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Putney to Mortlake: on the microfoundations

of endogenous agency

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PUTNEY TO MORTLAKE:

ON THE MICROFOUNDATIONS OF ENDOGENOUS AGENCY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this work is to systematically develop a micro-level understanding of endogenous agency in a highly institutionalized, stable setting as a basis for a general institutional theory of action. Using an ethnographic account of Cambridge's 2007 season preparations for the annual Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race we examine endogenous agency in an environment where extant institutional theory least expects it. An ontology is proposed which explains endogenous agency in highly institutionalized settings based on the inherent tensions between three autonomous but interpenetrating categories of agency: institutional, strategic, and relational affective.

Keywords: ethnography, institutional theory, agency

To what extent are individuals free to do as they wish in institutions that prize conformity, loyalty and tradition? What basis is there for endogenous agency? The question of how agency can both be constituted in, and shape, institutional structure has been of central importance to institutional theories of organization (e.g. Barley and Tolbert, 1997; Seo and Creed, 2002; Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006), as well as organization theory more generally (e.g. Child, 1972; Barley, 1986; Feldman and Pentland, 2003; Baker and Nelson, 2005). The process of institutionalization is generally seen to give institutional structures a degree of solidity based on the routinized reproduction of practices that are reinforced by social controls and supported by taken for granted rationales (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Giddens, 1984; Jepperson, 1991). With increasing degrees of institutionalization the likelihood of actions that diverge from the status quo is generally thought to recede as, by definition, practices cease to be problematized and alternative courses of action become unthinkable (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Zucker, 1977; Oliver, 1991; Barley and Tolbert, 1997).

Due to the very definition of institutionalization as a form of social reproduction, divergent action in institutionalized settings has posed a theoretical challenge (Battilana, Leca, and Boxenbaum, 2009), particularly in environments like the Cambridge University Boat Club (CUBC) that have been less susceptible to external shocks. It has been shown, for example, that routines *do* change endogenously in traditional organizations in stable environments (Feldman, 2000), and that highly embedded actors *can* institute change (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006; Reay, Golden-Biddle, and Germann, 2006). To date, the challenge of explaining these empirical manifestations of endogenous agency has been met by pointing to the role of pluralism, contradiction, and ambiguity in creating space for agency (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Seo and Creed, 2002; Kraatz and Block, 2008), or by arguing that actors can exercise some degree of

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strategic choice based on the extent to which their interests are served by the institutions in which they are embedded (Child, 1972; DiMaggio, 1988; Oliver, 1991). While accepting these structural explanations as able to account for many examples of endogenous agency, our concern is the lack of a general theory of action that can underpin them. Indeed, for almost two decades, a number of institutional scholars have stressed the need to make the microfoundations of institutional theory more explicit, yet there has been modest progress in this effort (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Selznick, 1996; Powell and Colyvas, 2008).

In this paper we aim to develop a micro-level understanding of endogenous agency by systematically examining divergent action in an institutional environment where extant theory least expects it: an ethnography of preparations by the CUBC to race their Oxford University rivals in the historic Boat Race. Founded in 1828, CUBC is steeped in tradition, highly regimented, and unusually protective of its traditions and reputation. Its singular logic is unambiguous – to win the annual Boat Race against Oxford – and its procedures for accomplishing this goal highly routinized. CUBC members strongly identify with the Club and take for granted that great personal sacrifices are required for competing in the Boat Race. Moreover, the environment in which CUBC operates is relatively stable: it is little affected by economic cycles and has faced few technological innovations throughout its 180-year life span. It is a closed, highly institutionalized environment in which endogenous agency would appear unusual. Yet throughout the season we observed multiple episodes of divergent action that could not be adequately explained by reference to external factors or by current theories of endogenous agency. Our aim in this study is to use this extreme case (Eisenhardt, 1989) to advance our micro-level understanding of agency more generally.

Our analysis focuses specifically on identifying, and explaining, episodes of endogenous agency. We are uncomfortable in explaining away the examples of divergent agency we observed by arguing that all environments are incompletely institutionalized to some extent due to the intrinsic pluralism of modern society (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Friedland and Alford, 1991). For if we find that even in the most institutionalized, stable environments divergent agency is actually quite common, why should we base our understanding of institutionalization and endogenous agency upon how individuals would act were conditions 'just right'? Our work points to a more fundamental reason why divergent endogenous agency may be more common in highly institutionalized settings than extant theory would expect. We argue that it can be better understood if we conceive of agency as consisting of multiple interpenetrating categories which can produce different courses of action. We offer a framework that explains endogenous agency based on the inherent tensions between three autonomous, but interpenetrating categories of agency – institutional, strategic, and affective relational – showing how the nature of agency is different depending on the salience of each of these categories. Hence, rather than relying on incomplete institutionalization due to pluralism, contradictions or ambiguity as an explanation, we trace endogenous agency to a revised ontology of agency itself. This new ontology of endogenous agency complements existing theories of agency in institutions and may provide a better explanation for divergent action in settings in which extant theory appears to fall short.

ENDOGENOUS AGENCY IN INSTITUTIONS

Ever since the critique of new institutionalism as being exclusively focused on isomorphism, and hence unable to adequately account for institutional change processes (DiMaggio, 1988; Powell, 1991), the question of endogenous agency has been central to much research in institutional theory. Zucker (1988) pointed out that institutional theory's original reliance on exogenous jolts

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in explanations of change (cf. Meyer, 1982) led to a problem of infinite regression. Hence the question of how actors can endogenously change the very institutions that constitute them as actors, now known as the 'paradox of embedded agency' (Seo and Creed, 2002; Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006), has become one of institutional theory's central challenges. Work in this area has produced a number of different perspectives on endogenous agency in institutions.

First, insights from resource dependence theory have been imported into institutional theory to argue that actors can respond differently to institutional pressures based on variation in the economic and legitimacy gains that can be attained through conformance (Oliver, 1991; Sherer and Lee, 2002). Actors are argued to always have some degree of agentic discretion (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) enabling them to exercise 'strategic choice' (Child, 1972) in relating to their institutional environments, especially when the degree of institutionalization is relatively low (Covaleski and Dirsmith, 1988; Oliver, 1991). To the extent that economic and legitimacy resources are not evenly distributed, some actors are motivated to change institutional arrangements in order to advance their self-interests, whereas others are motivated to maintain them (DiMaggio, 1988; Leblecici, et al., 1991). Hence, whether institutional pressures motivate acquiescence, compromise, avoidance, defiance, or manipulation (Oliver, 1991) is seen as a strategic choice that depends on the strength of these pressures and the mobilization and defense of self-interests (Goodstein, 1994; Ingram and Simons, 1995).

Goodrick and Salancik (1996) have pointed out that a problem with this direct incorporation of a strategic choice perspective into institutional theory is that institutionalism's central premise – that actors at times act without choice or forethought – is lost or ascribed to rare cases of completely institutionalized practices implying that the institutional context is of no special

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importance to understanding action. Hence, confounding institutionalization with resource dependence brings into question whether an institutional theory is at all needed to explain organizational action. A second approach to the question of embedded agency has therefore been to theorize agency and change without dismissing the essential premises of an institutional perspective. Rather than primarily relying on incomplete institutionalization and resource inequalities as the most important enabling conditions for purposive, interest driven endogenous agency, this approach focuses on the contradictions and ambiguity seen as inherent in institutions, while acknowledging that agents and interests are themselves constituted in institutional structures and processes. For example, Friedland and Alford (1991) argue that humans live across multiple institutions and derive their potential for agency from the contradictory relations between them. They also point out that the symbols and claims associated with a particular institution are often ambiguous and contested, even as they are shared, enabling individuals, groups and organizations to mobilize different institutional logics to serve their purposes under particular circumstances (cf. Creed, Scully, and Austin, 2002; Farjoun, 2002; Levy and Egan, 2003; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005). Contradictions, ambiguity, and/or uncertainty thus provide areas of bounded discretion in which interests, themselves constituted in institutions and not independent from them, can affect the choices actors make (Goodrick and Salancik, 1996). By implication, and in line with the resource dependence approach, the potential for purposive agency is thought to be smallest when the degree of ambiguity is low, and when contradictions are least salient. In other words, institutions *not* characterized by pluralism, ambiguity, salient contradictions and/or uncertainty are thought to leave little room for endogenous agency.

This perspective is complemented by a third approach to agency which, drawing on practice theory (Giddens, 1984; Schatzki, Knorr Cetina, and Von Savigny, 2001), points out that the relationship between institutional structure and agency should not simply be theorized as one of decreasing degrees of agentic freedom with increasing degrees of institutionalization. Even highly institutionalized structures involve agency because actions and institutions are recursively related (Giddens, 1984; Barley and Tolbert, 1997) and because these institutions often require purposive maintenance work for their continued reproduction (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006). Hence endogenous agency in institutions is not restricted to episodes of institutional change enabled by contradictions, ambiguity and/or incomplete institutionalization, but also extends to the mundane yet knowledgeable practical work of actors aimed at maintaining particular institutions (cf. Zilber, 2002, 2009). Contradictions, ambiguity, and incomplete institutionalization are not necessarily required for purposive endogenous agency because institutional structure itself is both constraining *and* enabling (Scott, 2001). Reay, Golden-Biddle and Germann (2006), for example, show how, rather than restricting action, institutional embeddedness can actually provide the basis for taking change oriented action. This approach also highlights the importance of the practices of actors other than institutional entrepreneurs in the creation, disruption and/or maintenance of institutions, pointing out that these forms of 'institutional work' involve a wide range of actors, both those with the resources and skills to act as entrepreneurs and those whose role is merely supportive or facilitative (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006). A practice perspective thus broadens our understanding of endogenous agency in institutions by including the institutional work of actors other than institutional entrepreneurs, and by highlighting processes of institutional maintenance as an important form of endogenous agency.

Yet despite theorizing institutional structure as both constraining and enabling, and despite theorizing actors to be knowledgeable, purposive and creative in their institutional work, a practice theory of institutions still leaves it unclear how and why actors would and could do anything other than reproduce institutions in highly institutionalized settings. Indeed, drawing on practice theory leads Barley and Tolbert (1997) to conclude that external contextual change is usually necessary before actors can assemble the resources and rationales that are necessary for collectively questioning institutionalized patterns of behavior. Lawrence, Suddaby and Leca (2009) point to the important, yet neglected, role of unintended consequences in producing patterns of behavior that diverge from the routinized norm. Hence, endogenous agency, other than activities aimed at maintenance and reproduction, is unlikely to be found in highly institutionalized settings, or, at a minimum, is unlikely to have institutional effects, due to the likely resistance of those whose interests a particular institution serves (DiMaggio, 1988; Barley and Tolbert, 1997).

Despite this broad (conceptual) agreement in the established literature, and perhaps because of it, few empirical studies have examined endogenous agency in highly institutionalized settings at the micro-level of analysis. Those that do, paradoxically, tend to find plenty scope for endogenous agency, including purposive agency effecting institutional change (Barley, 1986; Zilber, 2002; Reay, Golden-Biddle, and Germann, 2006), although in each of these studies exogenous changes such as changing technology, or changing policy were an important factor. One exception in which exogenous change was *not* a factor is Goffman's (1961) study of a mental hospital in which patients subjected to extreme forms of socialization and regimentation still 'worked the system' in ways that were not always aligned with the institutional scripts. This leaves us with the question how such agency is possible given institutional theory's prediction of

the prevalence of automatic, routinized reproductive agency in highly institutionalized settings *not* characterized by exogenous changes, salient contradictions, pluralism and/or ambiguity. Where does divergent agency come from in these types of environments and what can this tell us about the nature of endogenous agency in general? This is an important question to address particularly if, as Powell and Colyvas (2008) argue, researchers still have limited understanding of how individuals locate themselves in social relations, and interpret and commit themselves to their institutional environment. The general lack of attention to individual action in institutional theory, other than that of successful institutional entrepreneurs, has left neo-institutional theory with an impoverished dualistic conception of actors as either 'cultural dopes' or 'heroic change agents' (Powell and Colyvas, 2008; Lawrence, Suddaby, and Leca, 2009). This neglect has led to an increasing number of calls to further develop institutional theory's microfoundations and to refine our understanding of agency (Barley, 2008; Powell and Colyvas, 2008; Battilana, Leca, and Boxenbaum, 2009; Lawrence, Suddaby, and Leca, 2009).

CAMBRIDGE ROWING AS AN INSTITUTION

Founded in 1828, the Cambridge University Boat Club (CUBC) has a single constitutional objective: to defeat Oxford in the annual Boat Race. This objective has not changed since the first race was rowed in 1829. From its founding, the race has grown enormously in popularity: in 2007, a quarter of a million people lined the muddy riverbanks bolstered, in spirit if not in person, by an estimated 120 million via television in 153 countries. The race is rowed with the incoming tide from Putney to Mortlake (both London districts) in slim carbon-fiber racing boats manned by eight oarsmen and one coxswain. The rowers are all men, though the coxswain can be a woman (as was the case in 2007 for Cambridge). Most of those trying for a place in either the Cambridge or Oxford crew will have been rowing for several years, often competitively.

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Thus, the 2007 Cambridge crew included one Olympic and World gold medalist, two reigning World Champions, and a President who went on to win Olympic gold in Beijing the following year. It was also an internationally diverse crew, with three Brits, two Germans, two Canadians and one American. This diversity endows oarsmen with a reservoir of know-how gleaned from prior experience as a benchmark against which to compare their Cambridge training. The presence of international oarsmen, however, is nothing new to either Oxford or Cambridge, this having begun as early as the late 1960s when Oxford and Cambridge became useful places for Americans keen to avoid being drafted into the Vietnam war.

The Club's internal organization has changed little over the past 180 years. The President (a student member elected by members resident in Cambridge) is still formally its head. His constitutional responsibility is that of selecting the fastest possible combination of eight rowers to race Oxford. Competitive rowing programs are, of necessity, highly regimented. The 2007 Boat Race program was virtually identical to those of recent years; accumulated experience has made race preparation formulaic and predictable. Each program begins with a 2,000-meter test on a rowing machine, followed by a two-week 'boot camp'. Those who survive will continue with 11 training sessions per week over six days, for an average of seven hours per day.

Rowing machines became a staple of Boat Race preparation in the 1980s, when flywheel-based air-resistance ergometers (also called 'ergs') were invented (even if rowing machines had been commonplace already since the 1900s). Ergs are principally used to build, and test for, endurance. Gradual advances in nutrition meant that oarsmen became better able to manage their energy buildup and recovery. But aside from ergometers and nutritional advice, Boat Race preparation has been relatively free of technological intervention. As Matheson (2004: 5)

explains: "The boat race decides which is best of two [universities] with a precise and objective result, arrived at almost without the intervention of any technological device." Likewise, the event appears to have resisted the impact of societal changes:

> *The boat race has survived the enormous social change that has transformed Oxford and Cambridge universities in every other way over the past 175 years. It continues the project the same qualities of fair play that it adopted in its infancy, and once a year it demonstrates publicly the cut and thrust of the eternal rivalry between the two elite academic institutions ... transmitted round a small world, in which the universities are accessible to all with the brains to obtain a place and the money to pay for their academic education (Matheson, 2004: 7-8).*

Full-time coaches were drafted in, in the 1980s, to replace the Old Blues who had hitherto coached the squad, voluntarily, for two weeks at a time. Professional coaching, in additional to technological advances in ergomenters, meant a greater pool of data on rowing performance. However, even as the availability of machine-generated data helped inform selection decisions, plenty scope remains for subjective assessments by coaches on what a boat 'looks' or 'feels' like. This is particularly true where data proves inconclusive or inconsistent. Besides, the ultimate test of a fast crew is their collective ability to generate speed in a boat, a feat that depends as much, if not more, on coordination as on power or technique. The bodies of the athletes must be in perfect unity, with the smallest aberration undermining velocity. This makes crew rowing one of the purest examples of collective action, as already recognized by 18th century philosopher David Hume (1740: 490). The fastest crews are usually those that display the greatest degree of synchronized behavior among their oarsmen.

The institutional environment is sheltered and operates to a strict 'what happens here stays here' maxim. In practical terms this translates to a set of ground rules, two of which are explicit: when speaking to non-members you never talk about Oxford, and you never talk about each other. These two rules are made explicit by the chief coach at the beginning of the training season, and

become particularly relevant as the media increases its coverage of the squad in the run up to the race. Such rules are not accepted begrudgingly but with a certain pride, even arrogance, as tellingly captured on a t-shirt designed and worn by the 2006 squad: *"Those who don't know don't need to know"*.

Naturally, given the extreme mental and physical efforts required to win the Boat Race in addition to the ever present risk of missing out on final selection, rowers strongly identify with the singular objective of winning the Boat Race and take it for granted that great sacrifice is involved. Strong identification is guaranteed through a number of mechanisms. First, those successful in being selected for the Blue Boat are awarded a 'Blue', the highest distinction for University sportsmen and women, and a potentially important differentiating factor as they compete with others for jobs in industry. Second, strong identification is facilitated by the active involvement of 'Old Blues' throughout the season who act as 'custodians' (Soares, 1997; Dacin and Dacin, 2008) in preserving and enhancing CUBC's traditions, serving as a visible reminder that Blues are involved in more than just a rowing race: they are about to make history. Old Blues typically don Cambridge Blue blazers and scarves, hats and ties at rowing events, signaling their achievement and allegiance to others in the rowing fraternity. Old Blues residing in Cambridge are also eligible to vote for the Club's President, and often remain involved in fund-raising, mentoring, or the appointment of coaches. Having represented the University in the Boat Race is a source of enduring pride, symbolized by having one's name painted in gold on the inside wood-paneled walls of the boathouse. Finally, the stringent selection system ensures that any rowers who are not fully committed to the cause are weeded out early on in the training season. One oarsman put it thus:

The coming months are going to be some of the hardest of my life. My Tutor described the next 3 months in the run up to finals as "the most intellectually challenging I will experience." Coupled with this, I will endure the most physical challenges of my sporting life. I've got to be fitter and sharper than I have ever been if I am not going to screw both of them up. This year for me is one of binary success. Either I win or lose on 28 March. Either I get the degree I want or I don't. There is no halfway consolation point. The results of the next six months will affect me for the rest of my life (Tuppen, 2004: 10).

Insert Table 1 about here

These institutional characteristics are summarized in Table 1. Taken together they constitute an extreme case that is uniquely fitting as a context in which to investigate the nature and origins of endogenous agency in highly institutionalized stable environments as a basis for developing a general institutional theory of action. Dacin and Dacin (2008: 330) have shown that traditions can be fruitfully analyzed as particular types of institutionalized practices: "Traditions imply continuity and thus are quite stable, enduring, and repetitive." As such, the CUBC case allows us to naturally control for several other, more familiar explanations of endogenous agency, because the characteristics of institutional pluralism and contradiction, salient ambiguity or low institutionalization that form the basis of these explanations do not appear to apply here.

METHODS

Our principal data set comprises a 199-day ethnography of Cambridge University Boat Club's 2007 Boat Race campaign, from the very first day of training up until The Boat Race. Additional data sources include all major publications on the history of Oxbridge rowing and The Boat Race as well as substantial archival documents. True to the ethnographic tradition, one of us spent an entire Boat Race season (19th September 2006 to 7th April 2007) with the squad, full-time. He joined the squad for their daily training sessions, sat in on all coaches' meetings, and socialized with the squad and coaches outside of training hours. When the CUBC would train off-site, in

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Spain, London or Chester, he travelled with them, slept in their rooms, worked alongside them in rigging boats, loading equipment, mopping floors, cooking breakfast, and studying video footage of water outings and past Boat Races. Aside from his willingness to 'roll up his sleeves and muck in', his integration into the squad appears to have been facilitated by a quirk of nature: he looks barely older than most student oarsmen.

Detailed written records were kept. Each day's events were transcribed from extensive field notes before retiring each night, and include descriptions of events (e.g. selection races) and rituals (e.g. formal dinners), but mostly of the mundane. Taken together, these notes cover 1,300 hours of observation. The formal agreement with the CUBC was that (1) unless asked to help out, he would remain unobtrusive, and (2) that the club would not have veto over his subsequent output but, instead, be offered an opportunity to consult drafts before publication. The Club refrained from exercising consultation over academic output, including this paper. The ethnographer was introduced to the squad simply as "an academic with an interest in crew dynamics" by the Chief Coach and President, and explained his presence straightforwardly in terms of two questions familiar, and of interest, to any oarsman: How do coaches arrive at the fastest combination of eight rowers? And, from the oarsmen's point of view, what does it take to earn a seat in the boat?

Archival Data

The ethnographer's privileged access to the coaches and squad included him being copied on all email correspondence, generating a record of some 350 individual emails. These include such regular features as announcements, weekly training schedules, and erg test results, but also post-race 'wash-ups' (or discussions on what went well and what didn't), reproaches of athletes by the chief coach (covering such issues as dirty kit left in the locker rooms), pranks, banter, and links

to YouTube clips of exemplary rowing. Email correspondence between coaches provided access to detailed performance data and their evaluations of athletes. Additional proprietary data included video footage of training outings, footage of the 2007 Boat Race (from the umpire's launch) and a voice recording of the coxswain calling the race. Proprietary archival data included a logbook kept by former Presidents. Publicly available documents include post-race press reports from a variety of national and local papers, articles anticipating the Boat Race from rowing magazines, online blogs and books. These books include six of the most important historical accounts of the race, published between 1939 and 2006, and autobiographical accounts of former Boat Race oarsmen who went on to earn Olympic medals.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, we deployed a theory-building approach that involved moving from the personal account of the ethnographer which consisted primarily of thick descriptions based on field notes, observations, and interview transcripts, to one that was more analytical and was integrated into current research (Van Maanen, 1979; Pratt, 2000). We followed an iterative process, travelling back and forth between the data, the literature, and an emerging structure of theoretical arguments and empirical categories, which we developed through a cyclic reading and rereading of the material (Miles and Huberman, 1994). We have consciously tried to mirror this emergent process in the structure of this paper by elaborating our theoretical lens in our discussion section, rather than presenting our theory in full upfront.

We began our analysis by working from the basic questions: What does agency look like in this institutional environment? Following Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 970) we define agency as the temporally constructed engagement by actors of their structural environment. Our work differs from theirs, however, in making substantive rather than temporal distinctions between categories

of agency. One such substantive distinction is that between 'conformant' and 'divergent' agency. As the name suggests, conformant agency refers to action that is conformant with institutionalized rules, norms and beliefs. Divergent agency refers to forms of engagement of institutional structures that challenge their taken-for-granted reproduction, either through public challenge or problematization, or through other actions that depart from institutionalized rules, norms or beliefs. Our definition of divergent agency includes actions that, although purposive, are not necessarily intentionally disruptive of institutional structure. As Giddens (1984: 9) points out, structural engagement does not need to be intentional for it to count as agency: "Agency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but their capability of doing these things in the first place (…), in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently."

Divergent agency also includes what could in laymen's terms be seen as *not* taking any action. For example, not offering one's hand in a culture in which shaking hands is an institutionalized form of greeting, should be seen as an intervention (when it is intentional) or a disruption (when it is unintentional) that departs from the institutional norm and is therefore an example of divergent agency (Jepperson, 1991). Furthermore, we consider divergent agency independent of its structural effects, or lack thereof. The extent to which divergent agency has any disruptive structural consequences will depend on its social visibility and perceived significance, as mediated by the social position of the actor, by the existing legitimating apparatus' ability to 'explain away' the divergence, and/or by the existing control system preventing any further visible transgressions from occurring (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Rather than the question under which conditions divergent agency can actually change institutional structure, our primary

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interest was focused on how such agency was possible in the first place in highly institutionalized, closed and stable settings not characterized by external shocks.

Using these definitions, we first constructed a broad list of actions, or episodes of related actions, through which, throughout the 2007 season, institutional rules, norms and beliefs were routinely reproduced or actively maintained on the one hand (conformant agency), and incidentally disrupted and/or actively challenged on the other (divergent agency). Systematic comparison of the initial lists that were independently developed by each author led to ongoing discussions around two themes: 1) discussions about the most appropriate categorization of particular (episodes of) actions as either conformant or divergent, and 2) discussions about the content and significance of the rule, norm and/or belief structures that particular actions conformed to or diverged from. For example, we noticed that oarsmen were very strategic about the way in which they competed for a seat in the boat and deployed a range of tactics to increase their chances of selection, for example by training harder (or working so as to be perceived to work harder) than anyone else or by targeting a particular seat that best suited their strengths relative to the other rowers. Whilst these actions can be seen to undermine a sense of community, which was a key institutional value, this form of 'healthy competition' also clearly supported the overriding institutional objective of generating the fastest possible boat. Thus different categories of agency and their relation to institutional structure emerged which refined our initial basic categorization scheme.

We then proceeded to analyze episodes of divergent agency in more depth as these were of particular interest given institutional theory's expectation of the prevalence of routinized conformant agency in such stable and traditional contexts as the CUBC. A careful examination

of the context of each of these episodes allowed us to parse them into broad categories. Following Pratt (2000), we selected categories that we believed might offer a strong contribution to theory without doing undue violence to the ethnographer's experience. We also used Goffman's (1961) *Asylums* as an alternative case study to which we applied our categorization. We chose Goffman's study to validate the explanatory power of our categories, because it presents an extremely rich micro-level account of a broad range of actions in an institutional environment that formed an even stronger 'extreme case' than our setting. This is because, unlike the rowers in our case study, the mental patients in Goffman's study were physically incarcerated, in addition to being subjected to extreme socialization and regimentation pressures.

FINDINGS

Two key findings helped us develop categories through which endogenous agency in highly institutionalized settings may be better understood. First, from a comparative analysis of the episodes of divergent agency we induced two substantive categories through which they could be organized based on the categories' relative salience. We distinguished examples of divergent agency in which the actions appeared predominantly 'strategic' in nature from examples in which divergent 'affective relational' actions appeared to be predominantly oriented at maintaining social relations in the face of potentially divisive institutional competitive pressures. We also identified examples of divergent agency in which neither the 'strategic' nor the 'affective relational' category predominated and each were salient. 'Strategic' divergent agency involved the calculated behaviors of individuals or groups who 'worked the system' to realize an agenda that undermined certain structural properties, defined as institutionalized features of the social system (Giddens, 1984) i.e. institutionalized rules, norms, values and/or beliefs. 'Affective relational' divergent agency involved behaviors by individuals or groups through which

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embarrassment or shame for others could be avoided and affective social relations maintained in a way that potentially undermined particular structural properties. This initial distinction provided a meaningful first step to parsing the data.

Second, we noticed that these two categories did not only apply to divergent agency. Many of the examples of reproductive agency we identified during the first phase of our analysis also seemed to involve 'strategic' and/or 'affective relational' elements, suggesting that these two categories were not unique to divergent agency. For example, as previously noted, many of the strategies deployed by individual oarsmen to increase their chances of selection directly supported the institutional objective of creating the fastest possible boat and were thus examples of conformant agency despite being strategic in nature. Moreover, the creation of strong affective social bonds between oarsmen in the form of 'team spirit' was also of key importance to realizing this objective. Thus 'strategic' and 'affective relational' agency appeared to crosscut the particular institution we were analyzing, diverging from structural properties in some cases, whilst conforming to them in others. In the following we elaborate on these key findings through an analytic narrative of Cambridge's 2007 Boat Race campaign, in which we first highlight examples of different types of divergent endogenous agency, followed by a discussion of examples of conformant agency.

Strategically Challenging the Authority of the Coach Based on Relational Affect

On the eve of 19 September 2006, 39 students gathered in The Goldie boathouse for the official kick-off to the 2007 Boat Race campaign. All were experienced oarsmen, about half had trialed with the Club before, some had raced and lost the Boat Race the previous year, and a handful had won World or Olympic rowing championship medals. Of these 39 students, only 28 remained after the first two weeks of training, the end of which coincided with the beginning of the

academic year. Those who had survived these first weeks now had lectures to attend and essays to write, meaning that much of their academic demands had to be squeezed into a relentless training schedule. As in previous years, the training program was marked by a number of formal selection tests, including two 2,000-meter and two 5,000-meter erg tests, the Indoor Rowing Championship, the Four's Head, and the Fairbairns Cup (two head races), Trial Eights (a race between two matched crews on the actual Boat Race course), two days of seat-racing at a winter training camp, and two 'fixtures' (or mock races). Formal tests aside, the oarsmen were conscious of continually being watched by the coaches, with each day providing new information on attitude, race readiness, and potential.

Among the 28 remaining oarsmen were five 'returning Blues', meaning that they had rowed The Boat Race previously. One of these, Tom James, had raced and lost three times. As CUBC's President this was to be his fourth and final attempt. Another oarsmen, Kieran West, had won Olympic gold in Sydney and had his sights set on stroking the boat (or responsible for setting the rhythm). Contesting this position was a reigning World Champion, Thorsten Engelmann, and the battle for stroke seat wouldn't be settled until just days before the race, when Kieran, agitatedly confronted the crew and coaches (who had swapped both oarsmen in and out of stroke seat) and surrendered his ambitions. It was to be one of a series of extraordinary meetings, in which the oarsmen took issue with decisions taken by their coaches.

One of these meetings took place in Banyoles (Spain), where the squad trains for two weeks each winter. The main purpose of this training camp is to seat-race the oarsmen and, using this data, for coaches to select a tentative Blue Boat (which races Oxford's top crew) and Goldie (the reserve crew). No sooner did the coaches announce their line-up or the five returning Blues took

issue with the coaches' selection, cornering the chief coach and pointing out that one of the Canadians, Dan O'Shaughnessy, should have been included in the Blue Boat. He had been left out because he proved less gifted technically, and no more powerful, than any of the others. Seat-racing data suggested Colin (who had been included) to be faster than Dan, while past tests had shown both to be equally powerful, and the coaches had collectively felt Dan to be less skilled. Yet, despite his technical deficiency (in a sport where technique is highly prized), the Blues felt that Dan's brazen, humorous personality helped defuse conflict within the crew and enabled them to row faster as a unit. The coaches reluctantly conceded, worried that sticking to their guns might result in a revolt among the athletes (as famously happened in Oxford in 1987), and replaced a more competent Colin with a more sociable Dan.

It is highly unusual for rowers to demand this much input in crew selection in a context in which coaching is almost universally autocratic; ordinarily, and for practical purposes, coaches make final selection decisions and whether the rowers think them fair or judicious is immaterial. The authority of the coach is pivotal for the effective functioning of the selection system. The psychological contract between coaches and oarsmen is akin to a 'pact of tolerance', meaning that oarsmen will often accept selection decisions, even if disagreeing with them, so long as the coaches remain credible. Here it is useful to note that several of these oarsmen had previously been coached by some of the world's most reputable rowing coaches. Reflecting on the 2007 'near-revolt', one of the returning Blues commented:

> *The more I think about it, the more it seems obvious to me that it was all about leadership from the very top. [With] Harry Parker [Harvard], Mike Spracklen [Canada], Jürgen Gröbler [Great Britain], I have never seen ANY such mutiny. It was simply a lack of competence – or the perception of competence – with [the chief coach] that led to all the problems. We all were arrogant and self-serving – but a strong and respected leader would easily have corralled us (Kip McDaniel, 9 Feb 2010).*

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Seat racing, moreover, is broadly accepted as one of the most effective means of determining what combination of oarsmen is likely to produce the fastest possible crew. The calculated collective action by the five returning Blues to challenge the coach's authority by demanding a meeting, in which they forced the head coach to overturn his decision not to select Dan, therefore diverged from key institutionalized features of the selection system. Their strategic challenge was less concerned with Dan's technical prowess than with his ability to gel the boat socially. With Dan on board, so the challengers argued, they were able to coordinate more effectively and maximize boat speed. They felt particularly strongly about Dan's likeable personality, and his ability to defuse conflict by playing the clown, as crucial to a crew that, while impressive on paper, were socially fragile.

Without the benefit of a parallel universe it is impossible to know what would have happened had Dan not been allocated a seat in the Blue Boat. Aside from seat-racing data and the coaches' private assessments of Dan's ability, the best evidence we have for his inferior technical skill as a liability is Dan not subsequently being selected for 2008, despite being the only returning member of the victorious 2007 crew, and having been elected President, in an Olympic year where the level of internal competition was lower. The very best oarsmen had left Cambridge to train with their national squads instead. This suggests that, whilst the conviction that Dan's inclusion would make for a faster boat appeared genuine amongst the five challengers, this conviction itself seemed as much based on preferring Dan as a person, as on him being a catalyst who could help the rest of the crew raise their game. As such, both 'strategic' and 'affective relational' elements appeared particularly salient in this example of endogenous agency.

The potentially disruptive tensions between the institutional imperative of selecting the fastest possible boat on the one hand, and relational affect for fellow oarsmen on the other, is also well illustrated in an Internet blog by Canadian international and Cambridge Blue Kip McDaniel who reflects on his training with the Canadian squad before stepping onto the Cambridge-bound plane:

> *PRIMAL INTENTIONS*
>
> *By: Kip McDaniel*
>
> *When you're rowing with the national team, you're always – and I mean always – looking out for your own self-interest. A good example of this happened today in the Canadian camp. This morning, one of our three heavyweight sweep boats was doing some selection. Not being in this boat. I had very little interest in the result – or so it seemed. With one portside oar challenging another (…), tensions were high and racing was intense. (…) The loser of the challenge would come into the boat I am currently in. The person being challenged was a good friend of mine, one who I had rowed with at last year's world championships. I respect his work ethic and speed, and only hoped the best for him in his time trial. (…) In the end, this friend lost the time trial by the smallest of margins, and will be joining us. On one level, I am sad for him, because he had been in that boat for months and was expecting to be in it for London. However, on a more primal level – and ultimately the one that matters in international rowing – I wanted him in my boat. My wishes won out over his, and I am frankly happy. That's the way competing at this level goes. So be it.*

Although in this example Kip did not actively influence the selection decision, and, as such, one can't speak of 'agency' in the way we have used it, Kip makes clear that his liking of his friend and not wanting him to lose as a result, lived in tension with his strategic self-interest of wanting him on his own boat. In Kip's case this tension was internally resolved by self-legitimating feelings of happiness at his friend's misfortune by considering self-interest to be an inherent acceptable part of competing at the highest level. In the case of Dan, this same tension was actively resolved through his forced selection based on the legitimation that Dan's likeable personality actually made him a faster boat mover.

Jake's Strategic Gaming and Associated Feelings of Affective Relational Guilt

Jake Cornelius entered Cambridge confident of a place in the Blue Boat. He had been a formidable oarsman at Stanford, had never lost a seat-race in his life, and had been training with the US national rowing squad before his arrival in Cambridge. Moreover, he came equipped with a 2,000-meter erg score of 5 minutes, 55 seconds (6 minutes or less is the gold standard in indoor rowing), making him one of the strongest in the squad. To everyone's surprise (not least Jake's), he lost all his seat-races in Banyoles. Both his Blue Boat ambitions, and his future with the US national squad were in serious jeopardy. So too was his self-confidence:

> *That night in Banyoles the one thing that went through my mind was to make sure that I'd never feel like this ever again – it was horrible – (…) couldn't look anyone in the eye – couldn't stand the sight of myself in the mirror. Melodramatic I know, but it was the most acute shame I have ever felt, like I betrayed myself and couldn't trust myself any more (Jake Cornelius)*

Jake knew, however, that despite the tentative lineup one seat in the Blue Boat (temporarily occupied by Oli) remained in doubt. Having returned early to Cambridge after losing his seat races, Jake decided to not give up. With final selection decisions to be announced on February 15th he knew there still to be a chance. The coaches had begun to rotate three oarsmen – Colin, Oli and Jake – in and out of the crew, and Jake saw his immediate challenge as that of persuading the crew and coaches that he was the better oarsman. Before being able to do this, he realized he first needed to make a conscious effort to believe in himself again: "Believing in yourself is the hardest part, because to do that you have to reject everything else that coaches and team mates and results are telling you to believe." He made himself a recording and listened to it all day long every day - "cooking breakfast, before training, walking to class, brushing my teeth, studying, shopping for food, washing dishes, during training, after training":

> *Nobody can work like I can … I have seen things they've not seen, and done things they've not done, and that makes me stronger … I beat Cal and Washington, because I worked for*

four years … I will beat Colin and Oli, because I will work for the next four weeks (…) I dominate the port side … I'm faster than Oli … I'm faster than Colin … I row faster than them, and I need to make Duncan and my team mates see that I'm faster. I'm stronger than them … I work harder than them … I catch quicker, I pull harder, I move boats better than they do … Everyone wants me in 4 seat because I'm faster and the strongest (…) My catches are the quickest on the team … (excerpt from Jake's tape)

His strategy also involved arriving at the boathouse before anyone else, and remaining there after everyone else had gone. He would spend hours analyzing video footage and call the coaches over to come in and watch the footage with him so he would get a sense of what they wanted him to do. He also spent a lot of time thinking of ways to game the selection process by influencing the way others would perceive him instead of just focusing on becoming a faster rower:

The way I viewed it, it wasn't really a matter of who was the better oarsmen between Colin, Oli, and me – all that mattered was who was perceived to be better – and so I spent a lot of time thinking of how others would perceive me. (…) I particularly wanted the coaches to see me working hard because if you're the guy when they walk into the boathouse and see you working, it gives them the impression that you work continuously. And so I also desperately wanted the guys in the Blue Boat to see that I was working hard, but at the same time I didn't want Colin and Oli to see me working hard because then they might start working hard too, and I didn't want them to find out until it was too late (Jake Cornelius).

Thus, the very process, by which the institution successfully socialized Jake into a rower willing to go to physical and mental extremes to secure his selection, also opened up the possibility of strategically gaming the selection system. Unbeknownst to Jake, Colin too put in a lot of extra work to become a stronger rower but did not play the selection game as strategically or as well as Jake in trying to influence the perceptions of the crew and coaching staff. The chief coach decided to give Jake another shot at the Blue Boat by means of a set of seat-races in late January. Jake narrowly beat Colin and Oli, providing coaches with sufficient justification to include him in Cambridge's top crew.

Despite the prevalence of strategy in Jake's agency, the affective relational element was also present - again in the form of a contradictory tension with self-interest - as attested by his feelings of guilt towards Colin and Oli:

> *I did feel badly about this because I like Colin and Oli and feel sad about having to compete with them for a place in the Blue Boat (...) a shame really, but what do you say to the people you are training yourself to hate? (...) I wanted so badly to get inside their heads and let them know I was the alpha male - it is so confusing to mentally attack your friends – it drives you insane but sanity seemed like a small price to pay for something I wanted so badly (Jake Cornelius).*

Thus extreme identification with the goal of wanting to get in the boat and winning the Boat Race led Jake to accept that the possible loss of friendship was a price worth paying; to Jake training himself to "hate" his friends and "mentally attacking" them at the cost "sanity" was a small price in relation to achieving this goal.

Calculated Hesitation to Avoid Affective Relational Embarrassment

Then, with only ten days to go until The Boat Race, and with the crew having been formally introduced to the world's media, the controversial decision was made to replace the experienced Blue Boat coxswain (Russ) with one much less experienced (Rebecca). The significance of this decision was not to be underestimated. As a national newspaper, put it: "The decision of the Cambridge coach … to change coxes this close to the race has a smack of desperation about it …" (The Guardian) Kieran indicated that this decision was far from straightforward:

> *Kip spoke very strongly and said he hated Russ's calls in training and racing and only put up with him because he thought everyone else liked him; Dan said he spent time after each outing having to calm Kip down from wanting to punch Russ because of these calls; Seb and I said we hated his race calls and we'd repeatedly told him since trial eights to be less aggressive and have a more calm, relaxed coxing style, but he hadn't listened or improved despite all the input; Thorsten, Jake and Pete agreed they didn't like his calls but hadn't said anything because they each thought everybody else liked Russ so didn't want to cause dissention in the crew.*

It was clear that, despite ongoing misgivings with respect to Russ' coxing calls, the crew had kept silent. They worried that everyone else liked Russ and they might be seen as the odd one out if they spoke out, thus causing potential personal embarrassment in addition to causing embarrassment to Russ.

This 'not speaking out' could be considered a form of divergent agency in the same sense as 'not shaking someone's hand' in an institutional context in which shaking hands is the norm. This is because the reluctance to raise the issue of switching coxswains, partly for Russ' sake, and partly because they assumed everyone else acted as they did out of affection for Russ, ultimately did both him and the CUBC a great disservice. It caused Russ to be publicly humiliated with all major national broadsheets covering the announcement of his demotion from Blue Boat coxswain to coxing the much less prestigious reserve crew instead. Postponing the demotion decision did not serve the primary institutional objective either, in that the crew tolerated a suboptimal coxswain for far longer than necessary. Although crew members' hesitation to speak out promptly can be seen to be calculative or strategic in the sense that it was based on how they thought others would react if they spoke out, the affective relational element of agency appears particularly salient in this example of divergent agency. Avoiding feelings of shame associated with the potential of embarrassing oneself as well as Russ appeared to trump the institutional imperative, at least temporarily, of creating the fastest possible boat.

Strategically Negotiating the Coach's Authority: A Final Revolt

A decision by the coaches to rotate Kieran and Thorsten in stroke seat with less than two weeks to go until the Boat Race caused a confrontation between the coaching staff and members of the crew yet again, with Seb requesting a meeting to discuss what he thought was an attempt to sneak Kieran into stroke seat. Seb felt that making changes this close to the race was plain stupid

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and as far as he could see it was a conspiracy: "Do the coaches not realize that everyone knows what tricks they're up to?" Kip agreed, as he stated at the time:

> *I can't believe it.... We had the best-ever row on Tuesday and then [the coaches decide] to swap Thorsten and Kieran, which upset everything. Even assuming it makes sense from a technical perspective to swap the two, it makes no sense from a psychological perspective. None whatsoever. It's just plain stupid. The last thing you want to do in approaching a race is to upset the boat. We'd already had a last-minute change of coxswain – and now this ...!*

Thus, after six months of race preparations, coaches could not take their authority over the crew for granted. Whenever prominent members of the crew disagreed with what the coaches felt was the best way to create the fastest boat, they made their feelings known and meetings were required to resolve the tensions. During this final meeting Kieran resolved the problem by relinquishing stroke seat for the sake of the team:

> *Actually I'm pretty pissed off that we are having a meeting at all. The only thing that should matter at this point is how we can make this boat go as fast as possible, not who sits where. It's not about some glory seat or any of that crap, but whether or not we win next week – (…) and, so long as we win, I don't care who sits where. (…) So Thorsten sits at stroke, I'm Six, we all stop worrying about what everyone else is doing and fucking well concentrate on our individual jobs! That way we'll win this bloody race and none of this will matter. Problem solved!*

The coaches never did get a chance to contribute any closing statements. Nor were they any longer expected to make any decisions. The crew had effectively taken things into their own hands. The boat belonged to them now.

Nine days later they won The Boat Race.

Strategic Conformant Agency: Healthy Competition

As explained earlier, we did not just find examples of strategic agency that diverged from institutionalized rules, norms, or beliefs but also identified examples that conformed to the structural properties of the institution. Internal competition for a seat in the Blue Boat and the strategic behaviors it produced to improve selection chances were actually a key pillar on which

the functioning of the institutional system rested. The training and selection program is designed to foster both competition and cooperation: rowers can only ever compete effectively if able to cooperate perfectly, or at least seamlessly coordinate their 'blade-work', with the very people they are competing with. To think strategically about one's relative ranking in terms of ergometer scores, seat-racing and technique, on one of either side of the boat, allows them to make a calculated decision as to how to compete. For example, several of the rowers (including Jake) made a conscious decision to switch from stroke to bow side (or vice versa) because they rated their chances of selection higher on one side, given the competition. Decisions such as these reproduce the institutional order because they are an intrinsic part of the logic of creating the fastest boat, which permeates this particular institution. As Kip explained: "always looking out for your self-interest (…) is the way competing at this level goes." The one institutional condition that applied to individual strategies was that they remained 'within the rules of the game', code of 'fair play', or 'sportsmanship', and excluded sabotage, scandal mongering, and other forms of manipulation, or indeed of 'doing nothing' when aware that any of this is happening. Thus, the possibility of divergent agency that was inherent in the competitive system was controlled by a set of institutional rules, which specified what behaviors were unacceptable.

Relational Affective Conformant Agency: Team Bonding

Whereas we have shown relational affective agency to have disruptive potential in some cases, it can also conform to structural properties. Despite fierce competition for one of only eight seats in the Blue Boat (when excluding the coxswain), squad members express respect, and even affection, for each other, actively maintaining social relationships by providing mutual support. For example, they will often help each other with academic work. During erg trials (which pitted athletes against each other for the fastest time over a 2,000 or 5,000 meter course), squad

members would rally around to encourage each other. Such moral support is priceless when struggling with fatigue midway through a trial, and reciprocated by the oarsmen. Invariably the oarsmen will post different results – some will be pleased and others disappointed with their own performance – and once the dust has settled they make an effort to either comfort each other, or to rebuild relationships. This is true even among the most competitive oarsmen, a nice example being a battle for the prestigious 'stroke' seat between Kieran and Thorsten. Olympic gold medalist, Kieran, and World Champion, Thorsten, were extraordinarily close in terms of their 2,000-meter erg scores. At the indoor rowing championships the previous year, Thorsten had beaten Kieran by the smallest of margins measurable on a Concept II ergometer. The tension before the following year's championship was palpable, with Kieran and Thorsten choosing to travel to the venue in separate vans, and keeping very much to themselves. However, no sooner had Thorsten beaten Kieran narrowly once again, or both athletes sought to make up for lost time. Immediately after the trial, still wet with perspiration, Thorsten walked up behind Kieran and gave him a big bear hug. Kieran reciprocated with a joke, and they left the venue together.

At a more general level, the squad will plan for a social event to complete a trial, and to patch up any hostility that may have arisen during it. Thus, the evening after Trial Eights (which traditionally pits two CUBC crews of equal strength against each other), the two crews will have a formal (black tie) dinner followed by dancing and a flurry of email banter the next day. Likewise, the final day of seat-racing for the Blue Boat often coincides with New Year's Eve which, albeit it on location in Northern Spain, allows for plenty of mockery as well as sympathy. Rivalries will be mended, even if only temporarily, newcomers will be introduced into the 'rough and tumble' of CUBC partying, coxswains are likely to get drunk (given their lack of body-mass compared to oarsmen, and yet eagerness to keep up), and those too miserable to party will be

comforted. In that sense, the CUBC world is surprisingly affective. Despite, or because of, intense personal rivalries, the oarsmen are often seen to display affection towards each other by means of touching, hugging, or homoerotic behaviors (such as simulated sexual posturing). These forms of bonding to counterbalance relational disruptions that can result from fierce competition serve the institution well: crew rowing is a team sport in which perfect coordination is of crucial importance for boat speed.

Institutional Maintenance Agency: Socialization by Coaches and Old Blues

Institutional reproduction is, likewise, facilitated by socialization as a form of institutional maintenance work. The coaches actively cultivate team spirit by making selection decisions as early as possible so as to allow a crew to settle and bond. Thus, by late January two distinct crews will have emerged: the Blue Boat and Goldie. These crews begin to develop their own identities, as they did in 2007, by training in separate corners of the boathouse, by being assigned their own coach, by riding in different vans, and by being forced to race each other in water sessions. The Goldie crew is united in one important respect: everyone in it failed to make the Blue Boat. But their resentment serves the club well: they provide an excellent training partner in their enthusiasm to defeat their bigger brother in mock races.

This counter-identity is encouraged by the coaches, as illustrated in an email sent by Goldie coach Rob Baker shortly after crew selection:

> *I want you to think of yourselves as Fighters. Not just in a general term I want you to model yourselves on actual fighters the main example being Muhammad Ali … Every fighter takes a good beating at some point and you have the Blue Boat to race so you need to come up fighting every time. I want you to be ready for anything in training and relish the fact that I will be pushing you in every area. When I ask you to jump over a wall I expect the answer in your body language to be "how high?" (12 January 2007).*

The Blue Boat crew sought to identify itself not in terms of Goldie, but their Oxford rivals. They decided, in 2007, to appropriate a term used by Oxford to refer to their Cambridge counterparts, namely 'Tabs' (derived from the Latin 'Cantabrigian'). While the term is itself neither flattering nor derogatory, Oxford have long used it as slang for Cambridge. Thus, by deciding to print t-shirts with 'Tabs' printed on them in bold lettering, the Blue Boat crew sought to turn a nickname into a source of positive identification.

More formally, continued socialization takes place through the involvement of 'Old Blues' who raced the Boat Race in past years and are still actively involved with the CUBC. Early in the training season, Old Blues are invited back to Cambridge to tell of the club's history, ethos and importance. When the squad trains in London, as they do every so often, Old Blues will regularly turn up to give moral support. Several of them sit on CUBC's Finance and General Purpose (F&GP) committee, charged with planning and resourcing the long-term strategic future of the Club, and some take personal responsibility for mentoring specific individuals. They are also extraordinarily protective of their organization, as experienced first-hand by one of us (the ethnographer) when asked for a veto over his research output or, if refused, risk being thrown out. Some of the Old Blues had gotten wind of his presence in the squad and worried about any damage his writing might inflict on an organization they hold as sacrosanct. As one of them wrote him in an email shortly before the publication of a book on the 2007 season:

> *I am sure you are aware I have always vigorously opposed the publication of this book and many who are aware of its existence feel the same way. It shows up what is currently wrong with the organization and it is extremely distasteful to me to read much of what you have written or implied ... I do not like you - you know that - and the less said or written further is probably best.*

The Old Blues view themselves as custodians of the CUBC, helping to socialize newcomers into the ways of the Club early in the season, involving themselves in the club's governance and the

appointment of coaches, and warding off anything that risks damaging the club's reputation. Through such forms of institutional work, they actively maintain and protect the institution.

DISCUSSION

Our aim in this paper is to develop a systematic micro-level understanding of endogenous agency in a highly institutionalized, stable setting as a basis for developing a general institutional theory of action. To this point, we highlighted a number of examples of endogenous agency throughout the 2007 Boat Race season, distinguishing between divergent and conformant forms of endogenous agency, as well as highlighting two categories that crosscut these two basic forms: 'strategic' and 'relational affective' agency. These examples are summarized in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

They show how 'strategic' and 'affective relational' agency diverged from structural properties in some cases, whilst conforming to them in others, suggesting that these two categories may be intrinsic elements of endogenous agency itself. In the following we draw on practice theory and the work of Goffman to suggest that, in addition to being intrinsic elements of agency itself, they are also partially autonomous from the institutional structures that give rise to them. This leads us to a revised ontology of endogenous agency as a basis for developing a general institutional theory of action.

Strategic Endogenous Agency

Our identification of strategic agency as an intrinsic element of endogenous agency in institutions at the micro-level of analysis, even in highly institutionalized settings, is supported by prominent practice theorists who emphasize the reflexive knowledgeability of actors. For

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example, Bourdieu (1977: 58), in outlining his practice theory, illustrates the complexity of marriage strategies in the Kaybilia, Algeria, concluding that marriage entails a very complex, and highly contextual calculation:

> *The matrimonial game is similar to a card game, in which the outcome depends partly on the deal, the cards held (their value itself being defined by the rules of the game, characteristic of the social formation in question), and partly on the players' skill: that is to say, firstly on the material and symbolic capital possessed by the families concerned (…); and secondly on the competence which enables the strategists to make the best use of this capital …*

His work suggests that the strategic conduct involved in increasing different forms of capital is an important means through which institutional structures are reproduced or challenged.

In our particular case, the strategic challenges to the coach's authority by the returning Blues were divergent in the sense that they challenged the institutionalized authority of the coach in selection decisions as well as the importance of seat-racing results in these decisions. The relationship between the crew and the coaching staff resembled a type of unstable 'negotiated order' (Strauss, 1978) in which decision making authority was strategically renegotiated on several occasions throughout the season. Yet this divergent strategic conduct also reproduced important structural properties. The forced selection of Dan was legitimated based on the claim that his inclusion would actually produce a faster boat, thus reinforcing the institution's overriding logic. Moreover, the final challenge to the coaches' authority, in which Kieran relinquished the seat that the coaches believed to be most suitable for him, actually created a sense of unitary cohesion within the boat, which had been lacking until then. Hence, the final revolt against the coach actually helped create a more cohesive rowing team. In other words, the unintended consequence of the coach's failed efforts to try to get Kieran in the stroke seat was to create a faster boat by provoking a revolt against him that united the crew.

Nevertheless, despite the possibility of strategic conduct supporting institutional reproduction, our analysis also shows that actors' bounded knowledgeability about the rules of the game and their ability to strategically engage, and even manipulate, these rules, also has inherent disruptive potential. The difference between the competitive strategies deployed by crewmembers to increase their selection chances, and those deployed by Jake, which had the potential to disrupt the institution's primary objective by influencing selection decisions to include other factors than genuine ability and work ethic, was a matter of degree of calculation and not a fundamental substantive difference. This suggests that the same strategic logic that can support institutional reproduction can also be potentially disruptive when taken to its extreme. Jake's case in particular shows that the very rules of competition that helped sustain the institution's primary objective of creating the fastest possible boat also made possible, and even encouraged, forms of behavior that could potentially disrupt this goal. This suggests that strategic conduct can be seen as somewhat autonomous from the institution which it helped sustain in most cases, necessitating *other* constraining rules such as those of 'sportsmanship' and 'fair play' to limit its potentially disruptive effects.

Bourdieu's work shows that this is not a unique feature of our extreme case, pointing to the autonomy of endogenous strategic agency in institutional fields in general: "(B)oth the individual struggles of everyday life and the collective, organized struggles of political life, have a *specific logic* which endows them with a real autonomy from the structures in which they are rooted" (Bourdieu, 1989: 21, original emphasis). Hence, we propose that strategic agency is not only an intrinsic element of endogenous agency in highly institutionalized settings, but also partially autonomous from the institutional rules that give rise to it. As such it cuts across both divergent and conformant agency, disrupting structural properties in some cases, whilst reinforcing them in

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others. The creative micro-level strategies that this logic induces are only reproductive of institutional structure insofar as the very rules by which actors play their strategic games are the ones that sustain it, e.g. strategic competition for seats supportive of the institutional imperative of creating the fastest possible boat, and additional rules are in place that constrain potentially disruptive creative excesses, e.g. strategic competition for seats constrained by rules of fair play and sportsmanship and by the institutional imperative of producing the fastest boat over and above self-interest.

In other words, the micro-logic of strategic agency opens up a range of possible behaviors for individual actors of which only a sub-set is conformant with institutional structure. The likelihood of occurrence of strategic divergent agency therefore depends on the extent to which the institution maximizes the relative size of this conformant subset by colonizing and constraining strategic conduct. Hence, we explain divergent strategic agency in highly institutionalized settings, in which the conditions on which extant explanations of endogenous agency rely do not hold, by theorizing strategic agency as an intrinsic element of agency itself which follows a micro-logic that is partially autonomous from institutionally sanctioned forms of agency and therefore has inherent disruptive potential.

Relational Affective Endogenous Agency

Although the term 'interaction order', borrowed from Erving Goffman (1983), is sometimes used as the micro-level equivalent of a particular institutional macro-order (Barley, 1986; Morrill, Zald, and Rao, 2003), Rawls (1987) points out that Goffman's unique contribution consists in the idea of an interaction order *sui generis,* partially autonomous from social structure, which derives its order from constraints imposed by the needs of a presentational self. Goffman has carefully argued over the course of his career that persons must commit themselves to certain

interactional ground rules in order for their sense of self to be maintained. Interactional prerequisites and related needs of self are thus a source of consistent social constraint which, crucially, may offer a basis from which the encroachment of particular institutions can be resisted and defied (Rawls, 1987).

Seen in this light, the episodes of divergent relational affective agency we identified are attempts to secure a presentational self, rooted in the interaction order, in the face of institutional structures that threatened it. Both Kip, in talking about wanting his friend to lose in order to get him in his own boat, and Jake, in talking about his strategy for defeating Colin and Oli, expressed feelings of guilt. This is because maximizing advantage to themselves according to the institutionalized rules of self-interested competition meant that they had to put on a false front towards others. This, according to Goffman, can produce feelings of guilt because putting on a false front breaks the moral obligation inherent in any interaction to represent face accurately, an obligation which exists independent of particular institutional forms and is solely based on interactional imperatives (Rawls, 1987; Goffman, 1967: 24). Similarly, the crew's hesitation to speak out about Russ' poor coxing performance can be explained by the interactional imperative of avoiding embarrassment for self and others which can induce feelings of shame (Scheff, 1990). This interactional imperative contradicted the institutional rule of giving the highest priority to winning the race by creating the fastest possible boat and thus led to the institutionally divergent delay in speaking out.

This is not to say that social interaction operates under rules that are completely free of institutional constraint. Indeed, Goffman (1961) emphasized that the institutional conditions in which people find themselves can be designed to be totalizing, leaving them with very little room

to secure a self against them. In our case, despite their feelings of guilt, both Kip and Jake felt compelled to privilege their institutional identity as competitive rowers over ideas of friendship and moral interaction, framing this as a conscious choice. Similarly, the crew did opt to replace Russ with Rebecca in the end, despite their initial hesitations, thereby restoring the institutional imperative. In the example of preferring Dan against evidence that he was an inferior rower, the returning five Blues felt compelled to legitimate their preference based on institutionalized performance rules; it was precisely *because of* his likeability in interaction, so they argued, that he contributed to a faster boat. Moreover, our example of the importance of 'team spirit' for institutional reproduction shows that relational affective agency can be harnessed to serve the purposes of the institution, and need not always be directed against it.

Nevertheless, our examples of divergent relational affective agency do indicate that on several occasions the taken-for-granted acceptance of institutional imperatives was at least temporarily disrupted by feelings of guilt, embarrassment, and shame, which led to different action patterns than would be expected according to institutionally sanctioned scripts. The episodes of revolt and delay we identified are difficult to explain in terms institutional structure, no matter how inconsequential they turned out to be for its continued reproduction in the long run. They make more sense when we theorize relational affective agency to be partially independent from institutional structure, rooted in the needs to secure a presentational self *against* institutional encroachment, as Goffman (1961: 280) explains:

> *Without something to belong to, we have no stable self, and yet total commitment and attachment to any social unit implies a kind of selflessness. Our sense of being a person can come from being drawn into a wider social unit; our sense of selfhood can arise through the little ways in which we resist the pull. Our status is backed by the solid buildings of the world, while our sense of personal identity often resides in the cracks.*

This implies that, like strategic agency, relational affective agency is not only an important element of endogenous agency in highly institutionalized settings, but also partially autonomous from institutional structure. It follows a logic of moral commitment to rituals of interaction through which presentational selves are protected, and emotions of shame and guilt are avoided (Goffman, 1961, 1967; Rawls, 1987; Scheff, 1990). We suggest that, like strategic agency, it also has inherent disruptive potential as an intrinsic element of endogenous agency in institutions, because it can induce behaviors that are not aligned with institutional imperatives. As in the case of strategic agency, we propose that the likelihood of divergence occurring depends on the extent to which institutional imperatives colonize and constrain affective relational conduct. In other words, the likelihood of divergent affective relational agency firstly depends on the extent to which affective relational elements are incorporated into institutional reproduction, e.g. institutional reproduction through 'team spirit'. Second, in cases where a conflict between institutional and relational affective imperatives is nevertheless experienced, the likelihood of divergent agency depends on the extent to which institutionally sanctioned social identities are successful at overriding interactional imperatives linked to maintenance of a presentational self, e.g. ignoring feelings of guilt towards others based on strong identification with a self-interested, competitive rower identity. Hence, like strategic agency, we explain divergent affective relational agency in highly institutionalized settings, in which the conditions on which extant explanations of endogenous agency rely do not hold, by theorizing affective relational agency as an intrinsic element of agency itself which follows a micro-logic that is partially autonomous from institutionally sanctioned forms of agency, and therefore has inherent disruptive potential.

A REVISED ONTOLOGY OF ENDOGENOUS AGENCY

In sum, we have identified two overlapping categories of divergent endogenous agency –
strategic and relational affective – and have shown that these two categories are also involved in
institutional reproduction. By relating these two categories to practice theory in the case of
strategic agency, and the work of Goffman in the case of relational affective agency, we have
developed a theoretical argument that leads to a revised understanding of endogenous agency in
highly institutionalized settings. First, we suggest that strategic and relational affective agency
are intrinsic elements of endogenous agency, in addition to taken-for-granted, routinized
institutional agency reinforced by institutional maintenance work. Second, we propose that
strategic and relational affective agency are partially autonomous categories of agency,
reproducing structural properties in some cases whilst diverging from them in others. Third, we
argue that strategic and affective relational agency can depart from institutional structure because
they have their own specific micro-logics of action, which are not necessarily aligned with
institutional imperatives. And fourth, we propose that the likelihood of divergent endogenous
agency in highly institutionalized, stable settings depends on the degree to which institutional
imperatives successfully colonize and constrain the strategic and relational affective categories
of agency.

Insert Figure 1 about here

This leads us to the model of endogenous agency depicted in Figure 1. According to this model
endogenous agency at the micro-level of analysis consists of three autonomous but
interpenetrating categories: institutional, strategic, and relational affective. 'Institutional agency'
refers to a category of actions through which institutional structures are maintained through

conformant action, including mundane routines and purposive maintenance work. 'Strategic agency' refers to a category of actions through which cultural, symbolic, social and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1985). are maximized. 'Affective relational agency' refers to a category of actions through which presentational selves are protected through rituals of interaction. These categories overlap but are also autonomous in the sense that each has a specific micro-level logic of action. In cases where strategic and/or relational affective agency overlap with institutional agency, the different micro-logics mutually support each other, conforming to institutional structure. However, due to their autonomy, these micro-logics can also point to different, conflicting actions. In such cases divergent endogenous agency will occur when either strategic agency and/or relational affective agency become the most salient micro-logics of action, overriding the institutional imperative. Our analysis suggests that this possibility is ever present, even in highly institutionalized settings, suggesting that the potential for institutional disruption is intrinsic to the nature of endogenous agency itself.

It is important to differentiate this argument from institutional logic theory which explains endogenous agency based on the contradictions between the institutional logics supporting different macro-orders (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008). We argue that strategic and relational affective agency are not related to any particular institutional macro-logic, but cut across them. Although their salience may vary, we suggest that strategic and relational affective agency are intrinsic elements of endogenous agency *across* different institutional logics. Hence, our argument is different from institutional logic theory in that our analysis suggests that contradictions between institutional macro-logics are not a necessary requirement for endogenous agency in institutions. This is because the pluralism required for divergent agency is inherent in the structure of agency itself, which is constituted in multiple,

potentially conflicting micro-logics of action that do not derive from any one particular macro-logic such as capitalism, democracy, the family, the professions, or religion (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton, 2004). It is through this theoretical move that endogenous agency can be explained in institutions that are *not* characterized by salient contradictions between macro-institutional logics. Hence, our theory specifically applies to institutional conditions under which explanations of endogenous agency based on institutional logic theory do not hold.

IMPLICATIONS

As Hallett and Ventresca (2006) point out, recent work in the institutional tradition has reached out to symbolic interactionism to complement the imagery of exogenous institutional logics with endogenous, socially skilled, negotiated action (Barley and Tolbert, 1997; Fligstein, 1997, 2001; Lounsbury and Ventresca, 2003; Barley, 2008). Our study falls squarely within this nascent "inhabited institutions" approach, bringing people back into institutional analysis based on the recognition that micro-level social interactions suffuse institutions with local force and significance (Scully and Creed, 1997; Hallett and Ventresca, 2006; Hallett, Shulman, and Fine, 2009). Rather than seeing institutions as inert containers of meaning and people as mere "carriers" of these meanings, this "peopled" (Fine, 2003) approach emphasizes that meanings are derived in part from social interaction and that, through interaction, people are shapers of institutional forces. Thus dynamic social interactions are constitutive of what institutions "are" at the ground level (Hallett and Ventresca, 2006). At the same time, institutional forces matter because they provide guidelines for social interaction and can strictly limit individual agency (Goffman, 1961; Hallett, Shulman, and Fine, 2009). Hence, both local *and* extra-local symbolic structures need to be considered to better understand the micro-dynamics of action and the related question of endogenous agency in institutions.

Thus far work in this tradition has been largely conceptual, pointing to symbolic interactionism's potential to enrich our understanding of the complex limits and possibilities of individual agency under conditions of institutional control, whilst still stopping short of specifying the relations between symbolic interaction and institutions. We have begun to take up this challenge by providing an empirically grounded account of endogenous agency in a highly institutionalized, stable setting. Our analysis suggests that symbolic interaction, or what we have called 'relational affective agency', can be reproductive of the institutional order, but also has intrinsic disruptive potential. When institutional imperatives encroach on, and conflict with, the moral commitment to maintain presentational self in interaction this can trigger feelings of shame and/or guilt that can become a source of divergent agency. This implies that instead of being "different sides of the same coin", as Hallett, Shulman and Fine (2009) suggest, institutions and symbolic interaction need not always overlap. Indeed, we propose that it is the *lack of* overlap between institutionally sanctioned agency rooted in the institutional order on the one hand, and relational affective agency rooted in the interaction order on the other, that forms an important source of micro-level endogenous agency.

Our work complements Goffman's (1961) in showing that, even in highly institutionalized, regimented settings that require full identification and total commitment, the effects of institutional structures are never totalizing and the micro-logic of symbolic interaction can escape institutional colonization. Hallet, Shulman and Fine (2009) are right to emphasize that this point in itself provides an enduring basis for analyzing how people and their interactions inhabit particular organizations embedded in particular institutional environments. Future research in this area may be able to elucidate the conditions under which divergent affective relational agency is more or less likely and also look into the ways in which it can have structural

effects, which was not our focus in this study. Both in the case of Goffman's *Asylums* and in our own case, most of the examples of divergent relational affective agency observed did not threaten the institutional order; relational affective disruptions were either temporary or largely inconsequential. Future studies should explore the relevance of divergent relational affective agency for institutional change in other, less extreme settings to better understand the role of relational affective agency in institutional reproduction and change.

A "peopled" approach to institutions also highlights the importance and relevance of emotions in institutional life. DiMaggio and Powell (1991) first pointed out that institutional theory's "cognitive turn" in the late 1970s has come at the cost of neglecting the emotional dimensions of institutions. Drawing on the work of Parsons and Collins, they argue that different institutional domains evoke cognitive, cathectic, and evaluative orientations to varying degrees, and that *feelings* of solidarity form important underpinnings of institutional order and stability. Colomy (1998: 292) also argues that institutionalism's treatment of practical action with its emphasis on routine and taken-for-granted elements and scripted behaviors needs to be amended with a depiction of "culturally impassioned action". Scott (2001) considers cathectic or emotional elements a candidate for a fourth institutional pillar, emphasizing the importance of emotion-laden attachments to practices or relations, "which provide not only a motivational basis but a kind of *logic of action*" (Scott, 2001: 70, emphasis added). Yet, despite these repeated calls for explicit consideration of the role of emotions in institutional stability and change, the "fourth pillar" of emotions has yet to materialize.

At CUBC the emotional orientations of rowers appeared at least as important for the reproduction of institutionalized practices as their cognitive or normative orientations. The fear

of intense feelings of shame and self-doubt associated with losing, combined with the prospect of intense feelings of elation, relief and pride associated with winning, clearly formed one of the most important motivational forces throughout the season. The molding of a collective identity and a common enemy was also highly emotionally charged, increasing commitment to the group as well as the CUBC tradition. As our discussion of the role of Old Blues showed, strong emotional commitment to CUBC based on a strong collective identity was often maintained long after rowers had left the university. Goodwin, Jasper and Poletta argue that "collective identities, in fact, are nothing more or less than affective loyalties" (2004: 419), suggesting a clear path for bringing emotions back into institutional theory, which is increasingly paying attention to the role of collective identity in (de)institutionalization processes (cf. Rao, Monin, and Durand, 2003; cf. Glynn, 2008). The social movement literature in particular has already highlighted the close connections between collective identity and emotional commitment (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta, 2001; Polletta and Jasper, 2001; Hunt and Benford, 2004).

Beyond this more or less obvious role of emotion as a committing motivational force in our case study, we have also shown how certain emotions triggered divergent agency, particularly when the maintenance of social bonds in interaction was threatened by institutional imperatives. Despite their limited structural impact in our case, we consider the clear empirical manifestations of feelings of shame, guilt, and embarrassment brought on by threats to the maintenance of social bonds to be highly significant, because they suggest a source of endogenous agency in highly institutionalized settings other than that related to the particular institution itself. For these reasons, we believe future research should pay more systematic and explicit attention to the role of emotion in (de)institutionalization processes as a corrective to institutionalism's cognitive turn.

Finally, our work has important implications for our understanding of the institutionally embedded nature of strategic conduct. The literature on institutional logics has already pointed to the institutional embeddedness of the particular rationality on which strategic conduct is based (e.g. Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton, 2004; Lounsbury, 2007). This work shows that institutional and technical forces should not be seen as separate and distinct. Moreover, Beckert (1999) argues that institutionalization itself *makes possible* strategic conduct because institutional rules that make behavior more predictable are a necessary requirement for the possibility of strategic conduct. Similarly, Berger and Luckmann (1967: 71) point out that institutionalized activity forms a stable background that opens up a foreground for strategic deliberation and innovation. Thus, an acknowledgment of the institutional embeddedness of strategic conduct leads us to see strategic conduct as part and parcel of the process of institutionalization. This is firstly because the rationality that informs strategic conduct is itself institutionally embedded, and, secondly, because the possibility for strategic conduct can be considered an *outcome* of the process of institutionalization.

Our case study provides a clear example of an institution in which the rationality of strategic competition was institutionally defined and constrained, and in which strategic conduct was not only enabled, but also actively encouraged by institutionalized 'rules of the game'. As a result most of the strategic conduct we observed was actually conformant to institutional structure. Furthermore, most of the rowers who engaged in strategic conduct in competing for seats were *not* cognitively disembedded from the institutional rules on which their strategic behaviors were based. Instead, rules of strategic competition were internalized and their purpose was taken-for-granted. Nevertheless, we also showed that the micro-logic of strategic conduct can escape institutional colonization and can, in some cases, diverge from institutional structure. This

slippage from institutionally conformant to divergent strategic conduct can occur because institutions "make it possible to take a strategic position even towards those rules on whose existence the possibility of strategic action depends" (Beckert, 1999). We have suggested that the likelihood of such slippage occurring depends on the extent to which a particular institution can colonize strategic conduct by incorporating it into its structure, and on the extent to which it can harness strategic conduct through other rules that constrain the types of strategic actions actors can legitimately engage in. We believe there is a need for future research that specifies the conditions under which strategic agency is more or less likely to be divergent, and that identifies the mechanisms by which strategic agency can be colonized and harnessed to serve institutional imperatives. Research that links the likelihood of divergent action to the different ways in which individual actors handle the possible tensions between the self-interests associated with strategic agency, the interactional imperatives associated with relational affective agency, and institutional imperatives could also make a valuable contribution to further refining the theory of action we have developed in this paper.

The most significant limitation of our study is also the most obvious: reliance on a single case restricts generalization. While we hope our findings will be shown to have traction in other institutional environments, we realize that ours is an extreme case. Paradoxically, however, it may be for precisely this reason that our findings extend beyond our limited sample. As Eisenhardt (1989) notes, if the goal is to extend theory, it makes sense to choose extreme situations in which the process of interest – in our case endogenous agency – is "transparently observable". If we were able to isolate sources of action that enable divergent endogenous agency in an environment in which this form of agency is theoretically least expected, these could also apply to less extreme cases. Moreover, by relating our empirical analysis to practice

theory and to Goffman's interactionism we have shown that our findings are unlikely to be unique to our case. Both Bourdieu's and Goffman's work are replete with empirical examples of knowledgeable, calculated action grounded in micro-logics of capital accumulation in the case of Bourdieu, and commitment to rituals of interaction in the case of Goffman, which can be reproductive of institutional structure in some cases, and disruptive in others. Our contribution is to bring these different perspectives together through an empirically grounded analysis that forms the basis for a reconceptualization of the ontology of agency itself.

As Blumer indicated in his 1946 address to the American Sociological Society, an organizational sociology "must visualize human beings as acting, striving, calculating, sentimental and experiencing persons and not as automatons and neutral agents (…). It must further visualize such human beings in their collective character as arranged in diverse ways and incorporated in intricate and indirect networks of relations." Our work shows that this vision can inform a distinctive "peopled" institutional analysis as a starting point for better understanding endogenous agency in institutions. This can form the basis of a theory of action that takes seriously actors' embeddedness in their institutional environments by considering both self-interested strategic agency and relational affective agency to be part and parcel of institutionalized conduct, whilst also acknowledging their inherent disruptive potential.

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Table 1

Institutional Characteristics of CUBC as an Extreme Case

Institutional Characteristics	Empirical Manifestations
No external jolts or shocks affecting the 2007 season	- The institution is virtually unchanged over the past 180 years, except for increased professionalization due to gradual technological improvements in both equipment and training methods, and due to the introduction of corporate sponsorship in the 1980s - The 2007 season was structured in the same way as previous years with no significant changes in the external environment in terms of changes in policy, technology, budget circumstances, or other external factors that could impact the institution
Dominated by a singular logic; no salient pluralism	- The Stephen's Test permeates all action and reflects a singular institutional logic: 'Will doing this help us win the Boat Race?' - CUBC is extremely closed and secretive as reflected in the rule 'What happens here, stays here', and dominates the bulk of rowers' time commitments - Only those who are fully committed to CUBC's singular aim are selected
Low ambiguity	- The institutional logic is clear to everyone and shared by everyone - The training and selection schedule is highly routinized and the training and selection methods are standardized
Highly institutionalized	- CUBC's traditions are upheld through rituals and maintained by Old Blues who act as custodians - Rowers strongly identify with the aim of winning the race, and take for granted that great personal sacrifice is required to achieve this singular goal - Transmission of institutional rules, norms, values and beliefs across new generations of rowers occurs semi-automatically, through the stringent training and selection regime and continued socialization
In fit with the broader institutional environment; no salient inter-institutional contradictions	- Racing in the Blue Boat is the highest sports honor in the University of Cambridge, which actively supports CUBC - Blues are generally considered to have an advantage on the job market after graduation

Table 2

Overview of Examples of Endogenous Agency

Episodes of Endogenous Agency	Predominantly Conformant or Divergent	Strategic Category of Agency Salient	Relational Affective Category of Agency Salient	Neither Strategic nor Relational Affective Categories Salient
Strategically challenging the authority of the coach based on preferring Dan	Divergent	✓	✓	
Jake's strategic gaming	Both	✓		
Hesitation to replace Russ	Divergent		✓	
A final revolt to keep Thorsten in stroke seat	Both	✓		
Healthy competition for seats	Conformant	✓		
Team bonding	Conformant		✓	
Socialization as institutional maintenance work	Conformant			✓

Figure 1. Categories of Endogenous Agency