member who had resisted the move from XP to Windows 7 because he had been hard to persuade about the security flaws that would arise after Microsoft stopped supporting the operating system. She thought she was done with him, but he continued to nettle her by asking on occasion why the college was not moving to Windows 8, since that was the more advanced OS. He refused Alice's expertise with managing the large scale deployment of computers in an instructional environment, incivility arising from his continued attempts to have her follow his advice about operating systems.

A slightly different version of advice giving was when users rejected the ITS workers' expertise by re-requesting services that had been denied them already. At the H-School, a visiting scholar visited the Help Desk at least three time to petition for an Ethernet connection in his lab for his laptop. Even the usually unflappable Isaac criticized the man for his attempts to persuade Isaac to bend the rules about secure network access. Similarly, the P-School ITS workers complained about a graduate student who arrived at the Help Desk every week complaining that his laptop was not accessing the network printer. Every week the ITS workers informed him that he needed to change his password, which the user steadfastly refused to do.

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The incivility of refusing the ITS workers' expertise by rejecting their diagnoses was magnified by his repeated requests.

Overall, advice giving was abhorred by the ITS workers, who interpreted such remarks as expressions of faculty disregard for their expertise. To advise a support worker how to do their job, particularly as a passive-aggressive response to a refusal, is tantamount to telling them they are unable to do their jobs. As discussed in Chapter 4, ITS workers considered these some of the most injurious slights against them. Users who were mean or cranky but did not reject the expertise of the ITS workers could be written off as having a bad day, part of the bad behavior expected of faculty up against deadlines. In contrast, those who implicitly rejected ITS workers' skill by responding to refusals with advice giving actively (re)produced the faculty/staff binary as diffuse statuses by extending their status as disciplinary experts to a generalized assumption of expertise with all endeavors.

Refusing to Leave

Users just stare there and look at you like ... I have a cat at home. She's very sick but she just stares and looks at me because she's hungry. "Please feed me, please feed me. Do something. Please feed me." And literally, I was getting frustrated because this user's just looking at me, and I'm like, "Really, I'm not lying to you! There's nothing I can do! You sending me these sympathy 'please feel bad for me' waves is not helping me." - Nathalie

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A common response to refusal by ITS workers was to simply persist in one's request until a dead end was reached or an ITS worker gave in and granted either their request or gave them priority in the queue. Refusing to leave involved faculty who, upon being told they would have to wait for service, planted themselves firmly at the Help Desk ledge and refused to leave until an ITS worker could accompany them to fix their problem. As discussed in Chapter 4, this was Otto's highly effective strategy. Despite any legitimate claim on the Help Desk's services,

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he was given assistance simply because he was willing to stand at the Help Desk for extended periods of time, asking again and again why no one was free, complaining about the decline in their customer service, and making inaccurate assessments of his computer's problems.

I observed similar behavior by a female professor:

Just then, the (white) woman professor with the dark hair returns [about 15 minutes after her first visit to the Help Desk.] in a huff. She's upset because she was trying to work with a tech rep to install a microscope but can't. She says, "It's an issue of no admin privileges, so can't install software." Jim responds: "Is Andre not with you anymore? Let me see if I can find him and get him up there." He implies that she can go ahead back to her lab as he turns to go to the back. She doesn't move, saying assertively "I want to stand here and find out if it's going to happen or not." She leans on the ledge and sighs, watching him go to and fro from the back offices. (FN0402)

Though refusing to leave seems a fairly peaceable strategy, it was no more appreciated by the Help Desk employees that throwing a fit when told to wait. In both cases, by refusing to wait, high status users showed themselves unwilling to accord ITS workers the right of professionals to organize their work as they best see fit.

In these instances, high status users kept asking for help until someone acquiesced to bump them to the front of the queue. Though the users were just trying to assuage their own frustration with malfunctioning technology, their unwillingness to comply with queuing was another act of incivility that (re)produced faculty as higher status than staff. By attempting to dictate to ITS workers how to organize their work and prioritize requests, they treated them as subordinates and denied their expertise.

Being Rude

As discussed in Chapter 4, faculty were occasionally rude to ITS workers who refused their requests. Several interviewees told about memorable instances of being yelled at, cursed at, or having objects be thrown at them. On one occasion I watched as an assistant dean badgered

Isaac about a laptop that was not doing what he wanted. In these interactions, faculty claimed

their right to freer emotional expression to communicate their displeasure (see Chapter 7). When

faculty were not challenged for this behavior, as was the rule, they (re)produced the faculty/staff

distinction as an organizational status hierarchy.

   At other times, being rude was more passive-aggressive. In one instance, a jointly-

appointed faculty member called to report a problem with her password. Jim attempted to

troubleshoot her problem but quickly realized that her issue would have to be handled by the ITS

unit in her other department because of the division of labor occasioned by centralization. When

he told her this, she retorted "I don't have time for that." Jim remained pleasant on the phone but

upon hanging up unleashed a torrent of invectives. The next day she arrives at the Help Desk,

expecting the H-School ITS workers to solve her problem. Jim recognizes her and after a phone

call to a systems administrator that verifies that the faculty member's issue must be dealt with by

the other department, Jim tries again to have the woman call the number he has given her. She

refuses, saying she tried the number she was given but that no one answered. At this point, Jim

rolls his eyes a little but picks up the phone and calls the other IT unit himself. He speaks for a

minute to the individual on the phone and then hands the phone to the faculty member. She

listens for a minute and provides a few pieces of information. The call ends and she hands the

phone back to Jim. She says, "My problem is with the account in the other department. I have

to contact the systems administrator there." With that she leaves, saying good bye but offering

neither a thank you nor an apology for the incivility of rejecting Jim's original and correct

assessment of her problem. Jim goes silent, withholding any emotional labor more than a nod to

acknowledge her remark and another at her good bye, any sympathy he had washed away by the

force of her rudeness. Jim was livid after her departure, his usual jocular snark replaced with

acute and vocal irritation at how she ignored his advice and then seemed so keen to act upon the other ITS worker's instructions despite them having been the same instructions. Instances like these frustrated ITS workers immensely. By dismissing Jim's advice out of hand but then announce the same information triumphantly as the other Help Desk's answer, Jim felt his knowledge had been disrespected.

The result of these interactions was that faculty (re)produced their organizational high status by enacting their sense of entitlement to deference from support workers. Being rude in response to refusal is a way to neutralize status threat by inducing acquiescence in low-status staff who could be fired for engaging in similar behaviors if they were defined as insubordination.

Going over the ITS Worker

The highest status workers responded to refusal with creative problem solving. Rather than explicitly protest policies that could not be circumvented because of HIPAA, they used their authority and social capital to find solutions that suited their desires. A prime example was when the head of the college secured the CIO Sabrina's permission to take advantage of a technicality that would allow her to keep her current tablet:

> Sue discusses that the new head of the school was having tablet issues – had tablet that they typically don't support but she finagled it such that they considered it "donated" to the department so they would work on it. The problem now is that apparently the programs she wants won't actually load on the OS she has. Someone asked if this had been explained to her yet, prompting a wry response of "no but soon" and a low rumbling from the rest of the staff. (FN0718).

Though the Help Desk employees were slightly irritated with the new head's problem solving, they were far more incensed that this "solution" would generate more work. Rather than acknowledge the ITS workers' attempts to manage their ever expanding workload or use

departmental funds to purchase a compliant tablet, she refused their advice and increased their burden. Her failure to acknowledge this extra labor was the ultimate act of entitlement, (re)producing her elite status. Similarly, faculty occasionally petitioned the CIO to allow them administrator rights to their computers, saying they could not waste time contacting the Help Desk. Frequently, though, faculty with admin privileges downloaded viruses or caused other serious problems that required hours to repair. The ultimate indignity was that faculty who caused these problems were unable to see and/or refused to acknowledge the work it caused the Help Desk employees.

While the H-School Help Desk focused their ire on the faculty who went over their heads to speak to Alice or Sabrina, the P-School split their irritation equally between the CIO and the individual user. The CIO of the P-School had a bad reputation among his the ITS workers, including the Help Desk manager, for siding with faculty and "throwing [them] under the bus." Unlike Alice's Help Desk employees who were empowered to enforce policy or ask Alice to intervene when the user was vehemently contesting a refusal, the CIO did little to protect his ITS workers from the incivilities of faculty. During my observation, Geordie and the others seethed that the CIO had reprimanded them for failing to complete a service request for a faculty member, because the faculty member had been consistently unwilling to reply to the ITS workers' emails trying to set a time for the service visit. These instances even more strongly (re)produced the faculty/staff binary as hierarchical statuses.

Like other instances of refusing a refusal, faculty's willingness to go over the heads of the ITS workers to seek exemptions from their superiors was regarded as a sign of disrespect. ITS workers interpreted such behaviors as unfairly trading on their organizational status to seek special treatment; faculty were generally oblivious to the effects of enactments of entitlement.

My Last Day Nearly Ends in a Shouting Match

The most contentious event I experienced at the Help Desk occurred on my last day at the H-School, a very muggy Friday in July. Lola and I were at the Help Desk, her reformatting a computer, me writing field notes. Suddenly a post-doc (white, female, and young) rushes into the room and in a very garbled manner tells Lola that she is having problems with her computer. Given her panicky demeanor, Lola assumes she's a doctor with a patient about to arrive and asks, "What's the exam room number?" The women, with irritation in her voice, says "It's not an exam room; it's the resident room on the fourth floor." Lola nods, seeing now that the post doc's problem is not clinical and does not require immediate attention, and asks for her computer's number. The post doc responds in a clipped tone: "There is no number, or if there is, I don't know it." Lola kind of nods again and then tells her that she will put the ticket in and someone will come and look at the computer when there is time, as everyone is either on vacation, at lunch, or on a service call. The woman does not take this well and screws up her face in an angry crumple. She then asks forcefully: "Is there someone else I can talk to? … I need it to be fixed right now." Lola starts to explain that she will be taken care of when there is someone available but the phone rings and she has to stop. Lola takes the call, which requires her to get up and confer with the System Administrators. The post doc paces back and forth and looks irked. I make clear to her that I am not IT and cannot help her, though she gives me a look that suggests she does not believe me.

Lola exits the Sys Admins' office and slips into the back offices without making eye contact with the post doc. After a few seconds, which seemed much longer on account of the woman's pacing, Lola comes back with Sue. Lola begins to explain to the girl that they already have a ticket in for the computer she is concerned about, which had a power supply failure and

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will need to have a new one ordered. The woman stiffens, affronted at the refusal, and immediately turns to Sue and begins to state her case. Now it becomes clearer that she is upset about some research data that she cannot access because she saved it locally to the desktop.

As mentioned above, the ITS workers tended to truly care about their users and even when criticizing their ways of asking for help or behavior, they were sympathetic to the frustrations of non-tech savvy users—except in the instances of failures to backup data. This was considered the user's responsibility, especially where the ITS workers had engaged in extensive instruction about backups, and Help Desk workers were unwilling to do the emotional labor of shouldering blame for data loss. Sue obliquely invoked these norms, asking the post doc if the other two computers in the residents' room were working. The post doc replies yes but says that she cannot find her data in the server folder. She ripples with anxiety and irritation, stating forcefully in the face of Sue's impassiveness, "I need to make sure my data still exists. It's my research data." Sue does not acknowledge her urgent tone and asks, "So you didn't save it locally?" The post doc replies, "I didn't" and then explains that she had been using a link to the server space that one of the Help Desk employees had installed. Sue nods, a slight squint in her eyes suggesting she does not believe the woman, and says, "Where it would be …" trailing off because there are only two places it might be: the server or the local disk.

Sue changes her approach and looks at the computer to my right on the rear desk and asks the post doc, "Did you try to log into this computer? If you save to the network, you can log into that computer or any computer and get the data." The post doc replies that she had not looked for it on our computer and whines, "I can't find it when I'm logged into another computer." They go around again about whether or not she saved it locally or on the server, it becoming clear to me and Lola that the girl either was confused about where she saved her data or was

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trying to save face. When the girl insists she did not save it locally, Sue repeats herself, "You

can log into that computer right there and get it." The girl bristles and spits out: "This is my

research, it's very important to me." Sue is wonderfully unsympathetic and tells her, "Oh. Well,

if you saved it locally and the hard drive crashed you can't get back." The girl blanches, which

Sue ignores, instead turning to Lola and saying for the benefit of all of us, "So, you can see that

the ticket says the power supply on that device is dead and not going to boot up." Interestingly,

their squabble about the hard drive versus the server precludes Sue from offering a reassuring

explanation of the problem, which is that a dead power supply is very different from a dead hard

drive and a new power supply will allow the post doc access to her local disk, but since the post

doc will not admit to having saved her data locally, Sue keeps this to herself. In a subtle act of

resistance, Sue withholds the emotional labor of explaining the post doc's data is safe since only

the power supply was identified as having issues because the post doc has adamantly refused to

lose face by admitting the possibility that she saved her work to the hard drive. Because the post

doc refuses to admit her culpability, Sue tacitly agrees to pretend that post doc is right and thus

removes from discussion any solutions contingent upon the post doc admitting she saved her data

to the desktop.

By now, Lola has managed to coax the post doc behind the desk and asked her to log into

the spare computer used for troubleshooting. When they find her server folder, the data she is

concerned about is not there. This prompts another question from Sue about the post doc's

server folder, which the post doc does not respond to, instead stammering about how she is upset

by her missing data and that if it really is missing then her "whole life is going to be ruined."

Lola and I both see a look of irritation flash across Sue's face, causing Lola to tell Sue that she

will take care of the post doc and Sue should return to her interrupted lunch. Sue nods and returns to her desk in the back without another word.

With Sue gone, Lola and the post doc try again to find her files on the server, as Lola has taken up Sue's passive-aggressive strategy of working from the premise that the post doc is absolutely correct about having saved her work on the server. Lola asks, "Which folder were you saving things to on the server? Your user folder?" The woman peers at the screen and does not respond to Lola's question. Lola tries again: "Do you know the name of the department network drive folder?" The woman responds with clear frustration in her voice, "I don't know. There was shortcut on the desktop that someone here put on the computer. That's what I was using." Lola gets the woman's email address and clicks through a few screens on her computer trying to find the "missing" files. After a few seconds, she says, "I don't see anything in there." She turns around to the girl, who stammers some more about "Last I checked … the short cut they made for me." Lola repeats herself, "This is the path to your user folder, so that means the data might be locally saved." The girl stammers, "But I know they made me a server shortcut. That's what I've been using." Lola asks who that was. The girl just replies, "Someone from IT." Lola tries another search but comes up empty handed. She tells the girl they will amend the ticket they have already put in and will help her recover her data as soon as they can. We both hold our breath a little, waiting for the post doc's reaction.

The woman is silent as she circles back to the front of the desk but soon takes an angry tone, "I've never had to put in a ticket before. They never asked us for stuff like this." This makes me bristle, knowing that she making false statements to try and get her way. Lola does not visibly react to her statement and just asks, "You think it was how long ago that they put the shortcut on for you? A month ago?" The girl responds curtly, "Months ago."

Lola begins poking through the ticket queue, eventually announcing "Here's something." The woman has a serious look on her face, still bristling with anxious energy. Lola tries to stay cheerful, and starts another attempt to connect to the post doc's server folder, poking through a few screens before asking the girl to come stand beside her so she can see Lola's computer. The girl does and looks at the screen that's been pulled up. Lola asks, "Would this be you?" The girl peers at the screen and then says, "Yeah, but not all of the stuff is here." Lola replies evenly, "That's the drive they created for you, but…." The girl cuts her off, saying again "That's not all of it." Lola replies, "So that means there is more saved locally because this is the server location you were assigned." For the first time the ITS workers become forceful about having the post doc drop her efforts at saving face and admit that she is partially to blame. The woman is not happy to hear this and her anxious energy seems to grow, "I need someone to look at this now." Lola remains calm and explains about the power supply and needing to get a new one and that they can recover her data once that has happened. The post doc continues to protest, pleading that her weekend will be absolutely ruined if she is not certain that her data exists and she cannot wait and she cannot stand for her whole weekend to be ruined by doubt about her data. Lola ignores her strident tone and replies evenly, "I know last time I checked that no one is free." The girl does not accept this and continues to plead with a negative tone in her voice, "If someone can please come look at the computer, this is like my whole work, so I like need it. I know I'm asking for you to do this suddenly, but …" Lola cuts her off this time and says, "If someone gets sometime today, they can pull the hard drive and see if it's there." The girl brightens some at this and asks when. Lola replies, "Maybe before 5. I can't promise anything." The woman's face clouds over again.

Twenty minutes having passed since she first stepped into office, the post doc turns nasty and remarks that, "I know before we had helpful people who would come help you." Lola does not react visibly to this slight, just says, "Well, Isaac is at lunch, Harry is tied up, and Sue is at lunch, and that is all the staff, so no one can really help you at this moment." The woman proceeds to throw something that could be described as a tantrum without the screaming or crying, arguing with Lola and being unwilling to accept that she might have to wait. Lola just says, "Do we have a way to contact you? Email?" The woman just squints at Lola, displeased that immediate help was not forthcoming.

Suddenly, as if from nowhere, Harry emerges from Theo's office where he has apparently been in a meeting for more than an hour. The post doc sees him and waylays him. She blocks Harry's path and explains her problem with little preamble. He remarks that he does remember setting up her short cut. She kind of nods at this but continues her explanation about how she really needed to get to her data and make sure it was okay or she was going to have a terrible weekend. Lola and I just look on, flustered. Harry tries to explain to her what happened with the power supply but she does not acknowledge this and continues to bemoan how her weekend will be destroyed if she does not know if the data exists because she won't do anything but worry about it all weekend. Harry, who hasn't endured the last twenty-plus minutes of her hostility, is more receptive to her pleas and says, "Maybe we can pull the hard drive and look." She goes off with him, her anxious energy dissipated by Harry's offer of immediate assistance. Lola and I roll our eyes together and watch them leave the room,

I am so nervous as to be shaking, enraged at the incivility the post doc showed Sue and Lola and even angrier at Harry for unintentionally undermining Sue and Lola's course of action. I mutter to myself and Lola about how disappointed I am in the post doc's behavior as a fellow

academic and wander into the back office to eat a cookie and calm down, reminded by my

reaction why I left support work for graduate school ten years ago. When I enter the back office,

Sue and Jake are chatting about server issues but stop when I come in. Between bites of cookies,

I tell them I am so ashamed of her behavior and cannot believe someone would engage in such

incivility toward the staff, particularly her denigration of Lola. Sue and Jake just laugh,

dismissing the post doc as "not that bad" and launching into their own stories of users having

curse or yell at them.

This example highlights the range of strategies that high status users employ to get ITS

workers to retract a refusal of service. Not only does the post doc treat Lola unkindly and lie to

the Sue about her back up practices, she remains at the desk for more than half an hour badgering

Lola to help her immediately. She rejects all assertions that no one is free and frays my and

Lola's nerves. Only when Harry, who had not been witness to her incivility, was free and agreed

to help her did she take on a pleasant and appreciative demeanor.

That I was the only person shaken by the post doc's rude behavior and enactment of

entitlement was in and of itself distressing. Behavior that should not have been tolerated was

dismissed because she had met the very low threshold (no cursing or yelling) set for acceptable

behavior by faculty. I argue that this is an example of alienation from emotions as discussed by

Hochschild (1983). Rather than be able to respond organically to high status users' rudeness,

support workers must learn how to not take such slights personally (discussed further in Chapter

7), (re)producing faculty and staff as diffuse status differences.

Discussion

Even when they do not intend to challenge the expertise and authority of ITS workers,

users engage in incivility when steadfastly refusing to consider the reasons why a Help Desk

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employee cannot accommodate them immediately. The IT support workers I encountered did

not take joy in refusing a request and tried to, as Andre once remarked, "say 'no' as politely as

possible." As I show in the next chapter, ITS workers engaged in a great deal of emotional labor

to ease the frustrations wrought by rationalization and centralization. Negative emotions arose,

however, when users refused the ITS worker's refusal and attempted position themselves at the

front of the queue or expected to be exempted from university policies. Fundamentally, these

were attempts to undermine the complex organizational process of triaging service requests and

substitute the user's individual interests instead. Rudeness and passive-aggressive behavior

simply made the (re)production of asymmetrical organizational status much more obvious.

The behavior I observed among faculty is discussed in an article from *Slate* titled "The

Kindly Brontosaurus," written by Jessica Winters.[14]   Bracketing any discussion of how the

author's whiteness or normative femininity might make the strategies she describes more useful

to her than minority groups like black men, the article promotes a passive aggressive form of

bullying. Written in a self-congratulatory tone that makes clear her pride in this insight, Winters

describes what she calls, the "posture that will get you whatever you want, whenever you want

it" (1). She describes its use at airports thusly: you "approach the gate agent as follows. You

state your name and request. You make a clear and concise case. And then, after the gate agent

informs you that your chances of making it onto the flight are [slim] …, you nod emphatically,

say something like 'Well, I'm sure we can find a way to work this out,' and step just to the side

of the agent's kiosk." She continues, "You must stand quietly and lean forward slightly, hands

loosely clasped in a faintly prayerful arrangement. You will be in the gate agent's peripheral

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[14] http://www.slate.com/articles/life/culturebox/2013/08/the_kindly_brontosaurus_the_amazing_prehistoric_posture
_that_will_get_you.html Her identity is obvious from her picture on the *Slate* website.

vision—close enough that he can't escape your presence, not so close that you're crowding him—but you must keep your eyes fixed placidly on the agent's face at all times. … Do not speak unless asked a question. … Continue as above until the gate agent gives you a seat number." She may think this is an "amiable" mode of interaction, but I cannot imagine that many service workers would find the behavior anything but unnerving or harassing. Even the author realizes her strategy is underhanded, as she admits that such behavior will make the gate agent so desirous of getting rid of you that they will do whatever you want. Embedded in her narrative is disregard and disrespect for the service workers whom she expects to bend to her will, to allow her the exception he has denied everyone else. That she could so unnerve a gate agent to the point they might break company policy and thus threaten their job just to get rid of her is not something to be proud of. Instead, it speaks to the lengths of incivility that individuals will go to refuse a refusal.

Korzcynski and Evans (2014) argue that the managerial logic that "the customer is always right" can easily become a way to disappear bullying and harassment. The extent to which support and service workers must endure bullying-type behavior by "customers" arises from organizational practices. If managers value profit over their employees, then harassment will be ignored; where people come before profits, service workers have the organizational power to engage in refusal.

While the H-School's shared understanding of the need to comply with HIPPA made it easy to enforce some of the network security policies, Alice's steadfast practice of supporting her employees' attempts to manage protocol and reign in some faculty excesses were crucial for the Help Desk employees to engage in refusal. As my experience at the P-School showed, managers who automatically side with high status users against the ITS workers are not respected. Like

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the sexually-harassed waitress who is told that if she were a better server that she would not be bothered, the high status of faculty meant all blame fell squarely on the ITS workers, stoking general resentment unlike anything I observed at the H-School.

Conclusion

The experiences of IT support worker shows that allowing customers to bend and break rules is not the only means through which high status individuals (re)produce their dominance. As I document in this paper, high status individuals who experience refusal engage in a variety of strategies meant to refuse being denied their request. Though not always successful, these strategies effectively (re)produced the unequal statuses of the interactants.

Chapter 7: Shock Troops and Shock Absorbers: IT Support as Emotional Laborers in the Rationalizing University

"When somebody comes to us for help, they always think it's an emergency" – Sue

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During my interview with Antonio, an IT Support worker in an engineering department with more than a hundred faculty, staff, and graduate students, I asked him to describe the issues experienced most commonly by his users. Instead of discussing technology per se, like error-prone programs or faulty equipment or the intractability of printers, his response focused on the emotional impact of computer problems on users:

> A user may get frustrated because something is not working the way it's supposed to. Say an update [to a program] happened, and it was working fine [before, but now it's not], so they may get frustrated at that and that's something that's understandable. I don't take it personally when they get upset because I know they're not upset with me. I know they're upset with the technology not working the way it's supposed to, so they're maybe verbalizing their own upset. So I say, "No worries, I'm here taking care of it to make it right."

Though the practical accomplishment of his job involved the arcana of maintaining servers, networks, and labs full of expensive machines, Antonio identified his key asset as an ITS worker as being able "to calm the users down." Like all the ITS workers I encountered, Antonio understood his primary organizational responsibility as extending beyond maintaining the computer infrastructure to helping users have positive and productive encounters with the available technologies. Technical skill was described as a necessary but not sufficient condition

for IT support work, as ameliorating user frustration required skilled emotional labor, especially in the face of screaming or panicky users.

In the field of information systems research, user frustration, defined as "when the computer acts in an unexpected way that annoys the user and keeps the user from reaching their task goals" (Lazar et al 2006a, 189), is assumed to be remediable through better design alone (Besserie et al 2004, Besserie et al 2006). Empirical studies suggest that users spend up to half their time in interaction with computers experiencing frustration, arising from causes as varied as malware, crashing operating systems, unclear menus, broken software, and network connectivity issues (Lazar, Jones, and Shneiderman 2006, Lazar et al. 2006). Degree of frustration is related to individual feelings of self-efficacy with technology. Users with strong feelings of competence with computers will attempt to fix their own problems; users who feel incompetent may simply throw up their hands and see their problems as unsolveable. In acute cases, frustration combined with helplessness in the face of technology results in a refusal to engage with computers at all; in less extreme cases, animosity develops between the individual and their machine making mundane work enervating.

The impact of user frustration can have substantial organizational consequences, like decreased productivity and negative affect leading to increased incivility. While information systems researchers concentrate on creating better technology (e.g., less confusing menus, more stable networks, better virus protection) to decrease user frustration (Lazar, Jones, and Shneiderman 2006), the fact that frustration arises from a mismatch between the user's expectations and the technology with which they are engaged means that improving technology can provide only a partial fix. There is also a need for interactional assistance, the type of help depending upon the user's degree of competence with technology and the realism of their

expectations. Assistance can range from detailed instruction on how to use a program to an explanation of why network speeds slow to a crawl when users' demands exceed its capacity. In all instances, the goal is to replace frustration with a sense of control and competence conducive to productivity, which may or may not involve a technical fix.

Organizationally, IT Support workers have the responsibility for ameliorating user frustration and getting people back to work. Their days are filled with rescuing users from negative experiences with technology, like helping a professor convert a document to an obscure format by their funding agency's deadline or restoring files a Human Resources manager accidentally deleted just before her meeting with a Dean. Everett C. Hughes described this as "the problem of dealing routinely with what are the crises of others" (1958, 46). Not only must the Help Desk employees provide technical fixes, but they must do so while calming down anxious users. How this is done is intimately tied to the status of the user. Help must be provided in such a way as to allow the user to maintain their dignity and positive self-image, which can prove tricky when asking for help is in and of itself a possible threat to status (see Chapter 3). In the shifting terrain of the increasingly rationalized university, these processes can prove complicated if the status-based expectations of the user are contradicted by university policy or procedure.

In this chapter, I show how the emotional labor of IT Support workers plays a part in the (re)production of university organizational status hierarchies. I begin by discussing how IT Support is uniquely positioned as a service work occupation that combines technology coded as masculine with care work and emotional labor coded as feminine. Unlike "masculine" service work jobs where aggressive or dominant behavior is expected, IT Support encourages caring for the user. I then discuss how ITS workers' emotional labor intersects with the status order of the

university. Using the example of unrest caused by the changes being experienced by the marketization of the contemporary university (see Chapter 1), I show how ITS workers play a role in easing the implementation of unpopular change. My central argument is that ITS workers are both the shock troops and shock absorbers of changes wrought by the importation of organizational logics from private industry into higher education. As shock troops, IT workers are key organizational figures for translating policy into practice, informing users of new rules and procedures. This process requires much emotional labor, because Help Desk workers seek to communicate new rules in ways that do not upset the users, especially faculty experiencing a loss of rights or privileges. As shock absorbers, the ITS workers endure with good cheer the anger of users unhappy with new limits being set on service provision. This took two forms: enduring the negative emotions of users but not communicating them upward to the responsible administrators and engaging in peer emotional labor to diminish the effects of users' negative affect. Overall, IT Support workers cared deeply about providing "good customer service" to their users, about doing all they could to further the research and teaching missions of the university. Extending the arguments made in Chapter 3, I show how the emotional labor dimensions of ITS work served to reproduce the faculty/staff distinction as a diffuse status difference, even in the face of organizational changes that threatened faculty's high status.

Emotional Labor and Care Work in IT Support

When the H-School Help Desk employees went on service calls or dealt with walk-ins, they did much more than repair computers or reset passwords. Interactions between ITS workers and users were multifaceted interactions in which technical fixes were executed within a context of care and encouragement. A visit to Pediatrics to fix a virus on a receptionist's computer provides a clear illustration. Claudette, an extremely affable staff member, had called because

her computer had acquired a virus. When we reached her office, she told of the virus being detected after she had been doing some research on the web, her sheepishness out of step with her usual joviality. Isaac's immediate response was to assuage Claudette's guilt over the virus, telling her that she had done exactly the right thing by removing the computer from the network and that he knew she was not doing anything she should not have. As Isaac sets about running a virus scan, Claudette apologizes a few more times and he forgives her each time. Soon, her jocularity returns, and we all laugh heartily when she jokes about just looking at pictures of cats, certainly nothing racy, during her lunch break. Over the course of the thirty minutes Isaac works on her computer, Claudette's frustration and guilt dissipated, enabling her to go back to work without the distracting dark cloud of a virus hanging over her head. When we depart, Claudette is back to her old self, offering booming thank yous as we step into the hall.

IT support work is interactive service work (see Chapter 3) with four dimensions: technical labor, pedagogical labor, care work, and emotional labor. Though a given user interaction might require only one form of labor at a time, they were typically accomplished simultaneously (Toerien and Kitzinger 2007a, 2007b). Rather than emotional labor and care work being activities performed *in addition to* technical or pedagogical labor, an ITS worker performed emotional labor and care work through *how* they provided technical and pedagogical assistance. This blending is obvious in ITS worker Greg's response to my question about what it takes to be good at IT Support: "Be able to ask questions [about the user's problem] in a way that doesn't make them feel stupid. You've got to draw as much information as you can out of them without making them feel like they don't know what they're doing." Greg describes a delicate balancing act in which the way one goes about troubleshooting a technical problem matters

almost as much as the ability to fix the problem. To maximize conceptual clarity, however, I will discuss each form of labor independently.

Technical labor consists of the maintenance of complex technologies through the application of a combination of abstract and practical knowledge (Barley and Orr 1997, 14). In organizations, technical labor denotes jobs responsible for maintaining the technological infrastructure required for professionals to do their work (Barley and Bechky 1994). For ITS workers, technical labor consists of the skilled work of troubleshooting and repairing computers, maintaining networkers, and the multitude of other tasks required to ensure proper functioning of the computer infrastructure. In the example above, Isaac's technical labor consisted of ensuring the affected computer had been removed from the network and running the programs necessary to diagnose and repair a virus. Technical labor has received attention from IT and computing researchers, particularly science and technology scholars like Greg Downey (1998, 2001) who early on called for researchers to see the internet as not an immaterial abstraction but a wholly material set of networks, servers, programs, and websites constantly maintained by humans engaged in labor (see also Das 2003). (See Chapter 3 for an extensive discussion of technicians as support workers.)

Pedagogical labor is when workers engage in (in)formal education of their students, users, and clients. This ranges from the formal work of classroom teachers to welfare caseworkers' instructions on how clients should complete a form to a lesson on retrieving voicemail given by a cell phone retailer. For IT support workers, pedagogical labor forms a major part of their job, as ITS workers have always advised users on technologies, including their operation and availability (Zabusky 1997). Isaac engaged in pedagogical labor when he gave Claudette positive reinforcement for taking the correct trouble shooting steps, subtly

encouraging this behavior to continue. At other times, Help Desk employees taught users how to change their passwords and how to go about rescuing CPUs that had been standing in water.

Though outsiders may interpret some pedagogical behavior as an attempt to transfer work from themselves to users, ITS workers saw instruction as empowering for the user. They believed that having some knowledge about their computers' issues helped decrease user frustration and being able to solve minor problems saved the user the time required to contact and/or visit the Help Desk. Instruction was only secondarily useful for ITS workers by lightening their workloads; teaching one individual in an office how to reset their password often led to that individual helping their coworkers with the same issue later, again preventing visits to the Help Desk. Nathalie spoke to this in her interview: "Some people get mad, it's like 'Why'd you give me a document? Just tell me how to do it.' Well like, because if I tell you how to do it, you're not going to learn. I want you to learn how to do it because this is a simple thing. So, I'm all about teaching people. It's teach a man to fish instead of giving him a fish." Unfortunately, most research on pedagogical labor focuses on teachers in formal settings. Only a few scholars have thought critically about the salience of informal educational moments occurring outside classrooms or patients' interactions with medical professionals (Phillips and Tinning 2011), preventing scholars from systematically considering how pedagogical labor may differ from other forms of care work.

Emotional labor was originally defined by Arlie Hochschild as "labor [that] requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (1983, 7). In contrast to emotion work, which Hochschild describes as nonpaid emotional management, emotional labor is conducted within workplaces and at high risk of control by management (1983, 7). The particular emotion produced in a

interaction depends on the organizational context, like flight attendants creating a "sense of being

cared for in a convivial and safe place" (1983, 7) while bill collectors are expected to induce

compliance through "a grimace and the raised voice of command" (1983, 137). In the above

example, Isaac engages in emotional labor by dissipating Claudette's frustration and returning

her to her usual cheery outlook. Among ITS workers, calming distressed users was a routine

activity, though not one scripted by management. (This contrasts with routinized call center tech

support in which interaction with the user is tightly scripted by computer programs that instruct

workers on the precise language and steps used to solve user problems [Ng and Mitter 2005,

Poster 2007, Mirchandani 2005]). Emotional labor has been a central concern for scholars of

work since Hochschild first named the phenomenon. Symbolizing the shift from a Fordist

regime of manual labor to the post-industrial world of interactive service work, emotional labor

is representative of the shift from organizations merely controlling bodies to their colonization of

workers' emotions and self-presentation (Korczynski 2005, Korczynski and MacDonald 2009).

Scholars have argued about just how deleterious emotional labor is for workers, ranging from

Hochschild's (1983) original concern that individuals become alienated from their own emotions

to Robin Leidner's (1993) argument for the self-protective elements of scripted service

interactions to Steven Lopez's (2006) efforts to identify the structural conditions for

organizations to encourage real emotional and social connections between workers and clients.

Researchers have noted that emotional labor is not the province only of service workers, as white

collar and managerial workers are expected to possess soft skills manifested in calm, rational

professionalism (Bolton 2005, see the literature on status and anger discussed in Chapter 7).

Research on emotional labor shows that cultural stereotypes about men as

rational/unemotional and women as emotional/irrational are built into expectations for jobs typed

as masculine and feminine (Acker 1990, Guy and Newman 2004, Martin 1999, Steinberg and

Figart 1999). Emotional labor in "women's" jobs is focused on making others feel happy and

cared for, like waitresses (Paules 1991, Erickson 2009), paralegals (Pierce 1996), daycare

workers (Murray 1996, 2000), nannies (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001, Ehrenreich and Hochschild

2003), and secretaries (Pringle 1988). In contrast, men's emotional labor is often oriented

toward making others feel negative emotions in the pursuit of compliance, like criminal

investigators (Stenross and Kleinman 1989, Heinsler et al. 1990), bill collectors (Rafaeli and

Sutton 1991, Hochschild 1983), and mixed martial arts fighters (Hirose and Pih 2009, Vaccaro,

Shrock, and McCabe 2011). Because emotional labor is so strongly gendered, individuals in

gender atypical jobs may experience threats to their sense of self when asked to perform

emotional labor at odds with their gender identity; alternately, they may attract opprobrium for

their deviance (Williams 1995). ITS workers are engaged in a "men's" occupation but expected

to induce positive feelings through ameliorating users' frustration. Julian Orr's (1996) *Talking*

about Machines discusses similar expectations for positive emotional labor when he discusses

how Xerox technicians sought to make their clients happy. This hints at IT support workers as a

whole being expected to engage in forms of positive emotional labor distinct from the negative

emotional labor (e.g., inducing fear, forcing to comply) common to "men's" jobs.

Finally, *care work* or caring labor refers to "occupations in which workers are supposed

to provide a face-to-face service that develops the human capabilities of the recipient" (England,

Budig, and Folbre 2002, 455). Human capabilities are defined broadly to include "health, skills,

or proclivities that are useful to oneself or others," including "physical and mental health,

physical skills, cognitive skills, and emotional skills" (England, Budig, and Folbre 2002, 455).

Care work underlies Isaac's entire interaction with Claudette, as he seeks to create a workplace

environment in which Claudette can have a positive and productive experience with the computing technology on which she depends. Much of what ITS workers do to insure pleasant and empowering encounters between individuals and technology can be considered care work. Like emotional labor, care work has been extensively examined, particularly as it is gendered feminine and jobs that require care work as a key task are low status and low paid (England 2005). An important line of feminist research shows that men are entirely capable of providing quality care in work or domestic settings as long as their interactants do not excuse them from caring duties (Risman 1998, Gerstel and Gallagher 2001, Russell 2007).

In contrast to emotional labor, which is examined in both its feminine and masculine guises, care work is largely characterized as feminine, researchers focusing on nursing, teaching, and mothering-like activities (England 2005, Oliker 2011). Some examples exist of masculine modes of care work, most notably a literature on men caregivers of ill family, which suggest that men may import "managerial" models of care into their nursing of their wives (Calasanti and King 2007). Alternately, masculinity may be performed in care work by engaging in caring activities but withholding positive or nurturing emotional labor (Williams 1989, 1995, 1992), examples being doctors who treat patients without attention to their emotional wellbeing (Ehrenreich and English 2005[1978]) and personal trainers that care for their clients' bodies but avoid friendship or other emotional involvement (George 2008). Men workers expected to engage in feminine care work may experience status threat and refuse to perform care work, like waiters that disengage themselves from the nurturing and emotional aspects of serving (Erickson 2009). Among the ITS workers with whom I interacted, refusing to perform positive emotional labor in tandem with care work was uncommon, though not unheard of. One P-School Help Desk Employee who approximated the nerd archetype seemed occasionally abrasive in his

interactions with users, taking an authoritative rather than friendly tone and making minimal effort to spare anyone's feelings of guilt or stupidity. Alternately, Sue often engaged with Help Desk visitors in a rather efficient and unelaborated manner that verged on terseness. While she was generally supportive and friendly in her interactions with users, her concern for solving problems quickly was characterized by a brusqueness not common among her colleagues. For the most part, though, ITS workers engaged in a large amount of care work in an occupation coded as masculine because of its technical focus.

Because of these care work and emotional labor elements, IT Support is a unique subsector of the Information Technology field. As a whole, Information Technology professionals are stereotyped as non-relational and masculine, the province of "nerds" and "geeks" with poor social skills but great talent with code and video games (Kendall 1999, 2000, Comeau and Kemp 2007, Bury 2011, Adams 2007, Dunbar-Hester 2008). Research suggests that women shy away from STEM occupations out of fear that they will be perceived as non-relational and thus inappropriately feminine (Faulkner 2007, Kvande 1999, Drybaugh 1999, Wilson 2003, Phillips 2005). In pop culture, IT Support professionals in particular are characterized as masculine computer nerds with abrasive personalities and a penchant for making fun of users for having computer problems (Margolis and Fisher 2002, Margolis 2008, Misra 2010). *Dilbert*, *The Office* US and UK, *Saturday Night Live*, and *The Big Bang Theory* have all depicted ITS workers as introverted, socially maladjusted, unconcerned about the user, and abrasive.

In practice, however, the men and women ITS workers I encountered eschewed (sometimes explicitly) these archetypes, arguing vehemently against models of computer support that made the user feel bad about having problems or asking for help. IT Support workers were

cognizant of the fact that their users were not computer professionals and as a result worked hard

to provide assistance that neither spoke over the heads of nor down to their users. When I asked

Norma what it took to be good at IT Support, her answer focused on rebutting the stereotype of

the uncaring computer technician:

> Well you need to have a customer support mindset and a lot of folks don't know that. They get into it and they really get impatient with people, but you have to try to think like normal people which is hard for a lot of these professional IT people, you know .. <imitates male coworker> "Well, so and so tried to plug this into her computer! Isn't that hilarious?" And it's like, well .. I could see where that might happen, instead of .. you know .. try to think like the other guy, empathize more. They need to have a sense of empathy without getting all huffy. Um and trying to explain things, um in terms that people understand because a lot of times they don't do that either. They're like, "What do you mean you don't know how to press the F7 key when the BIOS is starting up! Come on, do I have to show you that?" <snickers a little>

Norma's opinion was shared by nearly all of my interviewees. ITS workers from across

the university spoke of people they knew or had known who were technically talented but could

not manage the required emotional labor. At the H-School, Andre remembered a student worker

majoring in Computer Science that lasted only one term. Though the student had been great with

computers, even Alice used him in her own example of an ITS worker too shy to provide the sort

of customer service required by the H-School users. Hugh put it most concisely: "I have

technical answers and I have regular common sense answer for people." Others mentioned

skilled technicians who lacked good people skills that either through their own initiative or a

manager's urging moved into positions like Systems Administrator or Network Security that

required less contact with users. As mentioned before, however, the likelihood that I did not

interview or observe the most introverted and non-relational ITS workers due to self-selection

into my interview sample means that I must urge tentativeness in extending these expectations to

all ITS workers. Because my subjects attested to the existence of colleagues who more closely

fit the "nerd" archetype but I myself did not interview any such ITS workers, more research

needs to be done to include these individuals.

Crucially, the expectation of care work was extended to men ITS workers as much as

women. Neither the men nor the women ITS workers I encountered excused their men

colleagues from emotional labor and care work, and men who resisted engaging in positive

emotional labor were derogated. This was evident in the frequency with which narratives about

poor customer service among ITS workers often discussed men whose practices mimicked the

stereotypes. Norma's quote above speaks to her and others' disapproval of men who refused to

engage in care work. Jane drew on the same tropes to answer my question about what

constituted poor customer service by ITS workers: "Some of the IT people I've met will be very

degrading towards users. On some of the IT mailing lists that I'm on, I'll see someone complain

about a user in their department and they're belittling them. It's awful to belittle someone

because they just don't know any better, is one thing. Part of [an ITS worker's] job, in my

opinion, is to be teaching someone to do something." Sam made a similar remark when talking

about the customer service style he tried to inculcate in his Help Desk unit consisting mostly of

men: "These guys know to never make somebody feel like they asked a stupid question."

Moreover, no one seemed to question men ITS workers who professed to enjoy the care work

aspects of their occupation and the men themselves spoke openly about the pleasure they got

from helping users. I quote Damon's enthusiastic recounting of helping a user at length:

> Sometimes, though, you have the user who doesn't know what's going on. And,
> unfortunately, they're kind of lost. But, at the same time, we're like, okay, we can work
> with you, calm down, we got your back. <both laugh> And, but, that's the next thing that
> I do. I confidently reaffirm them, we're going to get through this, we're going to solve it.
> We can do it, we can do it! <laughs> You know? If you just hold on, we can do it!
> <laughs> And, so they're like, okay, we can do this!

The importance placed upon care work and emotional labor meant that IT managers often

gave equal weight to technical skill and soft skills when hiring, especially at the entry level.

Though credential expectations have increased in computing occupations like programmer and

systems analyst since the early 2000s, IT support maintains the tradition of hiring individuals

with only basic skills and a college degree of any kind and then providing on-the-job training.

Most of the women (13 of 17) and some of the men (4 of 15) ITS workers lacked degrees in

computer science or related STEM fields. At the H-School, Andre, Sue, and Jim all lacked CS

or STEM degrees but were considered great with users. Alice herself had majored in Psychology

and Chemistry and learned on the job. Others attained their degrees only after entering IT

through Help Desk positions and deciding they enjoyed and were good at working on computers,

including two of the men ITS workers. A few women who began their university careers as

administrative assistants moved into ITS positions in the 1980s and '90s and then earned

Bachelor's of Business Administration with a focus on IT. Among managers concerned to hire

women into ITS positions, lack of formal training was rarely considered a barrier, especially at

the entry level. One IT manager in an engineering department said that he had been successful in

recruiting great women ITS workers from the humanities and social sciences, like a history

major with no formal technical training who proved to be a great technician and excellent in

interaction with the faculty. Alice in the H-School explained her Help Desk hiring practices

thusly:

> So yeah, I think ... I think it's important that the personality is right. You know, <clears throat> I've had some great technicians who aren't that great at support. And it's not that theory, that the customer's always right. It's the ability to talk to them in a way that ... you get the information that you need without making them feel uncomfortable and that you are fast and efficient so that you're not interrupting them. I mean, let's face it, we're not in an environment where ... you know, faculty are very different um ... <clears throat> and someone who has a ... that adaptability with that ease and comfort of talking

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to ... anyone. And then, knows how to fix the problem, so ... you know, there's a blend ... right? There's a skill set, there's a personality trait that they have to be somewhat of a trouble-shooter, they have to understand the technology, and if they don't they at least know how to get to the point where they can ask the right question.

Although giving slightly greater weight to interpersonal skills than technical skills might seem at cross-purposes with ITS workers' responsibilities for the computer infrastructure, few IT managers found such practices problematic. Abstract problem solving skills were far more important than absolute levels of knowledge. The rapidly changing world of ITS and the infinite number of devices, programs, and operating systems, meant that it was impossible for any one person to know even a fraction of what there was to know. When asked about the necessary technical skills for ITS work, more than one individual quipped quite seriously that an ability to use Google to find answers to unfamiliar problems was the number one skill requirement. The ideal ITS worker was usually described as combining a positive interactional approach with a willingness to seek help through research and from peers. This contrasts with constructions of "nerd" masculinity based on individualism and heroic problem solving (Cooper 2000).

Of course, affability could not cover for a real lack of technical skill. The unit's shared irritation at ex-employee Higgins was palpable years later, largely because mistakes Higgins had made still came back to haunt them. While I was present, Harry pulled some spare computers after a flood put nearly a dozen computers out of commission only to find that they were unformatted despite Higgins supposedly having put them away ready for later use. The H-School Help Desk employees recalled that Higgins had at first been adored by the faculty and staff for his positive attitude and enthusiasm . He quickly became loathed by his peers for habit of not following through with assigned tasks or promised services. Higgins avoided censure for a while as his coworkers completed his tickets to avoid user anger, though as Wallace put it,

"eventually, he had everybody in the building mad at him and it got back to Alice and Sabrina."
He was ultimately let go when the extent to which he been shirking his duties was laid bare in a
confrontation with a department head.   Though details were sketchy in all Help Desk
employees' partial recountings of the event, the overall moral was that Higgins' might have
continued to get away with his derelictions much longer had he not crossed someone with
enough power to lodge a complaint to which the CIO had no choice to respond seriously.

Status was a constant undercurrent that structured ITS workers' interactions with users.
Returning to Alice's quote about hiring, the imbrication of status with care work and emotional
labor in IT support is clear. Her concern was not merely to hire workers that could get along
with users generally, but individuals who could get along with faculty, defined as a unique group
with possibly problematic proclivities (see Chapter 4). As discussed in chapter 3, support work
is necessarily about maintaining status structures. Care work and positive emotional labor
frequently occurs within asymmetrical power relations in which low status service workers care
for and extend deference to higher status others (Glenn 2010). Secretaries take care of managers
(Pringle 1988, Davies 1982, Kennelley 2002, 2006); service workers make paying customers feel
like kings (Newman 1999, Leidner 1993, Korczynski and Evans 2013, Sherman 2007, Hanser
2008, 2012). The exceptions are doctors and other professionals with privileged responsibility
for physical and emotional care (George 2008). Just as high status individuals are considered
entitled to the labor of low status others, so are high status individuals entitled to a particular
emotional tenor and degree of care in their relationships with support workers. Deference
(discussed in Chapter 3), which is enacted through "the little salutations, compliments and
apologies which punctuate social intercourse" and communicate one individual's esteem for
another (Goffman 1967, 57), epitomizes emotional labor.

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I now turn to the experiences of IT support workers as emotional laborers.

Emotional Labor in the Changing University

As discussed, the increased managerialism and marketization of the university has catalyzed concern among some faculty about their diminishing status. When status threat is combined with frustration over problematic technology and intensified by changing rules and/or a loss of entitlement, there is a significant possibility of contentious interactions between users and Help Desk employees. For the rest of this chapter, I discuss ITS workers' performances of emotional labor as having two major types: shock troops of a new era of decreased entitlement and increased constraint by users and shock absorbers of the discontent arising from the decreasing privileges accruing to faculty status.

Shock Troops

I hardly ever would say no to someone, I'd just do it. I guess I bent the rules a little bit. Well, she called me after I retired <chuckles> and said, I want to do this! I told her to go talk to Sabrina, the CIO, and do this and do that. And they wouldn't let her on. You know, what she should have told them was that the department paid for some of the machine and then it would have been fine. But she didn't, she told them it was her machine and that was the end of it. So, there's little stuff that I used to do that they don't do anymore, which is fine. You have to have rules. But at the same time, I always thought it was lazy of people. They make hard and fast rules so they don't have to do it anymore. We're not going to do this anymore, too hard, no! But some people could really use the help, you know. So I hardly ever told anyone no. If it was outrageous or bad computing practice, then I'd say no. But in a lot of cases, no didn't exist for me. I think that's why people liked me. <laughs> - Wallace

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When I asked Wallace to define good and bad customer service by IT Support workers, his answer pivoted on changes brought about by rationalization and centralization. He contrasted his never-say-no approach to the limitations and constraints imposed by the new policies, suggesting that the constraints imposed by university and/or department rules are used opportunistically to forego creative problem solving. His attachment to the old model of faculty

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entitlement is clearest in his suggestion that the professor would have been best served by fibbing about the origin of the computer. Though "should have told" could be interpreted to mean the faculty user had simply forgotten to provide a piece of information that would have allowed her to legitimately do what she wanted, Wallace was actually suggesting that she make a false assertion of the computer's origins. What Wallace forgot, however, was that detailed purchasing and inventory records recorded the budgetary origins of all computers and these were used to make decisions about what services would be provided. Whereas faculty member's claims may have been taken at face value and assumed accurate in years past, such disregard for protocol could not be permitted within a system premised on strict accounting.

The service logic that reigned in the H-School Help Desk during my observation was based on careful adherence to policies of efficiency, accountability, and circumscribed spheres of responsibility. While Help Desk employees cared greatly for their users, they knew the time and the resources of the unit were finite and sought to do as much as they could with what they had. The reality of constraint was represented by an offhand comment from Sue that "Yes is not always the best answer." Much like fast food workers who politely acclimate customers to the labor they are expected to do for themselves (i.e., carry their own food, bus their own tables) (Leidner 1993), ITS workers were tasked with socializing university users to a neoliberal regime in which costs are managed carefully and faculty status comes with less entitlement than before. As Jane said, "I had someone tell me that they thought, more or less, that faculty was too pampered with expecting someone to be there constantly" (F13). Though ITS workers generally disagreed with aggressive cost-saving efforts that diminished support for users, especially as regards the academic and teaching missions of faculty, they were also well aware that their continued employment required they abide by the university's IT policies. As a result, their

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efforts walked a fine line between accommodating the desires and particularities of the user and making clear the limits of the services they could provide.

The clash between new and old service logics was highlighted when the H-School Help Desk workers had to explain to users that things Wallace had done as little as a year ago were no longer considered options. The experience of an Emeritus faculty member is instructive. Jim had accepted Dr. Kwan's laptop and his request for an upgrade with minimal commentary. Upon inspection, Jim and Harry discovered that the machine had a dual boot system in which both Mac and Windows OSs were available to the user upon start up, something Wallace had set up three years prior. Sue quashed any upgrade that maintained the dual Operating System setup, saying it made for an unstable machine, and told Harry he would have to break the news, as he was stationed at the Help Desk that day and would be the one to interact with Dr. Kwan upon his return. Knowing a refusal, or saying "no" to a user, was coming was always tense because one never knew how the user would react, especially high status users. When the Emeritus did return, he was displeased with the news and asked Harry why they refused now to do something that they had done previously, mentioning Wallace by name. Harry just replies, "That's what Sue says," indicating that he had little discretion in the matter. (He does not mention explicitly that Wallace has retired, meaning I do not know if Dr. Kwan knows this.) I think the emeritus is going to argue with Harry, but he just thinks for a second and then says, "Then I choose Windows. I'll be back Monday. Thank you." Harry is relieved that the interaction did not become contentious and repeats "Thank you" to the Dr. Kwan, who has already moved into the hall. Harry's choice of "Thank you" as a reply is somewhat out of step with the conversational norms of "thank you" being met by "you're welcome," especially since the only real action on the part of the Emeritus was a non-contentious interaction. Given the possibility that the

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professor could have argued with Harry or tried to refuse his refusal (see Chapter 6 for a more extended discussion), this smooth consultation was considered worthy of and ITS worker's explicit appreciation. That the Emeritus did not fight the Help Desk's new policy shows his capitulation to a new service logic in which faculty were given boundaries, not indulged.

I turn now to four main realms of emotional labor engaged in by the ITS workers at the university in their role as shock troops of organizational rationalization: managing expectations, enforcing frugality, implementing new technologies, enforcing the queue and a centralized division of labor. I examine each of these kinds of emotional labor in turn, discussing their significance for the (re)production of organizational status in the contemporary university.

Managing Expectations

"Under-promising goes a long way." – Hugh

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While IT Support workers were well versed in having to tell users "no" to requests that violated university policies or budgetary constraints (see Chapter 6), their interviews made explicit their preference for avoiding such situations whenever possible. Refusing a request could bring about heightened emotions and uncivil and/or rude behavior from users who sought to be exempted from standard operating procedures. To forestall the remedial emotional labor of explaining why a distraught user would have to seek assistance elsewhere, ITS workers engaged in the preemptive strategy of "managing expectations," an expression very common among the ITS workers I encountered. When asked what made for good ITS workers, they said stopping problems before they could start. Though sometimes this referred to preventing technical issues, few IT problems are detectable in advance; ITS workers spend their days responding to problems that have arisen without warning. Instead, "managing expectations" meant keeping people from

asking for things they could not be given, like software on private laptops or immediate service when no Help Desk employee was available.

The concept of managing expectations is tied to an assumption that people will over ask where possible. A study of bus riders' perceptions of good service revealed that the majority of examples given by the surveyed customers was an instance of the driver breaking a company rule to provide personalized service, like allowing someone to ride for free or making unscheduled stops (Shamir 1980). A key issue for ITS workers is that faculty and grad student users who used their personal laptops for university work often ask for assistance with viruses. Though the Help Desk employees were sympathetic to users with troubles, university rules meant to circumscribe their workloads meant they were not allowed to work on such machines. (Liability concerns were secondary.) Help Desk employees were instructed to politely inform the users that they would have to seek assistance elsewhere, implying that the individual would be required to shoulder the burden of repair. The ITS worker then had to endure the possible ire of those being refused, ranging from silent squints of disapproval to raised voices questioning the worth and competency of the ITS workers, which even if momentary tended to sting. As I discuss below, ITS workers did considerable amounts of emotional labor to not take users' expressions of frustration personally.

The importance of managing expectations was made clear during a new graduate student orientation at the H-School. Centered on getting students' laptops and smart phones on the H-School's network, Harry and Isaac framed their presentation as an explanation of what could and could not be requested from the Help Desk. Most interesting was the shift of tone in their caveats about what the Help Desk would not do over the course of three sessions. When Harry ran the first session, he played up what the Help Desk could do for the students, trying to create a

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welcoming atmosphere. Isaac politely interrupted him and talked a little about what the Help

Desk was not able to do for them. Harry reinforce's Isaac's comments by saying that services

like repairing personal computers were not even provided to the Dean. Isaac leads the next

session and despite his cheery tone and convivial approach, he makes clear the limits of the Help

Desk's services. Harry nods silently in agreement as Isaac speaks. When Harry leads the third

group, he his language has shifted to match Isaac's more explicit efforts at managing

expectations. They try to make it clear early on that they are not supposed to even "touch"

students' personal machines and crises must be taken elsewhere. In each session, the students

say nothing but seem to comprehend the limits being placed on their entitlement to service.

Again, this is not to say that the ITS workers were unsympathetic to such problems, just that they

wanted to forestall the emotional labor of explaining to a distraught user that they would have to

seek assistance elsewhere. Like individuals told they must wait, users told they could not be

helped were likely to take it personally. The frustration already experienced by users was

exacerbated if they believed that ITS worker was willfully withholding help from them. By

making clear to the users early on what the limits of service were, such refusals were less likely

to come across as personal slights but simply a follow through on an already stated policy.

A common form of managing expectations occurred when ITS workers gave pick-up

dates to users dropping off computers for repair or explaining how long it would take to

complete a given project or order. The standard was to give very conservative estimates. For

example, I observed Andre communicate these strategies to Lola during her training period one

early afternoon. A user requested that Adobe Acrobat be updated, which was a fairly

straightforward process requiring about twenty minutes of hands on time, and Lola began to

write back that the computer would be available for her by 4pm that same day. Andre stopped

her and suggested that she tell the user the computer will be ready the next morning. When Lola

protested based on the simplicity of the task, Andre said that if the computer was indeed done by

4pm they could call her to get the machine right away. If something arose that took precedent or

complicated the install, they would have time. Andre's advice made clear that a happy user

mattered more than an objectively quick turnaround.

Hugh, an ITS worker in a medical unit, spoke more explicitly to this process of managing

emotions and producing positive feelings through preventing disappointment on the part of users:

> [You say,] "We can do that in three weeks." And then you do it in a week. … You give
> yourself more time than you need because there's always some chaos, something that
> happens, and then you take care of the emergency and you say "I'm gonna get that [in
> two days" and then you start on it right then and you get it done in an hour and they go,
> "Oh we weren't expecting that til Thursday." "Yea, it's done now, you don't have to
> worry about it." "Okay, cool. Thanks!" So a lot of survival comes from under-promising.
> Give yourself like three times the time that you need and then do it in the regular amount
> of time and people will have a lot of respect for you, "He got that done really fast."

As he and other ITS workers knew, people did not measure their (dis)pleasure with service

workers against an objective accounting of the necessary time for a repair but against the time

they were promised by the ITS worker. Rather than expecting a user to be understanding that an

emergency arose and took precedent over their repair, the ITS worker built in slack in case

something diverted their attention. This prevented them from having to revise their original

estimate, let alone apologize to a now-disappointed user whose schedule might have been

hinging on getting their machine back at a particular time. Moreover, by making conservative

guesses about delivery, the ITS workers could benefit themselves by appearing to get the job

done faster than expected. Through this processes, they manufactured positive emotion in the

individual that rebounded upon them.

Ultimately, managing expectations was a process both laden with emotional labor and designed to forestall future emotional labor. One was not merely giving out rules, timelines, or delivery dates, but laying the groundwork so that a user would take any limitations in stride when they actually experienced the abstract policies as real constraint. Nathalie described it thusly: "Tell them what they can expect because if they expect you to make the world bright and shiny and glowing and filled with rum punch and when they don't get it, they're going to be mad. Tell them what they can expect. Set expectations." Of course, this was a process in which status mattered greatly. ITS workers rarely had to contend with low status staff demanding more than ITS saw as their lot, requiring ITS workers to do less reparative emotional labor. Faculty members, by contrast, were at risk of experiencing status threat every time ITS workers rejected a request, requiring Help Desk employees to proceed with caution. Emotional labor crucially helped to lessen the shock of decreased entitlement.

Enforcing Frugality

Among the cost-cutting strategies employed by the Central IT Department were preferred vendor agreements between the university and particular companies, which created exclusive relationships between a vendor and the university in exchange for discounted pricing. Though the cost savings could be considerable, such strategies proved contentious when they contradicted the preferences of users or saddled them with problematic equipment. At the H-School, I observed one faculty member storm out in a huff after he was told that they would not process his purchase request for an IBM. He was instructed to go through the university website to the proper vendor and resubmit his request. His protests that he did not want to use another type of computer were not heeded, though Harry sympathized with him and tried to convince him that the computers available from the preferred vendor were just as good. Such efforts were

not uncommon, as the ITS workers often had to engage in emotional labor to secure high status users' compliance with newly introduced limits on purchasing, which could be interpreted as another blow to the right of professors to autonomously design their own work methods and be the experts of their own activities.

At P-School, issues arose in relation to the preferred vendor agreement for photocopiers. Because copiers are fundamentally complex, networked computers these days, ITS workers are usually involved to some degree in their installation and maintenance and work with the administrative assistants responsible for the machines. At the P-School, a switch from Xerox to another brand after decades caused serious discontent because the new machines were proving difficult to network. The P-School Help Desk employees divided their time between trying to help solve the technical problems and trying to calm down the administrative assistants that were beleaguered by faculty and administrators unhappy with lost documents. The ITS workers walked a fine line between sympathizing with the users and making it clear that there was no way they could get the university to circumvent the preferred vendor agreement. Moreover, they often expended considerable energy suppressing their own frustration at administrators who made decisions about technology without consulting the ITS workers that would be responsible for its upkeep. As I discuss later in this chapter, not only did the Help Desk have to enforce the uptake of new equipment, but they served as shock absorbers by absorbing anger at the new machines but not communicating these problems to the administrators ultimately responsible for the choice of vendor.

Managing expectations intersected with enforcing frugality when ITS workers had to actively discourage users from spending what they (as IT professionals) considered unnecessarily high amounts of money for equipment. At the P-School, status seeking among the

faculty spilled over into their interactions with the Help Desk employees. During the first staff meeting I observed, the ITS workers and CIO strategized about new faculty computer purchases, which were eminent with the start of term only a few weeks away. I quote at length from my field notes:

> Their main goal seemed to be to communicate clearly to new faculty what they were going to be allotted [in new computer funds] and dissuade them from listening to each other and clamoring for the best machine possible. Stan remarked that the big problem was that no faculty wanted the "basic" package. This conversation continued for a while, people reminiscing about sweetheart deals, outlandish expenditures, and tech bonuses for faculty they were trying to keep. People seemed generally disgruntled about this, snarkily remarking on the excesses of different users. (P-School 0725)

In this passage, we see how faculty's jostling for status manifested itself in competition for the most expensive computer. No user wanted the "basic" package, as it conferred little status on the user. As a result, the faculty users tried to treat the cap placed on new computers as a baseline. This created tension between them and the Help Desk employees, who were in the unenviable position of rejecting requests for machines and dealing with much of the fallout in terms of faculty frustration.

Being nice can help high status individuals navigate loopholes, like Dr. Siobhan for whom the Help Desk employees proactively offered to purchase the equipment she wanted from a non-preferred vendor despite her protestations at not needing special accommodations. Others simply go above the ITS worker to the CIO, using their status to demand an exception. Most germane to the shifting context of the university was the ability of sufficient funds to buy a way around the guidelines. Dr. Tress in the H-School was a prime example. When his clinic, which brought in the most revenue of all the H-School clinics, was renovated, he worked hard to create a particular aesthetic, using black and silver as his main decorative colors. What the Help Desk employees remembered most was his insistence on having black monitors consistent with the

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design scheme, regardless of cost. Though everyone agreed that his clinic was "the prettiest," they also remembered his willingness to pay an additional $500 per monitor out of pocket to bypass the purchasing policies of the school. Few faculty members or administrators had the resources to engage in such practices, but since organizational goals were to decrease outlays of limited university funds, those who could find alternative funding sources were celebrated, not discouraged.

Again, the emotional labor required to enforce frugality was deeply shaped by the status of the user. Among low level staff, there was no tradition of letting individuals choose their own equipment. They simply used the computers that were assigned to them. Only among the faculty and other high status users was there the expectation that they would be able to choose the exact machine they wanted, regardless of the cost. Thus, when this entitlement was retracted, there was no need to engage in emotional labor with the staff, only faculty. Where staff did benefit from ITS workers' emotional labor was when preferred vendor agreements saddled users with problematic technology, though commiseration was not the same as overturning agreements. Crucially, these two different forms of emotional labor served to reinforce the faculty/staff binary. Shared irritation at administrative decision making joined staff and ITS workers together in opposition to the high status individuals that foisted such problematic technologies on them without consulting them. Conversely, faculty demands solidified ITS workers' characterization of faculty as a uniquely problematic group.

<div align="center">Implementing New Technologies</div>

Just as vendor agreements saved the university money but created headaches for the users as well as the IT support workers who cared for the users, decisions made about the implementation of new cost-saving computing technologies without user input could cause

serious discontent. When new equipment, programs, or protocols disrupted individuals'

established patterns of working, they could become disgruntled and reject the changes foisted

upon them. (During my research on secretaries, I observed a similar phenomenon in which some

of the most senior faculty would resolutely refuse to use a newly instituted online process for

processing expense refunds. Though younger users applauded the speed of the system, the older

faculty felt burdened by having to do more than hand a pile of receipts to the department

secretary.) As the shock troops of organizational rationalization, ITS workers were in charge of

fostering compliance among their users. To this end, ITS workers went beyond simply teaching

users how to engage with the new technologies, to the more delicate task of convincing users that

they will be at the very least no worse off than before. Communicating imminent changes to the

faculty in ways that allayed fears and defused concerns required ITS workers to do considerable

emotional labor. Peter, an IT manager whose unit provided coverage to multiple science

departments, talked at length about preparing users for the changes they were about to

experience:

> [My strategy for easing change is] mainly going to staff meetings, faculty meetings,
> talking about th[e change to Google] and then just let them know that this is why we're
> changing. … and letting them know it's not going to be perfect day one. Anyone that's
> going to come in and say, "Hey we're making this change. It's not going to be hard … and
> there's going to be no problems." That would be overselling it on top of it too being
> unrealistic.

For several months, Peter's schedule was dominated by presentations to staff and one-on-ones

with faculty meant to explain just what would change and reassure them that the Help Desk

would be there to shepherd them through the process. He, like so many others during the

transition, sought to induce feelings of calm and dispel trepidation, emotional labor functioning

in tandem with pedagogical labor to make the accomplishment of technical labors possible.

Managing expectations intersects with implementing new technologies when Peter tries to dissuade the users from developing unrealizable expectations about the implementation of new technology. Returning to the social construction of computer frustration (Corn 2011), ITS workers often felt that users had too high expectations for technology. Rather than seeing problems with new programs as inevitable and surmountable, many users expected perfectly functioning technology and could turn their frustration on the Help Desk employee. ITS workers sought to naturalize imperfect technology, recasting both technology and asking for help as non-threatening to their status. For this reason, Peter and so many of the ITS workers I encountered, expended intense amounts of emotional labor when laying the groundwork for the university-wide shift to a new email platform.

When the university's Central IT finally moved to Google for email, they tapered off support for the Windows system the university had utilized for more than a decade. This caused an array of headaches for the Help Desk as users protested learning new routines and had trouble following the directions posted online for migrating email from the old system to the new one. Faculty disregard for communiqués from the Help Desk was particularly problematic, as the Help Desk encountered more than a few users who had managed to ignore months of emails outlining the new changes and then arrived at the Help Desk in a lather about not receiving emails. Among those not blindsided by the changes, some high status users complained loudly and frequently, forcing ITS workers to listen to innumerable variations on the same laments. At the more labor intensive end, ITS workers had to deal with distraught users whose previous practices were no longer viable within the new computing environment. More than one ITS worker told of having to console distraught users who learned quite suddenly that the habit of saving emails in their trash folders was no longer possible. Though not considered a best

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practice by any ITS worker I encountered, Microsoft email systems on Macintosh and Windows

machines had allowed users to employ the trash folder as a storage folder by never automatically

emptying their trash. In contrast, Google automatically deleted trash files every thirty days. The

ITS workers received more than a few calls from users freaked out at missing email. The

emotional labor engaged in by the ITS workers in this situation concerned trying to pacify users

having to confront the terrifying possibility that they have lost emails forever. Such incidents

could be emotionally draining if users directed the expression of their frustration with the

program at the individual ITS worker. For example, failed efforts to solve user problems could

be literally thankless tasks, as users nearly always reserved thank yous for instances when the

ITS worker got them back to normal functioning. The user who expressed appreciation for the

ITS worker trying to solve a problem was quite rare.

A similar process occurred during the conversion of the H-School clinics to electronic

records. Spearheaded by the administration, the process had not been seamless and problems

with the program created considerable discontent among faculty. Despite not being early

adopters of electronic records, the software was described by ITS workers and users alike as very

buggy and prone to crash. Some departments run by senior faculty managed to keep

computerization at bay until most of the kinks had been worked out, but eventually even they

were forced to give up their paper records. Isaac spoke at length about individuals' emotional

reactions to the introduction of new technologies, again highlighting the emotional labor of

managing expectations to gain compliance:

> Some of the people are very reluctant to change. So like when they changed from the
> paper [records] in the clinics to the computerized documentation, they're like, "Oh, now
> we have to do the trainings." So they go through the process, they get trained. So now, in
> their mind, it's supposed to work. So if it fails, they're like, "Oh, we should have just
> stayed with the papers because they're gonna be here and they're not going to solve it and

we'll have to wait. If it was the paper way, we'd just write it down and we'd be done with it." So they don't want to talk to you because they're like, "Okay, you made us have this thing in the first place."

As the last line makes clear, users often assigned blame to the individual ITS workers for their frustration, resulting in the need for ITS workers not only to ameliorate the users' frustration but keep in check their own irritation at being the target of misplaced anger. As I discuss below, Help Desk employees engaged in a lot of emotional labor for each other to keep the emotional injury of misplaced blame from damaging their general demeanor.

My findings corroborate existing research on the willingness of high status individuals to try and stonewall the implementation of new technologies and processes in their workplaces (Kellogg 2012, Venkatesh, Zhang, and Sykes 2011), though I add the perspective of the ITS workers whose responsibility it is to enforce compliance. Faculty or doctors that refuse to engage with new technologies do not do so in an organizational vacuum. Instead, such refusals take place within the interactional context of an individual explicitly or implicitly invoking their high status to resist a low status individual holding them accountable to organizational policy. By ignoring the impact of such refusals on ITS and other support workers, scholars cannot show the negative effects of high status attempts to thwart status threat. Neither the frustration of seeking compliance from recalcitrant others over whom the ITS worker has no power nor the emotional labor of defusing discontent are recognized. In turn, this obscures the zero-sum character of status contests in which conferring esteem and privilege to some (e.g., professionals) demands it be withheld from others (e.g., support workers).

<u>Enforcing Ticket Queues and Decentralized Divisions of Labor</u>

As discussed extensively in Chapter 5, the expectation that users submit their service requests through ticket queues and other impersonal mechanisms often catalyzed status threat

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among faculty. While Chapters 4 and 5 discussed how users' reactions to ticket queues reproduced their high or low organizational status, here I discuss briefly the role of ITS workers' emotional labor in fostering compliance with a new way of requesting IT support services. Not only did ITS workers have to engage in the pedagogical labor of explaining to users how the new systems worked and which of several ITS units to contact for a particular problem, but they also had to ensure that users would not reject the new system as incompatible with their expectations for immediate service. The specter of "revolt" (to use an interviewee's term) by faculty was not entirely fantastical. Hugh recounted a failed implementation in his own department, a small administrative unit; the senior administrators simply ignored the new ticket system, continuing their habit of personal communications. To prevent these kinds of negative reactions, ITS workers engaged in emotional labor intended to convince the users that the method of requesting help may be changing but they would experience no degradation in the quality of care.

Convincing users that they were being as well cared for under the new system as the old one was not a simple task. Users worried that requests not made to a particular person, whether through an email to an individual ITS worker or a conversation face-to-face or by phone, would not be received or acted upon. Anxiety about being ignored was stoked by a related expectation of nearly immediate response from ITS workers, ratcheting up their frustration as waiting was suffused with the uncertainty of whether help would ever arrive. This resulted in a particularly disliked practice in which the individual submitted their request to the queue but then followed this up with a visit or phone call to the Help Desk within a matter of minutes to insure their request had been received. On such occasions, the ITS workers politely assured the user their ticket had been received and help would be coming as soon as possible, attempting to induce compliance and avoid catalyzing users to refuse the ITS worker's refusal.

To avoid the future emotional labor of calming impatient users, ITS workers proactively tried convince their users that going through the ticket system was more likely to get them timely service than circumventing the queue (see Chapter 5). Workers tried to break users' habits by telling cautionary tales of users that tried to avoid the queue by sending requests directly to a favored Help Desk employee only for their request to languish unseen in the inbox of an absent ITS worker. ITS workers politely cautioned users that they might not receive a response if the ITS worker was sick or on vacation, meaning it could be days or weeks until someone discovered their request. The ticket system, by contrast, ensured that their request would be seen and responded to by whoever was available. This advice both suggested a better way of requesting help and forewarned the user that any upset experienced by the user because of queue circumvention would not be considered a dereliction of duty by the ITS worker. This was a unique approach to emotional labor. Unlike some of the other forms of emotional labor engaged in by Help Desk employees, pushing for use of the queue involved that implicit threat that future emotional labor would largely be withheld for users burned by trying to avoid the ticket queue. The goal, however, was the same: compliance with the new, rationalized systems.

Many departments, including the H-School, customized their ticket queues to send email confirmations of service requests. ITS workers generally saw good communication skills as key to happy users, as users would accept waits (even long ones) if they were kept updated about the progress of request. This was doubly true for the ticket queue where anxiety about the status of one's request was exacerbated by uncertainty that the request had even been received. During my first few days of observation, Alice dedicated most of the unit's mandatory weekly meeting to the results of a customer satisfaction survey. Though most users were pleased with the service they received, the ticket queue came in for special opprobrium because of the anxiety caused by

being uncertain as to whether their request had actually been received. The solution was a type

of automated emotional labor in which the acknowledgement of the request was intended not

merely to alert the individual that their request had been received but to defuse nervousness

about being ignored. Similar procedures meant to serve the same end were implemented in other

departments on campus.

A related problem was people's confusion about why an ITS worker would refer them to

another unit rather than assisting them in the moment. Key to the logics of rationalization and

centralization of IT support at the university was the delegation of basic tasks relating to email,

classrooms, and public computer labs to Central IT. Whereas ITS units had once been

responsible for all the technology within their walls, the cost savings efforts of the university

created a division of labor in which some routine tasks were done by others. Though this

lightened the workloads of individual ITS units, it often required emotional labor in the form of

convincing users they were not being callous in referring them to another source. At the H-

School, a common instance of this involved password resets for users' email and the generic

university online system. Because the H-School Help Desk handled passwords for the college

specific network, users assumed that they were also responsible for their generic email

passwords and occasionally arrived at the Help Desk flustered by being locked out of basic

systems. Most users took the Help Desk's instructions to call Central IT in stride. Some though

questioned this referral, ranging from a quick squint that suggested the user was not sure the

referral was necessary to asking in an incredulous tone why they should have to seek assistance

elsewhere. The general strategy was to sympathize with the user feeling beleaguered by having

to call the Central IT number and to reassure them that the ITS workers they would encounter on

the phone were competent professionals happy to help them. By vouching for the Central IT

unit's ability to provide quality care, they eased the user's anxiety about having to contact a stranger to ask for help.

Like the other forms of emotional labor discussed in this section, how Help Desk workers went about fostering use of ticket queues and decentralized divisions of labor was structured by status. Though many users adapted to the new procedures without complaining to the ITS workers directly, there was some suggestion that ITS workers had to put more effort into gaining compliance from faculty than staff. Among staff, the primary exceptions were administrative assistants who worked for high level administrators. These staffers typically experienced a lot of pressure from their bosses to get things done on short notice, which rebounded on the ITS workers in the form of queue circumvention. Though both groups received the same preemptive emotional labor and ITS workers were sympathetic to the pressures administrative assistants experienced, only faculty members, as I discuss below, had a reasonable chance of having their queue circumvention go unchallenged.

Otto and the Loss of Special Dispensations

I finish my discussion of the shock troop function of the ITS workers at the university through the case of Dr. Otto, Emeritus. For nearly thirty years, Otto had taught and researched at the H-School. Although brilliant, Otto had always occupied a marginal location within the H-School status system given his lackluster track record for attracting funding for his research. Wallace, however, had protected Otto from the savageries of budgets for years, helping him keep functioning equipment that better resourced labs would have long sent to property disposition, admiring his effort to keep going with few funds. When Wallace retired, no one took over responsibility for Otto from him, and the marketization of the university could not be kept at bay.

Instead, the remaining members of the H-School Help Desk had devolved onto them the responsibility of forcing Otto to accept his low status.

Jim and I sit quietly in the stillness common to campus buildings on rainy Friday mornings, me pecking at my field notes and him going through the ticket queue to see if there was anything he could do from the Help Desk.   We both look up as an elderly gentleman in a white coat shuffles into the room, breaking the silence. Otto, a German man, more than seventy and thickly accented begins immediately upon crossing the threshold, presenting no preamble or pleasantries: "I have a problem with my computer. I don't know what's wrong. I cannot display my Sitemaker page. I tried to run it, but it won't start running it. I tried to reinstall Microsoft Office. I do have the program there. The only thing that works is Microsoft Word." Jim, clearly recognizing the professor, asks without any preamble or pleasantries on his own part, "So that's the only one of the Office programs not working?" The doctor speaks hurriedly, "Maybe Excel, but I'm preparing a presentation for another doctor." Jim pulls up the ticket queue and begins to input the doctor's request, asking "What's your office number? Are you available all morning?" The doctor catches the meaning of this and rejects Jim's attempt to deal with him at a later time: "I'm in clinic, but if you give me time – it's all on the desk in a way I can show you very quickly." Jim's face remains impassive and the doctor presses on: "I'm almost only in clinics all day. Do you have good time to look at PowerPoint issues?" Jim maintains his position, simply asking "The afternoon?" Otto refuses this and speaks more forcefully: "Not in the afternoon. I have appointments outside. It only takes five minutes to show it." The room gets tense as Jim refuses to accede to Otto's request to jump to the front of the line and Otto continues to insist that his problem will be a quick one and that he must be able to work on his "peepitee" (ppt said phonetically in a German accent).

The situation is "resolved" by the sudden appearance of Isaac from the back. The second Otto spots him, he turns his attention to Isaac and begins to asks if he can help him with his problem, saying again that it will just take a minute. Isaac gives in upon seeing the pained look on Jim's face and we all file down the hall to Otto's small office, which is tucked away in a back corner of the basement near the parking deck entrance.

Fixing a computer problem almost never goes as quickly or smoothly as one might hope. It takes even longer when dealing with a user that refuses to grant authority to the ITS worker (see Chapter 4). Isaac sits down at the doctor's computer as Otto hovers over his shoulder, explaining in several different ways that he cannot open his "peepitees" though his home computer will open them and that he has reinstalled MS Office at least twice in an attempt to fix the problem. Eventually the doctor goes quiet as Isaac stops responding to him, focused. With the air vents as the only noise, we can now hear a high pitched whine punctuated by deep metallic thwacks. Due to several bad experiences with my own technology, even I know it's the sound of a hard drive going bad, the thwacks being the reading arm hitting against the metal plates with the data on them, slowly destroying the discs with the force of contact. Isaac asks Otto about it, but the doctor dismisses it, saying that it had been making that noise for two years without any problems. Isaac pauses, trying to collect his thoughts, and then slowly begins to explain to the professor what the sound is, that it means the imminent death of his computer, and that there is nothing that can be done other than get a different hard drive. The doctor is not happy with the diagnosis and begins to grumble some, remarking that the other doctor will just have to accept that the "peepitees" are a no go.

With this, Isaac stands up and moves a couple steps to the door. Otto continues to talk, though, complaining about the deterioration of service in the Help Desk over the last thirty years

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and how they "used to" support him but now they did not. He threatens to email the CIO directly about the problem, which does not provoke any reaction from Isaac. Instead, he pushes past the professor and into the hall, heading back for the Help Desk. Once out of earshot, Isaac remarks that that is the nicest he has ever seen Otto, which strikes me as odd since I did not find him to be particularly friendly.

When we get back, I look at the clock and realize we have been gone nearly an hour dealing with Otto's computer. As I get settled on my stool, Alice comes out from her office and asks me how things are going. I tell her about going to Otto's office, which causes her to both laugh and furrow her brow. She says, "You know, we're not supposed to help him." I look quizzically at her, never having heard this about a user before. She explains that he is no longer considered an official member of his department, which is symbolized in his not being a member of any of the department email lists and not being included in the budget, and because his computers are all "crap" bought with his own money, they are not supposed to be serviced. She says that he gets helped mostly because he will refuse to leave the Help Desk until he receives assistance, wearing down the staff until they acquiesce.   Isaac, who can hear Alice from the kitchenette, comes back out and tells Alice about Otto's threat to write the Sabrina, the CIO. Alice just shakes her head, saying that any email from Otto is likely to receive the reply that he actually is not entitled to any help. She then suggests that Isaac not be in contact with the CIO in order to avoid any negative reaction from her.

Jim, who is still sitting at the Help Desk, looks up from his screen to remark that he had no idea they could tell Otto "no." I get the sense from their conversation that Otto gets helped out of a strange admixture of pity, respect for one's elders, and a pragmatic desire to get him to leave them alone. I only learn later, from Wallace, that Otto had always had a precarious status

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in his H-School department. Otto had never been well-resourced, spending decades limping along on subpar equipment purchased with underfunded accounts supplemented by his own determination. Wallace's admiration for Otto's determination had been key to Otto's ability to withstand the encroaching demand that scholars fund their own research from outside sources. By his own admission, Wallace had given Otto attention that he was perhaps not entitled to, shielding him from the vagaries of the neoliberal university. When Wallace left, Otto lost this protection. He was defenseless against Sue's insistence on upholding the policies of the Help Desk.

When Otto is mentioned during a conversation with Sue, she repeats what Alice said, that as a rule Otto was not entitled to assistance but that Help Desk employees tended to help him anyway. Thus, the Help Desk found themselves in the awkward position of having to deal with Otto's desire for help that was not commensurate with his current status, which was quite hard since no one wanted to state explicitly what was whispered among themselves – his department was trying to make him actually enact his status as retired/Emeritus and let go of his status as professor. Having been disowned in every other way possible, including being moved to a basement office four flights away from the rest of his department, the right to service and deference from the IT staff was one of the last status markers to which he clung. Eventually even this would be taken from him.

A month passes before I see Otto again. Just like before, he shuffles into the office and begins immediately once his eyes meet Harry's: "Someone was to look at my network connection." As I was present for his call to the Help Desk before Harry took over for Jim's lunch, I know that he is neglecting to mention that Jim told him that someone would look at his computer "when they had time," explicitly rejecting any intimation of immediate assistance.

Harry sighs and asks Otto if his email address is O-W-N. Otto nods and states with urgency, "I have notification I have to talk to network administrator." Again Harry sighs as he finds the original ticket and then slips into the back offices. After a second he comes back, telling Otto that Jim will be there to help him in just a minute. The implication is that he can return to his office, but Otto stays rooted until Jim appears. I tag along behind them, though receive much less attention from Otto once Jim explains that I am a researcher and not a member of the IT staff. I see now that him giving me attention during the previous visit likely stemmed from his belief that I was IT and could maybe do something about the poor treatment he felt he was receiving.

We squeeze into Otto's basement office and I lean against the wall while Jim sits at Otto's computer. Jim ignores Otto's explanation of his problem, a failed network connection, and clicks through a few screens as he diagnoses the actual problem. Cutting Otto off, Jim tells him that he does have a network connection and points to the icon in the bottom left of the screen that indicates such. Otto dismisses Jim's explanation, clinging to his original theory of the problem and repeating his diagnosis yet again. He disregards Jim's efforts to explain why a generic message to contact one's network administrator about a problem was quite different than having an actual network problem and should not be interpreted as such.

Jim and Otto go around in circles several times, Otto becoming more forceful in his claims each time. Eventually, Jim tires of this and informs Otto point blank that they are not supposed to provide him with computer services other than insuring he has a network connection, which Jim points out as existing once more. Otto becomes incensed and begins to rant somewhat unintelligibly about Jim's refusal. The one part I really catch is Otto saying vitriolicly of his department, "If they want people to dig a ditch, they need to give them shovels."

Jim just shrugs his shoulders, likely emboldened by his imminent departure from the unit, and repeats an explanation I know by heart now that Otto's computer cannot be serviced because it was not bought with school money and that they are not supposed to help him anyway as he does not have help budgeted from any department, his own department having cut him off. Otto retorts that he would think H-School would be happy for him to spend his own money on equipment and show that by being willing to service it. Jim just gets up and rolls his eyes at me behind Otto's back, clearly fed up with not being heard. Otto continues with this line of argument for a minute, eventually questioning the professionalism of the IT staff and spitting out "What's the point of you then." This time Jim does not roll his eyes because Otto is again facing him, but puts on an expression of sympathy and restates himself. The situation has gotten incredibly uncomfortable and I scrutinize my shoes, studiously avoiding Otto's angry look.

Once this tactic has failed, Otto begins a third, approach, contrasting his current experience with being refused help with what it was like "just a few years ago" and claims it has gotten worse since the transition to Google the previous year. These statements are both ironic and accurate. Ironic because he does not see how the Help Desk's refusal to help him is intimately tied to his department's efforts to remove him from their budget now that he has retired. Accurate because Wallace himself admitted to having had a soft spot for Otto and bent the rules for him on numerous occasions. With Wallace gone, the new service logic predominated and he lost the special dispensation he'd had.

In this moment we find the ITS worker actively involved in trying to get Otto to accept and perform his new, lower status as unfunded Emeritus. Rejecting the status of retired applied by the department and university, he tried to access resources to which he no longer had a right. ITS workers' unwillingness to provide help serves to (re)produce organizational classifications.

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Jim and Otto's fight was not simply about responsibility for computer repairs but about Otto's diminished status in the university. The misunderstanding between the two parties about why Otto was not being helped was not just about budget lines but how budget lines represented status. Moreover, it encapsulated a clear lesson about the value assigned to professors incapable of bringing in outside funding.

Shock Absorbers

[Central IT] thinks [the switch to Google] is a success, but it's not successful until the customer is 100% happy. So I don't think [Central IT] sees the whole picture. I don't think they see what happened to us in those six months afterwards, where we had to do training and suffer with the user because it was so difficult for them to do things. – Anita, IT Manager

As discussed above, ITS workers' role as the shock troops of rationalization involved an extensive amount of proactive emotional labor meant to manage expectations and users' compliance with new technologies and limits on entitlement. Though entwined and often indistinguishable in form, their function as shock absorbers is a distinct type of emotional labor through which ITS workers sought to defuse user frustration after technologies and policies were instituted. This was reactive rather than proactive emotional labor. As I show, this had two major forms: absorbing user irritation and defusing peer irritation.

Absorbing the Users' Irritation

Most important skill in IT: "Not take it personally. When I first started, I used to take it much more personally, but now it's less. … Because now I can go to somebody who is frustrated and doesn't understand technology and explain that it doesn't always work" (Isaac Interview).

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When I spoke to ITS workers, one of the skills they described as essential for being good at IT support was being able to not take user frustration "personally." As Isaac's remark above suggests, enduring but not being affected by expressions of user anger and distress was not

something that came naturally. Stories circulated of IT workers who left support services because they could not maintain their composure, as Help Desk employees shared with flight attendants (Hochschild 1983) and other service workers (Korczynski and Evans 2013, Bishop, Cassell, and Hoel 2009) the occupational mandate to react to client and customer misbehavior with understanding and indulgence. Learning how to stay composed and create calm in the user, rather than allowing the organic reaction of becoming irritated at users' misdirected anger, was crucial to successful service interactions. In the wake of the kinds of changes discussed above, users were known to lash out at the ITS workers, engaging in rudeness and incivility (Chapter 4). Help Desk employees worked hard to resolve individuals' frustration, engaging in emotional labor to dispel users' trepidation and make them receptive to the pedagogical efforts of the ITS workers. I distinguish among three strategies were employed to defuse user anger: patience, sympathetic soundboards, and shielding from effects.

First, ITS workers tried to have infinite patience with users experiencing frustration at changes, especially when most users have very similar problems. For example, I observed twenty individuals contact the H-School Help Desk in the span of two hours because a major update to Java had been released. Each time Harry kindly explained what was happening and guided the user through a simple fix. This approach was shared among the Help Desk employees I encountered. When I asked Jane, an ITS worker in the university library, my standard question about the qualities necessary to be good at IT support work, she replied: "Patience. Part of [IT support] is that you might get asked the same question all the time and you can't get frustrated with someone over that. That's just part of the job." Similarly, Nathalie talked about her husband, also an IT professional, leaving IT support for a systems administrator position because he found himself becoming overly upset at being asked the same question (e.g.,

"So, we really have to switch to Gmail? Really?") hundreds of times. ITS workers constantly reminded themselves that their users were not IT professionals and that it would be counterproductive to resent users' lack of technical skills. By embracing the organizational division of labor that made ITS workers responsible for the infrastructure that made professionals' work possible, the ITS workers saw professionals' ignorance about technology as a fundamental condition of their work, not individual failings. This moved the ITS workers beyond "acting," whether surface or deep (Hochschild 1983), and asked them to really question their organic reactions to less knowledgeable users. Here pedagogical labor becomes important because it legitimates user ignorance and makes patience an act of caring emotional labor rather than just an attempt to suppress righteous anger at an abusive user.

I was always impressed with the ITS workers' ability to maintain their calm with users. Not everyone has the ability to remain unflappable after spending five minutes travelling to an unspecified service call to find that a Full Professor only thought he needed instructions on how to reset the background image on his recently upgraded Operating System but actually does not because he realized while you were en route that it is the same procedure on all Windows machines. This was doubly true when a service call was prefaced with the ITS worker's less than positive appraisal of the user. "High touch" was a common euphemism that described users that required "hand holding," or more assistance than they deemed reasonable. Demanding users of any status were liable to be described as "high touch," especially if they requested assistance with the same problem over and over, refusing to learn basic techniques from the ITS workers. A secretary for an assistant dean came in for criticism for refusing to follow ITS workers' advice over the phone, instead just repeating over and over, "Can you please come see what's wrong with it?" Rather than becoming angry, the Help Desk employees sent someone to help her face-

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to-face. Experience had taught them that this secretary (like others of all statuses) was unable to translate the directions she was given over the phone into functional engagement with her machine. While a service call to help a user do something simple like transferring her bookmarked websites from one browser to another might seem unnecessary, the Help Desk workers considered it as highly expedient. Not only did a visit shorten the time required to discern and repair the secretary's issue, but by avoiding the frustration of a phone call filled with miscommunication, they could maintain their patience with the user. Though there were times when Help Desk employees' patience seemed to wear thin, in very few instances (detailed extensively elsewhere in this text) did I observe them display negative affect toward users. More common was for them to withhold positive emotional labor, like compliments or small talk, and stoically focus on the technical task at hand. Only later, in the company of other ITS workers and well out of earshot of users (as I discuss below), did Help Desk employees vent their frustration. Communicating their irritation to users was counterproductive for all involved.

Second, ITS workers offered sympathy in exchange for users' complaints about changing technologies. The ITS workers often let users vent, listening sympathetically to their disappointment and frustration with new policies, but very rarely communicating them upward to the responsible administrations. For example, training sessions meant to acclimate users to new technologies involved a lot of emotional labor, both in calming frustrated users and in magnanimously receiving a lot of "advice" from faculty users about how the transition should have progressed. ITS managers had to tread carefully in these situations, making the user feel validated in their opinions and feelings but being clear that there was no chance of retreat from the changes. Maintaining a positive demeanor could prove difficult, however, if high status individuals' venting was interwoven with overestimations of their technological facility (see

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Chapter 4). In some interactions, ITS workers expended extra effort at maintaining their positive demeanor despite irritation with faculty members whose uncivil or rude reactions to status threats rendered them less than sympathetic.

In all the instances of centralization and rationalization discussed above, the post-implementation period required users to adjust to new ways of engaging with technology and/or the Help Desk. Performing patience was interwoven with expressions of sympathy. The goal is to validate the users' problems as reasonable or common, rather than personal failings, while still showing the problem to be resolvable. ITS workers walked a fine line as they did not want users to feel "dumb" about having problems, which not only was unkind but might catalyze status threat, and also hoped users would see technical problems as surmountable and thus experience less frustration with later issues. Help Desk workers had a repertoire of responses for people who expressed shame or embarrassment when a problem that they imagined was impossible to repair was fixed by simply plugging in a loose cord or a twenty-second tutorial on where to find a particular application. ITS workers tried to assuage user frustration by talking about how many people have experienced similar problems previously or how they themselves did not know how to identify and solve a given problem at first. Thus, sympathy was extended not simply for a given problem but for the general and very understandable experience of technological frustration all users endure.

Third and finally, in their effort to shield users against the shortcomings of rationalization, ITS workers engaged in creative problem solving and occasional rule bending to provide the level of service necessary for accomplishing the teaching and research mission of universities. Though Help Desk workers often had to engage in refusal as discussed extensively in Chapter 6, they did not do so gleefully or without consideration for the user. Instead, they

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worked hard to obviate the need for refusal, either preemptively through managing expectations or in the moment through flexible interpretations of existing policy. Emotional labor underlay the ITS workers' willingness to bend rules when viable, as the goal was always the same: a calm user having a positive, non-frustrating experience with technology.

Sometimes this meant giving in and transgressing centralized divisions of labor when time permitted. In the H-School, there was a general use computer lab only a few doors down from the Help Desk. The Help Desk employees were not responsible for maintaining the lab; Central IT serviced it using pooled labor. Requests related to the lab were supposed to be routed through the Central IT ticketing system. Although this division of labor was logical from an organizational standpoint, it could feel Kafkaesque from the position of a user having an emergency. As Peter, an IT manager, said of leniency in enforcing the ticketing system, "We still have faculty members or different individuals, staff, that walk down here and ask for someone specifically. We don't turn them away. Why would you, right? It would just be silly. We're right here." This reaction was common among the ITS workers I encountered, as they wanted to help the user as best as possible while also providing a lesson about the drawbacks of queue circumvention. For example, Harry helped two graduate students get a microcard reader functioning on a public computer after they pleaded with him one day that they could not wait for someone to come from Central IT. Since the issue was entirely with the peripheral and the students' use of the related application and Harry would not need administrator rights or to fiddle with the Operating System, he justified completing the request as not actually transgressing the newly instituted centralized division of labor. For Harry and many others, user satisfaction came before upholding abstract rules when there was no likelihood of collateral damage to their job security or relationship with Central IT.

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Most of the ITS workers I encountered talked in similar ways about bending (but rarely breaking) rules related to the centralized division of labor, like those related to personal machines. Help Desk employees were not unsympathetic to users' problems and disliked turning away frustrated users, so many did what they could without violating protocol. For many, this expressed itself in willingness, though only if they had the time, to stand behind people and tell them how to resolve their problems without actually laying a finger on their machine. Even Sue, usually a stickler for protocol, was fine with the Help Desk employees using their lunches or breaks (i.e., not work time) to fix the laptop of a non-technical member of the H-School's IT unit. Ultimately, the ITS workers treated the rules about divisions of labor pragmatically, knowing they were invaluable for protecting Help Desk employees against the endless onslaught of problems, but also pursuing their usual goal of decreasing user frustration by helping where ever possible.

Only on very rare occasions did ITS workers communicate to Central IT user issues with rationalization and centralization. Though the ITS workers occasionally proffered their own opinions of policies that they felt were detrimental to the users, they were more typically shock absorbers, enduring and dampening user irritation before it could reach the responsible administrators. The ironic result was that rationalization and centralization progressed far more successfully than if the ITS workers had not engaged in the extensive emotional labor of absorbing frustration and fostering positive and productive interactions between users and their technology.

Defusing Irritation among Themselves

Erving Goffman's (1959) theory of the presentation of the self distinguishes between the front stage, where individuals are most careful about maintaining their self-presentations, and the

back stage, where people relax their facades and pretenses. Research on work has frequently

documented how geographic and metaphorical back stages provide a site where workers can

defuse irritation at problematic customers and cope with the travails of service work (Erickson

2009, Tracy and Tracy 1998). The back stage is also the site where workers teach each

techniques for dealing with problem behaviors or the proper display rules for their occupation

(Scott and Myers 2005). Without back stage areas to provide a respite from the draining work of

self presentation, front stage work would be much harder – perhaps impossible.

ITS workers are no different from other care workers and emotional laborers in this

regard. Stan, who felt particularly beleaguered by administrators with unreasonable expectations

and sparing expressions of appreciation, said:

> I'm a pleaser. I want to do my job, but in the end you can't kill yourself. You know, I
> always make myself miserable. It's like you need to back off 'cause that's not going to
> help anybody. If you're miserable and it starts to show … You start getting miserable
> about stuff and you're interacting with customers when you don't care and you have to
> pretend like you care. You know? And you always do care, we always do care but it gets
> overshadowed by other feelings.

I surmise that part of Stan's problem was his lack of peers with whom to commiserate. The

manager of a Help Desk staffed primarily with student workers, he was almost entirely isolated

from his peers in other colleges. Unable to speak about his frustrations to his students, as his

interactions with them were a front stage performance of managerial authority, his back stage

was empty except for himself. His seemed to be in need of someone to share his burden of his

deep unhappiness with his work. Were he located in a community of ITS workers like Damon's,

where employees were instructed before a shift to "take ten minutes to get everything off your

chest and relax a little bit, because in ten minutes, all hell is about to break lose," he might have

been able to weather his discontent more easily.

At the H-School as elsewhere, ITS workers served as shock absorbers when frustration and anger were transferred from the user to the ITS worker and then released through commiseration and/or backstage humor. Whether arising from user frustration about rationalization or other sources, the H-School Help Desk employees performed a great deal of emotional labor for each other, commiserating about problematic users, rationalizing their behavior, and advising each other on how to "not take it personally." I myself was the object of such emotional labor on multiple occasions at the H-School. A representative occasion was when Lola and I went upstairs to look at the computer at the Info Desk. When Isaac had taken the call, he asked the receptionist if she would restart her machine. The woman had tried to follow Isaac's instruction but said she was not getting a response from the machine. Lola looked the machine over and then firmly held down the power button until we heard it power off. After a few seconds, Lola restarted the machine, which had returned to normal functioning. (Most IT Support workers say the first step in trouble shooting issues ranging from program errors to erratic networks to a slow operating system is to restart one's computer or device. The secret is to hold the power button down firmly and then wait a few seconds before restarting it.) The receptionist was apologetic and thanked Lola profusely. Lola brushed off the compliments, saying she was just happy that the machine was not actually broken. We left the Info Desk and as the elevator door closed, I made a snarky joke about the receptionist not having the upper body strength to push the power button to shut down the machine. Lola laughed for a second but then segued into defending the user, remarking that users were sometimes afraid to push buttons with very much force, not realizing their computer's sturdiness. This behavior was engaged in by all the ITS workers at the Help Desk. As long as the user had not been uncivil in their

interaction with us, they were likely to be forgiven for whatever ignorance or foible had brought us to them.

Back stage humor was also common at the H-School. An array of humorous images were plastered the System Administrators' office door, referencing pop culture, like Chuck Norris, or drawing from nerd culture to joke about common technical issues. My favorite, which made me laugh every time, said, "One does not simply cancel a print job" over a picture from *Lord of the Rings*. Riffing on a quote from the book/film in which the adventurers are cautioned "One does not simply walk into Mordor," the sign likened the seemingly impossible task of wrangling printers with walking into a battle one is almost certain to lose. Printers are a major irritant for ITS workers, as they seemed to fail frequently, suddenly, and without warning. To be able to laugh about one of the most frustrating technologies is no small achievement. Similarly, a box cutter that had once gashed Jim was labeled "Bloodsplatterer" in the same style that other computing equipment was labeled. Like many other work sites, contextually-meaningful artifacts and inside jokes were a way for workers to perform emotional labor for each other, sharing and thus dissipating the frustration that arises within service work contexts.

A steller example of back stage humor was manifest in what P-School Help Desk worker Burton, giggling hard enough to have his laughs ripple through his ample frame, described as the "punishment laptop." On my fifth day, Burton gave me a tour of the supply closets, which like all technological limbos where old machines come to die and new machines wait to be deployed, were filled with knotted balls of cables and dozens of keyboards piled haphazardly on each other. He stopped before a shelf of loaner equipment and, knowing I was not totally ignorant of technology, quizzed me: "What are the most expensive laptops?" I laughed and said "gaming rigs," something I knew from my own involvement in video games. (Because video games

played over the internet require heavy processing power for the visuals and internet traffic, the needs of gamers are at odds with the aims of laptop designers, who focus on scaling down the internals to insure lightness and portability. Most dedicated gamers use desktop computers because laptops with the hardware necessary for playing games tend to be extremely expensive.) Burton, pleased that I was familiar this esoteric piece of information, then turned back from where he had retrieved a laptop and dropped into my arms the largest and heaviest laptop I had ever seen. Not only was it more than 18 inches by 12 inches, but the front was emblazoned with the logo for famed computer company Alienware, a large white alien head with neon green eyes that glowed when the computer was running. When Burton opened the laptop for me, I learned that the inside was similarly decorated, causing me to laugh, which only got more intense after he showed me a charger brick weighing more than twenty pounds and a canvas backpack with an attached metal frame also decorated with the Alienware logo and meant to ease lugging around what came to almost 50 pounds of computer.

As I stand there laughing, arms buckling under its weight, he explains the origins of the laptop: Once a professor needed a laptop and in a particularly glaring example of status seeking ordered the most expensive laptop in the catalog he was given. Once the laptop arrived, it became apparent that he had not carefully examined the specs before ordering because he was so taken aback by the laptop's decoration. As Burton told it, the professor took one look at the laptop, said "I can't use that," and demanded he be ordered a new laptop. The Alienware laptop was downgraded to being a loaner, which since no one wanted to use it eventually became the "punishment laptop" given to users that had been particularly troublesome. Although I never saw anyone be assigned the laptop during my time there, it symbolized for the unit as a whole

both the foibles of faculty and ITS workers' limited resistance to faculty's enactments of status threat.

Though the value of venting was well recognized, Help Desk employees policed each other to some degree, trying to not stray from humor and venting that dispelled irritation into vitriolic snark that fed general negative affect and enmity with the user. Charlie, an IT worker in a science department, spoke to this need for caution back stage:

> Generally people are good in front of the users but you also need to be careful in the office when the users can't see you, because that kind of attitude can really be infectious. If you have somebody that's in your group that's just constantly complaining about their users, just doesn't like all this. That's not contained to that person. It's going to spread and people are gonna start developing bad attitudes just because you have this dark cloud over in the corner just constantly complaining.

Along these lines, one of the things that alerted me most quickly to the distinctive emotional climate of the P-School Help Desk was the absence of the kind of apologist behaviors for users that the ITS workers were so quick to employ. Rather than being told I was overreacting to a simple mistake anyone without IT experience could make, the P-School ITS workers would engage in even more vitriolic derision of the user. The effect was not collective forgiveness of users' ignorances but a deepening of animosity toward the faculty and Central IT.

Ultimately, ITS workers engage in the same kinds of back stage coping strategies as other service workers and emotional labors. Being the target for user frustration seems unendurable without a release within in a community of peers, even if the worker knows consciously not to take misdirected anger personally. More important, commiserating with coworkers provides access to productive coping strategies that allow them to accomplish their functions as shock troops and shock absorbers of the rationalized neoliberal university.

Conclusion

A successful interaction? Um ... Anything where you leave and they're not still crying – Erin

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Research on the managerialist university has characterized staff as the handmaidens of the neoliberal logics that are sounding the death knell for professors' status as professionals. In particular, ITS workers have been demonized as part of critics' concerns that digital learning tools not only threaten to make professors' intellectual property the university's but are the first step in pushing faculty out of the classrooms altogether (Rhoades 1998, Ginsberg 2011). As I have shown in this chapter, critics are only superficially correct in their negative characterization of ITS workers' function in the changing university. What they ignore are the intense efforts made by ITS workers to ensure that the academic and research missions of the university are not disrupted as costs are cut and new logics are imported from private industry. The ITS workers I encountered were not uncritical implementers of rationalization and centralization. They believed in the university as a site for knowledge creation and saw themselves part of that mission. Protecting users' from the frustration and anxiety of poor service was merely an extension of the (unrecognized) emotional labor that ITS workers already engaged in as they try provide users with positive and productive engagements with technology.

As I have shown in this chapter, ITS workers may be the shock troops of the neoliberalizing university, but they are not storm troopers destroying everything in their wake without regard for the casualties. Instead, they are deeply invested in causing as little chaos and disruption to academics' work lives as possible. Importantly, this is not simply functional, designed to insure compliance through consent. ITS workers truly cared for their users and their success (see and Uzzi 1997, Granovetter 1985 on embeddedness). ITS workers are not the

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uncaring mercenaries that some authors imply. When they tried to persuade users that service would stay high quality throughout the changes, they were speaking to their own investment in ensuring that users received timely and caring support, not just engaging in utilitarian strategies for easing centralization and rationalization.

ITS workers' lack of alliance with the administration responsible for foisting these new methods of service provision on users was even more obvious in their function as shock absorbers. These workers engage in a lot of emotional labor in the wake of service changes, ratcheting up their already considerable (yet ignored) emotional labor. Not only do they extend great patience and sympathy to users, but they try to lessen the blows of rationalization. In some instances they succeeded in getting Central IT to rethink practices that would create discontent, like modifying centralization so that the Central IT unit was supplemented by local Help Desk units covering multiple departments and/or buildings so as to prevent the frustration of an extended wait. ITS workers explicitly sought to protect the educational mission of the university, manifested here as the need for instructors to lose class time to waiting for help with troublesome technology, from the administration's cost-cutting efforts.

Importantly, the sympathy expressed by the ITS workers toward users was not merely utilitarian. It was an honest expression of their own concern that the teaching and research missions of the university should not be torpedoed by the administration's cost cutting. In their interactions with users, this sympathy helped solidify their understanding of faculty/staff as a diffuse status difference (see Chapter 3). Through venting and sympathizing, the ITS workers and staff members saw each other as equally put upon by a powerful administration unconcerned with the real effects of their policies. In contrast, faculty were more likely to see the ITS workers as allied with the administration, assuming that fulfilling their organizational responsibility to

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implement new policies and procedures was the same as agreeing with their formulation. Ignoring or taking for granted the emotional labor engaged in by ITS workers as the shock troops and shock absorbers of the neoliberalizing university allows their mistaken assumption to persist.

Ultimately, critics must reevaluate their apriori assumption that ITS workers and other support workers are unquestioning supporters of managerialist administrators. Policy changes enacted at the highest levels without worker input are as frustrating for low level staff as they are for faculty. Faculty have failed to recognize how ITS workers and other support staffers can be allies in the fight against managerialism and deprofessionalization, not enemies. This starts by recognizing how the intensive emotional labor of ITS workers is a good faith attempt to shield faculty and staff users from the shortcomings of centralization, not simply a utilitarian tool to manufacture consent to a new regime.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

I interviewed for a job at Life Sciences Institute and they asked me, "Why do you want to work here?" And I'm like, "Are you kidding me? Why would you not want to work here?!" And they're like, "What?" I'm like, "You have faculty members who are trying to cure cancer. I would love to be on that team! If they were able to cure cancer and to say I was part of that?!" <laughs> I love what the university does. I love what they're accomplishing. I love <stammers> the things they do. If I could change anything, I want to know more what people are doing. They used to have staff meeting where the faculty would come once a month and tell us a little bit about their research. <mumbles> I fix computers. I can't talk about my job, my job is boring. "What'd you do today?" "Loaded software, uh..fixed a printer, bought a laptop for a guy who's taking it to China. Yea, that's what I did." <whistles and makes explosion sound> My dad was a cop! He told us about the accidents. My mom was a nurse, she told us what they did to fix the person who was at the accident. Those are exciting stories, my stories are boring. So what I end up doing is telling the stories of what the researchers are doing. I'm a very small part of it, but this guy is trying to find out what part of the brain is responsible for OCD behavior that is life threatening. They're taking brain images and figuring out what part of the brain is being hyper-stimulated that's making this guy cut himself and you make micro incisions in the brain and it decreases his compulsion by sixty percent. When a faculty member told us that, I'm like, "Are you crazy?! That is insane." They're Life Sciences guys. They are actually studying the proteins that are responsible for the growth of cancer tumors. "Really?! You guys can learn how to starve cancer? That is awesome! I love that kind of stuff. What can I do to help?" "Make sure my computer stays running." "Okay! Yay!!"<laughs heartily> - Nathalie

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Contrary to assumptions of critics of the marketization of higher education, faculty and staff are not opposing factions, the former dedicated to the teaching and research of mission of the university, the latter bent on undermining this mission. Like Nathalie quoted above, IT support workers are proud of the university as a site for knowledge production as well their contributions to these accomplishments. When higher education scholars ignore staff or scapegoat them for budget bloat, they incorrectly treat them as a discrete group detached from

the core academic affairs of the university, the allies of the upper-level management that are the targets of much vitriol. By ignoring the voices of staff, scholars like Rhodes, Slaughter, and Ginsberg do not realize that staff can be among the fiercest critics of the managerialism and marketization of the university. They erase the substantial concerns staff have about the detriment to faculty and students of logics of rationalization and managerialism as well as their efforts to soften the effects of these policies. Unfortunately, when critics exhibit a marked preference for hanging onto the privileges of higher education's halcyon days, they are diverted from confronting neo-liberal logics head on. Scapegoating staff ultimately prevents scholars from developing holistic understandings of the university as workplace.

Criticism of staff as external to the teaching and research missions of the university ignores how staff's liminal status of being "in but not of the academy" is not inherent in their status as "non-academics" but actively (re)produced by their interactions with faculty. When staff are treated as second class citizens, they become the foils against which faculty claim high status identities as academics. Staff are not essentially anti-faculty but often develop such attitudes as a result of continued incivility and slights, a lack of recognition for their skills, and having to clean up problems caused by faculty, like missed deadlines. Gideon Kunda (1992) and Robert Jackall (1988) similarly observe that secretaries are excluded from the corporate cultures engineered by management. The result is that these support workers become outsiders in their own organizations, their alienation from core/professional workers written into corporate policy. By unreflexively treating staff as faculty's Other, critics can ignore or misrepresent staff as required by their rhetorical aims.

Though rarely acknowledged, staff and faculty are fellow employees with common interests in stemming the managerialism and rationalization that are disrupting their work lives

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as well as the solvency and productivity of the university. Faculty, however, are unlikely to see the value of allying with staff; to do so would be to let go of their remaining hopes that the university will reverse its course and the golden days of faculty control will return. In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss how attention to the experiences of staff urge a range of interventions both scholarly and practical. First, I suggest how organizational sociologists and other higher education researchers can benefit from increased consideration of staff. Second, I detail how the experiences of ITS workers can contribute to the development of several lines of inquiry outside research on higher education. My final section focuses on the micro and practical, providing spme ideas about how to create new interaction rituals that construct staff as valuable.

Interventions in Research on Higher Education

Critics of the changing structures of institutions of higher education, especially the increasing control of the professoriate by non-academic managers, would benefit greatly from seriously considering staff and their function in the university. Scapegoating staff for the problems of the university forestalls serious consideration of solutions to problems in higher education beyond trimming "bloat." Instead of reasoned consideration of the function and cost of staff, panicky critics, like Ginsberg (2011) and the authors of an article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Brainard et al., 2002) about staff numbers doubling (see Chapter 1 for extended discussion of these texts), rely more on rhetoric than substance to make their arguments. For example, critics often present data that only circumstantially supports their arguments, like talking about exploding numbers of staff without examining the cost of those workers. Ginsberg similarly talks about the incursion of managers from the private sector into the academy, but he gives no numbers about the numbers of deans that are non-academics now

versus a previous era, nor does he consider how the university has a long history of hiring from outside the university for administrative positions that handle budgets and financial matters. The superficiality of his assessment is compounded by not examining whether or not academic and non-academic hires actually have different management styles or outcomes (2011, 21). This is ignored because he dismisses wholesale faculty in administrator positions, dismissing them as poor scholars who seek refuge from their academic failure in the bureaucratic machinery of the administration. Though Ginsberg's narrative of the "fall of the faculty" and dangerous incursions of administrators from private industry is appealing to academics who feel powerless against increasing managerialism, it is empirically unsound. Non-polemical research must make clear the actual numbers of administrators from outside the university as well as the relative costs and benefits of different groups of employees and revise their theories accordingly.

Inversely, scholars need to be more attentive to the demographics of low status staff, especially with respect education. Staff often have academic backgrounds and identify with academia. The collapse of the academic/non-academic binary with the faculty/staff binary no longer holds in the contemporary university, though the prevalence prior to the 1970s of underemployed faculty wives with doctoral degrees suggests the divide has never been absolute (H. Hughes 1973, Shaffer and Shaffer 1966, Weissman et al. 1972). Researchers ignore the extent to which staff posts are filled by individuals with substantial credentials. Administrative assistants, academic advisors, lab technicians, and ITS workers may have MBAs or Master's in social work, liberal arts, or STEM. Many staff earn Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the very universities by which they are employed. Their fondness for the university and its mission lead them to take employment at the university after graduation. Some staff are financing their Master's or doctoral degrees through employment at the university. Others take employment at

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the university as part of a second body problem, sometimes permanently, sometimes as a stopgap to a position in administration. No solid numbers are available, because this is an unexamined population, but it suggests that faculty and staff statuses cannot be used as proxies for education, social class, or professional accomplishment. There is no shortage of staff dedicated to the teaching and research missions of the university, who want to see its students and succeed; for scholars to assume otherwise is to ignore the changing landscape of higher education employment.

An instance of this misunderstanding occurs in *Wannabe U* by Gaye Tuchman, which cogently critiques the importation of market-based logics into universities. While discussing the effect of ranking systems like *US News and World Report* on university curriculum, she quotes at length an informant critical of university efforts to game the ranking system: "The faculty is supposed to set the curriculum-within budgetary limits-and teach it. All kinds of staff people are teaching first-year [small seminars]. One of the secretaries … even taught one. … If they have so little to do that they think they can teach –even topics they're not qualified to teach-give them more work to do" (2009, 128). This statement receives little commentary from Tuchman, though it deserves greater scrutiny for what it reveals about the impossibility of drawing a firm divide between faculty and staff in terms of education and qualification. When the speaker uses the word "secretaries," it is as an invective synonymous with "uneducated" that erases the multiple paths that lead individuals into staff positions.   The diminishing number of tenure-line appointments combined with a rise in dual career couples means that highly-educated trailing partners are occasionally given staff positions, like academic advisor, as a stopgap if no academic appointments are available. Similarly, the number of high-level staffers with advanced degrees, like administrative assistants with MBAs or Master's degrees, is greater than one might

assume. Only a small minority of the administrative assistants I talked during an earlier phase of research possessed just a high school diploma. Thus, defining staff as being categorically unqualified to work as an adjunct misunderstands the contemporary processes by which individuals are sorted into jobs. Future research should be more attentive to these realities and how ignoring staff's human capital disadvantages the university and (re)produces faculty and staff as diffuse statuses.

Third, when talking about higher education as a workplace, researchers need to distinguish among administrators, faculty, and staff and be cognizant of the uniqueness of each group. More research should be undertaken to see just how different the experiences and opinions of each of these groups are, including quantitative research to test the significance of these organizational statuses. My observations suggest that the different structural locations and statuses of each group lead to different levels of insecurity about their status and thus dissimilar interaction rituals, but the generalizability of these findings needs to be examined in different settings.

Finally, scholars should be realistic about the likely continued existence of the multiversity (Kerr 1995[1963]), which requires seeing staff as indispensible to higher education's fundamental operation. Staff are integral to the success of the university; faculty cannot be expected to fulfill even some of the functions of staff. Moreover, we should be critical about the implicit assumption that faculty would necessarily be successful at staff and administrative functions. Management may not meet the formal definition of a profession (Abbott 1988, see Chapter 3), especially because managerial positions require neither licensing nor credentialing, but it is still requires learned skills (Khurana 2007). To assume that academic

skill will translate into managerial competence downplays the difficulty of being an effective

manager of people and (re)produces faculty and staff as diffuse statuses.

Theoretical Considerations

The experiences of ITS workers that I detail in this dissertation have the potential to

make beneficial contributions to several debates in sociology. First, my research contributions to

Ridgeway's framing theory and social-psychological research on status expectations by

identifying a work arena in which gender is not a primary frame used by interactants to

coordinate tasks. The diminished importance of gender was facilitated by the unique contexts of

the university, where the faculty/staff binary dominated people's perceptions, and the H-School

Help Desk, which bore the imprint of Alice's dedication to a diverse staff and championing of

women in IT. Researchers have described other instances where gender is diminished as a

frame, like Solari's (2006) perceptive argument that home health care workers' identification as

employees or carers unconcerned with material reward depended not on gender but on the

organization through which the individual found employment as a care worker. In particular, the

experience of ITS workers has much in common with the young competitive swimmers that

dismissed gender as a frame for understanding skill as a swimmer (Musto 2013). Musto argues

that the focus on swimmers' objective times made it nearly impossible to disregard instances in

which the girls beat the boys. For users, the simple metric of a machine as either working or not

working functioned in a similar way. To dismiss the technical skill of a woman who has clearly

gotten the user back to work is not easy, possibly paving the way for less sexist appraisals of

women ITS workers generally. Ridgeway (2011) argues that gender-typed activities and mixed

gender settings make gender more salient as a frame, but future research must attend as well to

situational influences that diminish the importance of gender as a frame.

Second, my research adds to the literature on gender and service work by showing how men can engage in positive emotional laborer and care work without experiencing status threat (Williams 1995). Scholars have focused mostly on how the service work economy disadvantages men, especially minorities, by requiring employees to engage in deference constructed as antithetical to normative masculinity (Nixon 2009). ITS workers, by contrast, are engaged in a form of service work coded as masculine because of the centrality of technology to their jobs. Other expert service work occupations, like professional trainer and consultant, also allow the coexistence of service work and masculinity (George 2008). Further research must be done to develop a more accurate understanding of the contexts that permit men to engage in care work and positive emotional labor as well as whether or not men accrue greater benefits than women for proficiency with soft skills.

Finally, I introduce the concept of "support work" as a way to foreground the interdependencies that underlie the contemporary division of labor. In particular, delimiting the functions of support staff undermines neo-liberal discourses of workplace achievement that give all credit to professional or core employees and ignore the invaluable contribution of support workers. If scholars were to focus less on the categorical identities and/or primary tools of workers and pay more attention to the interdependencies engendered by complex divisions of labor, more holistic theories of work and the labor market can be developed. Instead of ignoring the division of labor or the marginalization of peripheral workers as employees that do not "create value," economic sociologists can denaturalize these phenomena and reveal the status hierarchies that underlie some of the most fundamental inequalities in contemporary society.

Practical Considerations

Because the status-based interaction rituals I observed had real (and often negative) impacts on ITS workers' self-esteem and feelings of alienation, I suggest a few ways to make the interaction rituals between users and support staff more reciprocal. Rather than focus on status conferral, university employees could work to create respectful relationships with support workers and acknowledge the centrality of their contributions to the university's functioning.

First, users should strive to engage in lateral deference, not (re)produce the subordinance of staff that results from the construction of faculty and staff as diffuse statuses. Staff should be treated as fellow professionals with real expertise, and faculty should be attentive to their unconscious transfer of their classroom demeanor as experts to interactions with support workers. While faculty might fear that admitting ignorance about technology will result in a loss of face, ITS workers prefer users who are realistic about their skills. Thus, faculty attempts to save face backfire by decreasing the ITS worker's esteem for the user. One solution is that, instead of conceiving of status as a zero-sum game, co-workers can engage in lateral deference and as a result redefine esteem for each other as a limitless resource and diminish the conflicts that can arise as individuals jockey for status.

Second, staff must be given a voice. Not only should they be included in university governance, but faculty and administrators must take the fundamental step of actually listening to the concerns and ideas of staff. Too often faculty and administrators make choices that directly affect staff's ability to do their jobs without asking their input or opinions. For example, architects and building designers are notorious for disregarding the needs of staff. Frank Lloyd Wright's beautiful "lily pad" atrium is infamous for frequent leaks onto clerical workers' desks (Pringle 1988). I encountered numerous administrative assistants whose requests for staff

bathrooms, kitchen space, and/or private offices for working with sensitive data were disregarded. These administrative professionals felt disrespected because their insights were not regarded seriously, which is interpreted as their superiors believing them to be inept at their jobs. Instead, faculty and administrators must see that staff have fine-grained, local knowledge that should be taken advantage of; like lab scientists, disregarding staff's expertise is done at one's own peril.

Finally, faculty and administrators must realize the essential role staff play in the continued existence of the university. One of Ginsberg's (2011) key criticisms is that faculty have shirked their duties as managers; he proposes that administrative positions should not be careers but temporarily held positions that faculty can come and go from. There are two key issues with this scheme. First, and drawing from faculty as diffuse status, he presumes that managerial skill is easy and that anyone can do it. I submit as evidence of faculty's shortcomings as administrators the glut of grad students predating the managerialist university. Second, it ignores the problem with institutional memory and constancy of function that comes from temporary administrators. Staff can be the most stable members of a department's administrative apparatus, secretaries and department managers staying put as chairs with short appointments come and go. At my own institution, the role of key administrator was created because department heads could not be counted on to pay attention to official communiqués or implement policy. Staff are essential to the longevity of departments and programs, and holistic critiques of the institution of higher education must take their contributions seriously.

Conclusion

In *The Future of Higher Education,* Clawson and Page (2011) perceptively point out that students have more interaction with staff than faculty. Students may go to class for 12 or 16

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hours a week; far more of their time is spent in dining halls, dorms, advisors' offices, and other sites away from the classroom. Moreover in a large university where a lecture/discussion section format prevails, the student may only actually interact with a professor one or two times during the term, not out of disinterest in getting to know their professor but out of a fear they would be distracting faculty from more important business. Faculty may be the most iconic members of the university, but they are often not a dominant presence in students' lives.

Institutions of higher education would crumble without staff's constant maintenance and repair of the organizational infrastructure. Faculty would be advised to stop using staff as a site for (re)producing their status and see them as fellow employees with shared interests in keeping managerialism and marketization at bay. Faculty and staff need not be in opposition, and lateral deference and real recognition would go a long way. For example, my own school, University of Michigan, has introduced shared services. Unlike the absence of critique by beleaguered faculty in the California university system (conversation with Jennifer Pierce), Michigan faculty and graduate students reacted angrily and vocally to the news. In particular, they criticized the university for cutting jobs and casualizing the labor force in the name of faculty. Against every assumption I made, they administration responded, promising to not cut jobs. Of course, they have since moved forward with centralization, but the display of faculty solidarity for staff is worth celebrating.

Appendix: Interview Schedule

IT Support Staff (ITSS) Interview Schedule

Demographics:

Age?
Sexuality? Marital/Partner status? Children?
Where did you grow up? How would you describe your class as a child?
What was your highest level of education completed? Major? Prior higher education?
What work experience did you have before this position?
How did you come to occupy your current position? Time at university? In your current
      department? In your current position?

Relationship with Technology:

How did you enter the field of IT?
How important is technology to your life?
How much involvement with technology do you have outside work?

Current Work Experience:

What is your current departmental position/title? Official job title?
Who is your supervisor? Where are you located in your department's hierarchy?
What is your official job description?
What do you actually do? Regular responsibilities? Current and past projects?
Can you walk me through your day yesterday?
Can you describe some of the more unusual activities that you have done in this position?
Do you provide training on technology for your staff?
What do you consider your most important responsibilities?
What do you consider your least important responsibilities?
What are the most common problems you are asked to resolve?
What are the easiest problems you are asked to resolve?
What are the most intractable problems you are asked to resolve?
Are there any tasks you've refused to do? Why? What was the reaction?

Training and Technology:

What sort of training for customer support did you have off-the-job?
What sort of on-the-job training did you receive for your current position?
What was the last training event you attended at work? Outside work?
How would you characterize the training you received from the university?
Do you belong to any professional organizations outside the university?
Do you belong to any groups composed of colleagues within the university?

Work Relationships:

Who are your users? Faculty? Students? Administrators? Clerical?
What is each of these relationships like?
Can you describe an ideal user interaction? Non-ideal user interaction?
Can you describe a smooth user interaction? A frustrating user interaction?
How integrated with the culture of your department do you consider yourself?
What constitutes a good working relationship? A poor working relationship?
What do you think makes a good supervisor? A bad one?
Who provides your work assignments? Who are you responsible to for that work?
What kind of feedback do you receive on your work? Do you consider it acceptable?
How is work requested? How do you signal that work has been completed?
Do you have any subordinates? Can you describe those relationships?
Do you have any colleagues in the same position as you? Can you describe those relationships?

Gender:

For women only:

Do you think your experience as an ITSS is different because you're a woman? How so? Why?
Do you think others treat you differently because you're a woman?
Have you had any unique (bad) experiences on account of being a woman ITSS?

For both:

Do you think women have a different experience with ITSS than men?
Do you think users have different expectations for men and women ITSS?
Do you think gender matters as far as who is suited to be ITSS? Why?
Do you think women or men are better suited to be ITSS? Why?
Have you ever worked with (another) woman ITSS? Was it different than working with a man
      ITSS? How?

Appearance:

Is this what you would normally wear to work?
Were you given specific instructions about appearance? How were expectations communicated?

General Reflection:

What do you think it takes to be a good ITSS?
What makes a bad ITSS?
What stereotypes about people in ITS have you encountered?
Do you think these stereotypes have impacted your work experiences?
What would you change about your job?
What do you dislike about your job?
What would do you like most about your job?
Do you find anything rewarding about your job?
Do you plan on staying in your current position? Why or why not?
Do you see room for advancement within this company? In what kind of position?
Would you recommend your job to a friend? A female friend?

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