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Building We: Labor & Management's Shared Obligation to Cultivate Organizational Culture

"Our problem is not the lack of knowing; it is the lack of doing. Most people know far more than they think they do." – Mark O. Hatfield, U.S. Senator

The modern public service institution, whether a government agency, a nonprofit organization, or a privately-owned firm with a social service mission, has evolved steadily over the twentieth century to take on many characteristics found in commercial business & industry as practiced in North America. This includes, but is not limited to standardized administrative processes, hierarchical lines of reporting and authority, and an expectation to use resources efficiently in pursuit of maximum sustained yield. This is reflected in continuous growth, from Frederick Winslow Taylor's theory of Scientific Management to New Public Management in the second half of the twentieth century, and the transition towards New Public Governance as the millennium closed and entered the modern era (Morgan et al., 2015).

This organizational journey in public service was paralleled by a longer process of labor organization, beginning before the Industrial Revolution, going through the rapid advancements of the Great Depression and the New Deal, as well as the Atomic Age and the Cold War era. Labor unions, as well as increasingly complex levels of labor organizations, championed the concepts of workers' rights and pushed back against a top-down perspective on how management of public service & private industry was best served. Cultural values, primarily class, race, and gender, became entwined as workers pursued collective success balanced

against individual motives (Kelly & Nelson, 2022). This has resulted in a sort of paradox (Brown, 2021), where the different sides of public firms often now have competing views of the working relationships among employees, management, external partners & peers, as well as clients and constituents. Do things work well at a particular organization? Whose definition of “well” is being applied? Whose voices are heard and whose fall upon deaf ears (Kelly & Nelson, 2022)? What of third parties who neither hold responsibility for nor produce goods & services, but find themselves dependent upon the reliability of public institutions to form the pillars of common society (Schechter, 2007)?

This can present a truly wicked challenge for those who aspire to a career in public service, as there are limited resources, constant scrutiny, and a sense of higher purpose that often come into conflict with one another (Morgan et al., 2018; Schechter, 2007). My research question seeks to understand if this is an unavoidable conflict or merely a probable source of tension, centered around the inquiry: *“In what ways do labor unions coproduce organizational culture alongside formal management in public agencies?”*

Positionality Statement

In approaching this research topic, the work is best served by first identifying who I am to undertake this scholarly challenge, and how that may influence both the perspective by which I will critically evaluate existing literature as well as the biases which may inadvertently compromise my understanding. I am a Caucasian man of European descent, born and raised in a working class background in the United States. I am a first-generation college graduate. I am culturally identified with the Atlantic & Great Lakes states, and I have settled with my family and

work in communities built upon occupied Clatsop, Tillamook, Chinook, Yamhelas, and Siletz lands. I have been represented by a labor union for over eight years of civil service, and I have been actively involved in my current labor union as both a steward as well as vice president, where I have been selected by a plurality of my peers to advocate on the behalf of nearly 60 full-time employees.

Research Design & Chosen Methodology

I surmise that my research question is, more practically speaking, a question of how organizational culture is shaped from multiple angles by the formal management structure (“Management”) & personnel put in place, the aggregated workers who embody the front-line staff, as well as the democratically selected individuals that comprise an informal leadership structure recognized as a labor union (“Labor”) (Haneberg, 2005). I intend to utilize an inductive model for conducting my research, as I do not have an existing theory from which to embark upon studying this problem. This exploratory perspective has been chosen to identify a pattern or patterns that may form the basis of a hypothesis. This hypothesis can then be evaluated repeatedly and either validated to form a theory or invalidated to direct follow-on research along other axes of inquiry. The data pool for this will be a review of Collective Bargaining Agreements that govern the working relationship and expectations between state agencies and their represented employees. These documents are both legally binding (and thus enforceable by both parties) as well as being public records, as it is in the interest of the public to understand how their public administration conducts the peoples’ business in Oregon.

Review of Relevant Literature

The literature reviewed serves to build a foundational structure for both setting the scene upon which this topic is being researched, as well as presenting the lenses through which the data that are collected may be viewed and interpreted. This body of literature is organized into four broad themes as a result: The History of Organized Labor, Labor Unions, Public Administration, and Organizational Culture.

Part I: The History of Organized Labor

"Fight Like Hell: The Untold History of American Labor" by Kim Kelly (2022) is an anthology written with a critical eye towards how the conventional understanding of the labor movement has centered white, heterosexual male-driven narratives at the expense of other histories that occurred among historically marginalized groups in North American history. In addition to forming a solid foundation from which to explore further, my intent in selecting this work to embark upon scholarly review is to uncover commonalities among a diverse series of communities that not only differ from one another, but also stand in direct contrast to my own lived experiences. The author's work within this text spans two full centuries, beginning with the early 19th century in New England's textile mills and ending in the early 21st century with the modern plight of warehouse workers in the Deep South fighting to unionize an Amazon distribution center.

These historical examples paint a vivid portrait of labor unions growing from a workplace-derived collective into active voices for socioeconomic transformation. This further exemplifies the state of modern public service organizations, in which greater emphasis on representation

has come into view as people seek to work for and be served by organizations that resemble the community at large. Whom we are and what we pursue in service to others appear to be intertwined here in Oregon as a result.

“Breadwinning, Equity, and Solidarity: Labor Feminism in Oregon, 1945-1970” by Laurie Mercer (2019) lays bare the struggle that women faced maintaining their presence in the workforce of Oregon after the end of World War II, when their participation was a matter of national service, patriotism, and economic necessity. As male workers returned from fighting America’s wars alongside the Allies, they rapidly began to displace women in many of the economic sectors where men had traditionally been employed before the war. This was benignly attributed to the accepted myth that men needed those jobs (and their higher wages) in order to serve as “breadwinners” for their families, including providing an economic opportunity for single men to afford the responsibility of settling down, marrying, and raising a family. This, of course, neglected the very real circumstances for women who were currently the primary source of income for their households, including those who had spouses or older male relatives that would not be returning from the war, making their continued economic success imperative. This gender bias in labor spread to the labor unions themselves, which often denied membership to women working in the same trade as their male counterparts, and the unions themselves reserved their protections and benefits exclusively for men. This forced women to begin organizing their own labor unions, setting up a zero-sum competitive environment for workers, and playing to the favor of employers who exploited a divided workforce.

In areas where women’s labor became active, including striking for contracts and fair treatment, women often stood upon a porous foundation of Solidarity, with male-aligned or

male-dominated union labor continuing to support business with companies, agencies, and other organizations. This included their workers actively crossing the picket lines in many cases. Whether the argument was that labor leaders wanted to contain labor disputes or there was the implicit lack of support for women's labor activism, Oregon workers found themselves falling behind national trends in organized labor and its alignment with women's rights until late in the 1960's.

"For Working Women in Oregon": Caroline Gleason/Sister Miriam Theresa and Oregon's Minimum Wage Law by Janice Dilg (2009) serves as an in-depth account of the life and public service of one of Oregon's most prolific leaders where class & gender rights converged in the early 20th century. Caroline Gleason grew up in a comfortable, middle-class lifestyle in Minneapolis, Minnesota with four other siblings. Her parents had set high goals for all of their children, to include pursuing higher education, affording Caroline the opportunity to attend the University of Minnesota in 1905, where she quickly became active in both the University Catholic Association (a continuation from her 12 years of parochial school) and the Women's League. Her worldview had previously melded her religious, spiritual, and intellectual development, but it was here in a public college that her vision began to extend toward women taking more active roles in society outside of their homes, and often leading in the novel field of social services. After graduating in 1908, she moved to Portland with her sister, Mary, as both had accepted teaching jobs in the city.

While originally moving west simply with the intention of taking a job and making her way in the world, Caroline Gleason was quickly confronted with the active labor community taking root in the Pacific Northwest and the tension generated when conservative views held by

Oregonians for generations came into contact with the social progression that was developing in parallel with America's rapid industrialization at the turn of the century. A family friend in Portland who looked after the two younger women, Father Edwin O'Hara, served both as a bridge to helping understand the people in this new community, as well as introducing a personal connection to the growing class struggles often seen in urban areas. One of the groups in Portland that Father O'Hara supported, the Catholic Women's League, would quickly become a core part of Caroline Gleason's civic life as it provided a safe environment for "women adrift" and working outside of their families' homes a place to meet, socialize, support one another with a growing sense of community, and enter the public sphere's domains of politics & economics, among other pursuits.

It is from this foundation that Caroline became embedded within Oregon's organized labor scene. She continued to pursue a complex life of labor activism with intersectionality along lines of sex & gender; she differed from so-called 'radical feminists' that argued for full, equal opportunity to that of men by instead hewing to the legal theory of "difference," arguing that women's biology and social status created unique needs & concerns that required legal protection that was distinct from existing laws written with men as the default. Her work locally culminated in the creation of the Industrial Welfare Commission in Oregon, which had the mission of establishing standards of hours, conditions of labor, and standards of wages; she would play a central role in the IWC's work after it was formed in 1917.

With this keystone of the literature review locked in place, now we can explore labor organizations in greater detail to better understand the roles they play.

Part II: Labor Unions

"Class vs. Special Interest: Labor, Power, and Politics in the United States and Canada in the Twentieth Century" by Barry Eidlin (2015) gives a side-by-side comparison between two countries in North America that have seen a divergence in the perception of labor organizations within the last 60 years. In America, the role of labor unions, including their activism and prominent voices, have been framed in the context of special interest groups. This is important as the connotations of special interests have taken on an often-negative tone within American politics, and as a result, labor unions have seen waning political support through the end of the Cold War era and the turn of the century.

In contrast, Canada's relationship with labor unions and workers' issues have remained firmly rooted along an axis of socioeconomic class during this period. This has served workers well, as Canada's form of parliamentary democracy is also comprised of multipolar political parties across the country, allowing for a flexibility for workers to organize and interact on equal terms with a wider swath of Canadian elected officials. In viewing these two different outcomes, it is also possible to see further cultural contexts within the United States that have become associated with labor unions, such as the imagery surrounding teachers' unions striking for improved pay, more job security, and expanded support in schools compared to law enforcement unions that are seen as politically driven organizations that shield police officers from criticism and accountability.

"The Labor of Caring: A History of the Oregon Nurses Association" by Patricia Schechter (2007). Along an axis of socioeconomic class, those at the lowest end of the labor spectrum

often faced significant challenges in advocating for the value of their work, and employers routinely delayed negotiations with the expectation that workers could ill afford to walk off the job without quickly facing painful financial consequences. Within Oregon, the Oregon Nurses Association supported low wage workers on strike for a 19 month campaign against Portland's Emmanuel Hospital as nursing attendants joined orderlies, maids, and kitchen aids in a protracted labor struggle demanding a minimum wage of \$1.00 per hour that began in August 1950 (Schechter, 2007). The history of nursing's training and education programs, which were originally housed within the same hospitals that depended upon nurses' labor and would be their primary employment venue, also contains a level of exploitation built into the system.

Hospital administrators and boards originally eschewed hiring the certified nurses they had just finished training, instead making clinical hours and patient care an active part of the nursing curriculum to tap lower-paid or even unpaid student nurses. These were, of course, the same entities that also controlled how many students their programs would admit, giving them almost total control over workforce development and access. At the national level, labor unions in America are often portrayed as merely one of many special interest groups that lobby elected officials, federal administrators, and collaborate with other non-governmental organizations to push their agendas. They can be counterbalanced against similarly organized trade & industry groups, which have historically been aligned with business owners and investors. Biases such as these will need to be addressed in any future organizational culture dialogues.

"*Collective Bargaining Agreements*" by Oregon Department of Administrative Services and multiple public-sector labor unions. Individually and collectively, these CBAs provided a wealth

of qualitative and quantitative data regarding how each labor organization functions within the state agency or agencies that its workers serve as staff. As collections within this literature review, they were worth reading because their authorship contains common language, structure, and definitions for significant terms. This fact is owed to the Department of Administrative Services' Labor Relations Unit (LRU) convening contract bargaining routinely between agency management and the labor organizations that staff have elected to represent their interests. The LRU serves as a third-party to help organize the table, standardize language within contracts, and to carry both parties through the sequence of contract bargaining and negotiations until tentative agreements can be reached and pave the way to full contracts that will be ratified by both parties. The government website referenced contains forty distinct legal contracts, categorized as collective bargaining agreements, which represent the mutually agreed upon working conditions between public administrative employees and their agency's management staff, as well as non-state employees who serve as home care workers across Oregon. A total of approximately 64,600 employees are represented by these collective bargaining agreements, and many of them are further connected to the national labor movement by their unions' affiliation as chapters of a larger organized labor confederation, such as the American Federation of Labor – Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO).

"2021-2023 Legislatively Adopted Budget General Fund/Lottery Funds – Summary (July 2021)" by Oregon State Legislature. This budget was crafted using the input provided by Oregon's Governor, as prepared in a government record known as the Governor's Recommended Budget. Besides showing a line item accounting of each source of revenue and how it is to be allocated among the state's agencies to support both project/programmatic

work, this document also shows how funding authorizes agencies to expand & contract their staff to accomplish the work of the people. This document was consulted to ascertain the size of individual agencies organized in the state of Oregon's Executive Branch of government, which served as a proxy value to understand how an organization's workplace culture might either be concentrated or dispersed across its entire workforce.

The LAB, as this document is called by state civil servants, also is illustrative as a piece of literature to consider as it represents a written description of the labor environment that both unions and agency management operate within, yet unlike CBAs, both parties have only indirect influences on how the LAB will be drafted by elected legislators, which elected officials will support key components or demand additional information prior to reaching nominal figures, and it is produced, debated, and ultimately passed in accordance with the political whims in the state capitol. While CBAs outline what both parties collectively agree to pursue together, the LAB informs them of the cold, fiscal reality which will constrain their actions in certain ways over the lifetime of a particular CBA.

The references from **Parts I & II** show the creation of a labor movement as an engine for socioeconomic change, one that steadily created space for the marginalized and underrepresented members of society to advocate for themselves. This legacy has matured over two centuries in the form of collectively bargained labor contracts that balance the demands of workers with the desires of the organizations which receive their labor. It is now time to look at the public organizations themselves to better understand how their power and resources are marshalled for the benefit of the society which they are meant to serve.

Part III: Public Administration

“Democracy in America” by Alexis de Tocqueville (2003) may seem an unusual resource to call upon, but it offers some compelling evidence for this research question. De Tocqueville’s work begins by highlighting how post-colonial America, unlike the Old World in Europe, was becoming defined by small-scale organizing principles that would govern daily life for much of its inhabitants as our young nation began to steadily expand across North America. These associations, as he defined them, were formed upon a variety of identities: By trades, by land ownership, by cultural & religious ties, and even by affinities for charitable works. Centralized power, as exercised by elected officials in larger towns & cities further away, was much less defined at the time and in many cases took a supportive role vs. a leading one in comparison to these quasi-formal associations. These organizations and their repetitive success nearly two hundred years ago form much of the lineage to modern governance as we know it today in local communities.

Two key terms are defined from this text: **Associations** and **Civic Republicanism**. In the words of de Tocqueville, “An association consists simply in the public assent which a number of individuals give to such and such a doctrine and their commitment to help in a specific way to make it prevail” (Tocqueville et al., 2003, p.220). The author then references an unseen, animating spirit that inhabits the structures of these associations and thus brings forth civic life into even the smallest of communities. This civic republicanism is spoken of with a tone of yielding reverence: “A recognized usefulness of his association with his fellow men and because he knows that this association cannot exist without a regulating power” (Tocqueville et al., 2003, p.

77). “In America, not only do institutions belong to the community but they are also kept alive and supported by a community spirit” (Tocqueville et al., 2003, p. 80).

“*Foundations of Public Service – 2nd Edition*” by Douglas F. Morgan (2015) contains two chapters that offer greater understanding of how public agencies operate internally with their leaders & staff (*Chapter 8 - A Political History of Public Personnel Administration*) as well as how no single organization holds supreme power to carry out their public service mission, and therefore must reach out and form collaborative bodies to do so (*Chapter 12 – Public Service Leadership in a Shared-Power World*). If it can be argued that there is an ancestral “public service culture” from which all American public service agencies descended from, these two chapters offer a keen argument as to how public agencies organize themselves to create systems by which resources are applied to providing public services and goods. This is elaborated upon by recognizing that there are often competing interests and motivations at play which must be balanced, and that achieving that balance often demands working in concert with other entities, organizations, and interests.

“*Human Resource Management in the Public Sector*” by John L. Daly (2012) serves as a practical text that explores concepts that influence the routine functions and long-term evolution of public sector workplaces in the early 21st century. Early in the text, the author highlights the significance of an ethically based organizational culture as one of six core values that human resources must promote, build, and safeguard to support a strong public sector organization. Further on, it recognizes that a vibrant work-life culture must be an intentional

goal of an organization's leaders, and that it begins with and extends from the workers at the lowest levels of the public agency. When the work-life culture is strong, the workers themselves become ambassadors for the organization, the work it performs on behalf of the community, and this aligns with their individual sense of purpose in being part of the larger organization. This serves to help recruit and retain talented workers who might otherwise be drawn towards more attractive opportunities elsewhere or simply repelled by an organizational culture that begins to turn septic.

Lastly, there is an entire chapter focused on human relations staff's work within public sector organizations where it interfaces with labor organizations (*Chapter 9 – Employment and Labor Relations Management*). This attention to the topic exemplifies a key fact of all public sector organizations: They are built with people in mind, and their ability to be effective is directly related to the level with which the staff feels empowered to act and in turn are recognized with dignity in the workplace.

A key term defined in this text is **Organizational Culture**. Daly exposites: "Organizational cultures serve as the major source of identity for employees, aids in guiding their behavior, helps reduce the uncertainty for their actions, and help join employees together in pursuit of common purposes" (Daly, 2012, p. 65).

"*Images of Organization*" by Gareth Morgan (2006) offers some fantastic insight into examining organizations through different lenses to better understand how they function. Two of the lenses, Cultural and Political, showcase divergent orientations for public agencies as well

as labor unions that comprise a sub-organization. The Cultural lens focuses upon collective-centered decision making and both formal & informal structures where power forms and flows from. It also places an emphasis on everyone within larger levels of organization understanding their role in producing mutually beneficial outcomes. The Political lens, in contrast, brings into relief the often-times competing interests of individuals, as well as their exercising of power to satisfy those interests. It is within this lens that informal organizations are framed as counter-organizations or countercultures, which places them within an adversarial context.

“New Public Leadership: Making a Difference from Where We Sit” by Craig W. Shinn, Douglas F. Morgan, and Marcus Ingle (2018) explores the organizational culture within a public agency, and who has a hand in shaping that culture. This, in turn, has the potential to unearth some uncomfortable truths about the organization. The ways in which we feel called to lead may not align with our official roles, and in some cases may come into direct conflict with them. Leading from where we sit affords us the agency to act where we can, how we can, to further public service instead of becoming mired by anxiety over things we have no control over. The portion of this text that outlines polity leadership brings in an understanding of how a single interest group or category of organization plays a wider part in a collective effort to lead effectively. This suggests that formal management within public agencies can and should seek to work with internal & external organizations.

“Organization Development: A Jossey-Bass Reader” edited by Joan V. Gallos (2006). This eight-section volume serves as a comprehensive and inclusive look at organizational

development as a discipline, and how its application as a practice forms a reliable mold for organizations to continuously evaluate their procedures, their performance, and their progress towards achieving the goals they have set for themselves. For the purposes of this research paper, *Part Five: OD Leadership: Fostering Change from the Inside* offers a concentrated series of professional writings that touch on salient topics. These include understanding options & challenges, leading as an internal consultant, leading as “the Boss,” leading the Boss, and building support. *Part Six: OD Focus: Organizational Intervention Targets* similarly has an entire chapter on organizational culture that serves as a great bridge to the final theme for this research paper’s literature review. *Part Eight: OD Future: The Future of Organizational Development* has a chapter on how a new class of worker, the Knowledge Worker, is challenging the management and organizational concepts developed in the early 20th century as the Information Age unfolds in the 21st century.

The key term defined from the essay by Peter Drucker in Part Eight is **Knowledge Worker**. Drucker paints a vivid image of “A professional whose work requires highly advanced and thoroughly theoretical knowledge; this will also include manual operations (Gallos, 2006, p. 919). A knowledge worker that engages in both knowledge work and manual work may be called a *technologist*” (Gallos, 2006, p. 925).

“Organization Development Basics” by Lisa Haneberg (2005) picks up where the previous body of literature above leaves off on helping to connect the Public Administration theme to the remaining Organizational Culture theme. Chapter Six discusses ways to successfully incorporate internal consulting techniques, Chapter Seven expands upon this by outlining how to facilitate

dialogue, and Chapter Eight neatly buttons up this theme in the literature review by discussing the art of coaching. These tools will be invaluable for both Management and Labor in coming together to better understand one another and effectively work together for mutual success where their agendas converge. More importantly, where these two groups' motivations diverge, the tools that Haneberg highlights will help both sides build enough trust to occupy the space between themselves while minimizing the anxiety, fear, and ambiguity that can often fill the void when transparency is not perceived.

This completes a comprehensive journey through literature about public organizations and their components, their structures, and the environments in which they can thrive or become anemic. Holding that in contrast with labor organizations, which have traditionally occupied positions of lower authority and power compared to the formally invested leaders of public organizations, the closing section of literature illustrates how the dynamics between these two groups manifest in the language, the traditions, the expectations, and the prevailing emotional climate found within public organizations. Understanding this has taken on greater importance over the past several years, as a global pandemic temporarily stopped many labor practices as we have come to know them over the 20th century and early 21st century, and laid bare the dormant socioeconomic divide between those who were deemed “essential workers,” and not allowed to slow or stop working, and the economic power wielded by knowledge workers who were afforded ways to adapt their working conditions using technology, modern business practices, as well as having the education and social mobility to radically pivot their careers as terrible circumstances caused many to reevaluate their priorities and seek greater alignment with personal values when they returned to the workplace.

Part IV: Organizational Culture

“Atlas of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection and the Language of Human Experience” by Brené Brown (2021) serves as the initial piece of literature to embark upon within the final theme of this research paper. As subsequent texts and sources will further explore the social and emotional dimensions of human relationships, this book serves as an orientation to what these feelings truly are, and how they intersect with other emotions to inform our ability to sense-make in the complex world we inhabit. Among the emotions explored in this text, I focused on trust, connection, belonging, and how the expression and authentic acceptance of these emotions is corroded by betrayal, fear, envy, and jealousy.

“Leadership is Language: The Hidden Power of What You Say – and What You Don’t” by L. David Marquet (2020). This text focuses on the role of communication and how it sets the stage for an environment where leaders and workers either productively engage in their work together or fall prey to prejudicial power dynamics that can sabotage an organization’s performance. Some key concepts that the author includes are how management techniques and principles from the Industrial Revolution era are increasingly being recognized as counter-productive to the working environment and skillset of the 21st century’s knowledge worker, as well as the author’s division of work tasks into two primary categories he refers to as “Red Work” and “Blue Work.” He assigns the work tasks these colors primarily based upon color theory that is a foundational description of how the visual aspects of art represent the emotional dimensions of the creator. Red is associated more with action, passion, and cycles

that move at rapid paces. Blue, conversely, is an expression of calm, cognitive activities, and evokes motion that occurs along a more gentle pace.

These complementary task categories further refine the definition of knowledge worker cited by Peter Drucker earlier in this research paper with the following elaboration: Knowledge workers unify the previously divided concepts of Red Work (manual, repetitive tasks) and Blue Work (creative, analytical tasks). They comprise a new kind of worker empowered to shift from one form of work to the other as needed, without relying upon external intervention to direct the work performed (Marquet, 2020).

“Pew Research Center: Majority of workers who quit a job in 2021 cite low pay, no opportunities for advancement, feeling disrespected” by Kim Parker and Juliana Menasce Horowitz (2022) is a brief snapshot of recent changes in the American workforce during a period dubbed “The Great Resignation.” The data collected by the Pew Research Center follows many of the conventional goals that labor unions have advocated for on behalf of represented workers and offers a point-in-time understanding of where labor relations are as we begin the third decade in this century.

“Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change – 4th Edition” by William Bridges, PhD, and Susan Bridges (2016) is a short, yet powerful reference on the psychological process by which members of a group process the end of living an experience as they knew it, and are then challenged to reimagine familiar organizations, roles, and even purposes to meet novel

demands moving forward. The work of Bridges & Bridges forms a model for understanding how this may create cognitive and emotional dissonance for those in traditional management roles as managers encounter limits to their conventional power. Accepting these limitations may be further exacerbated by being challenged to turn towards their workers' labor union as a potential partner to complete the work of building & maintaining a healthy organizational culture, as that will require a high degree of trust between the two interest groups and trust is a resource not easily accumulated nor transferred quickly.

"The Changing Nature of Workplace Culture" by Raymond J. Cole, Amy Oliver, and Aiste Blaviesciunaite (2014) takes the conversation into a slightly different direction, by discussing how the emergence of ever more sophisticated information and communications technologies (ICTs) have empowered workers to change the environment in which they perform work. No longer defined by a centralized office or building where everyone clocks in for static shifts, as has been the practice since the days of Frederick Taylor's Scientific Management and Henry Ford's modernized assembly line, workers are now increasingly altering the space & time that they work to balance their lives around external interests that can be both collective and highly individualized among staff. The authors investigate how the blurring of these boundaries between home, work, and the emergence of "third spaces" where workers inhabit during working hours is actively changing the culture of workplaces as a result. They also identify how the definition of workplace differs among ethnic & national cultures across the globe.

“Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World” by Vivek H. Murthy, MD (2020). This book, written by the 19th and 21st Surgeon General of the United States, speaks on the tangible effects that human relationships have upon the physical and emotional well-being of individuals. Taken on a larger scale, it also speaks to how these connections foster a stronger sense of resilience, and conversely, how their absence predisposes workers to several social & physiological ills. It resides in this literature review as a scientifically grounded look at how the health of a workplace’s culture can be observed and treated, as well as better understanding the impacts that individuals’ connection to one another (or lack thereof) forms the basis of this culture. The responsibility of how this impacts the health of others individually and collectively makes it imperative to best understand how a workplace either promotes wellness or may become toxic over time.

“Valuing Change: Differential Measurement of Workplace Culture Shift” by Daniel Stewart Coutts (2021) discusses the complexity in engaging with workplace culture directly, and how the tangible variables that leaders often manipulate can turn out to be confounding, or even antithetical to producing the changes desired. The author then offers several examples of proxy values that may be correlated with workplace culture on a larger scale, and how modifying them as a form of adaptive management may allow leaders to infer second-order changes in the workplace culture as a result. These findings are interesting in and of themselves, but they also further highlight the challenge in viewing workplace culture and changes to it over time through a quantitative lens of measurement, which many organizations are primed to do, versus a qualitative lens of measurement, which can often feel far more subjective.

Research Design

The unit of analysis that this research paper focuses upon is public agencies within the state of Oregon, specifically at the state level of government. This provides a sampling pool to comb through that remains manageable, while still being influenced by conditions across the entire state. This helps diminish findings that may otherwise skew too heavily in representing urban, globally oriented communities or the opposite: Small, rurally based agencies that homogenously represent local constituents.

Utilizing a Descriptive Research Design, this body of research reviews Oregon's state-level government agencies. In doing so, the primary data investigated are the Collective Bargaining Agreements that are retained and available as public records from Oregon's Department of Administrative Services (DAS). Some implications of this research endeavor may include highlighting where management and labor relations are currently strained, or even contentious. This research may also reveal the level of employee engagement/satisfaction in specific agencies, as well as trends among smaller, medium-sized, and large agencies of the state.

Great care has been taken by this author with how data is collected, identified/categorized, and interpretation has been provided with as much objectivity as possible. The intention of exploring this research question simply is to describe what is currently known and a matter of record on the relationship between Management & Labor, and how their dynamics contribute to organizational culture. This research question stems from a position of curiosity and humility, not from a place of anxiety and insecurity (Brown, 2021).

Collected Data

Oregon's Department of Administrative Services (DAS) serves as the clearinghouse for Collective Bargaining Agreements that bind the enterprise of State business agencies with the organized labor required to produce public goods and services. This single agency, as of April 2023, currently retains thirty-two distinct CBAs that represent thirty-three separate bargaining units (*State of Oregon: Employee Resources and State Workforce - Labor Relations*, n.d.), for a total of 66,640 state civil servants (*Oregon Transparency: State Budget: State of Oregon*, n.d.). Additionally, four separate CBAs are administered by DAS with 23,300 non-state employees that provide home care services that are vital to supporting vulnerable populations across Oregon (*State of Oregon: Employee Resources and State Workforce - Labor Relations*, n.d.). All but two of these CBAs governed the same 2021-2023 period that aligns with the State of Oregon's fiscal year calendar. The two outliers, both CBAs between the Oregon Military Department and two chapters of the International Firefighters Association, span a four-year period that will conclude on June 30th, 2023, along with the other two-year CBAs.

All 36 CBAs were reviewed, both to understand their connections to various state agencies, as well as the distinct labor unions that are active across the State of Oregon's enterprise. The two primary organizations on the side of labor are both national entities: Service Employees International Union (**SEIU**) and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (**AFSCME**); of these, only AFSCME remains affiliated with a larger umbrella organization of labor & trade unions, known as the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO).

Among this diverse set of data from both the CBAs as well as the State of Oregon's 2021-2023 Biennium Legislatively Approved Budget, the current size of state agencies with organized labor was identified (Figure 1), as well as the numbers of separate Articles and Letters of Agreement within each CBA (Figure 2). Among these sub-components of the CBAs, the LOAs are worth extracting as they represent *ex post facto* negotiations in response to changing working conditions/work environments that emerged after periodic collective bargaining sessions. LOAs tend to be shorter, more prescriptive, and will not automatically be included into future CBAs, though workers may persuade their bargaining teams to draft them into Articles to enshrine them in an enduring fashion.

Lastly, the data set was broadly organized into three categories, based upon the size of the agency's total staff that each bargaining unit is associated with. Small Agencies were designated as public administrative offices and departments with less than five hundred total staff. Medium Agencies had staff of more than five hundred people, but no more than 2,000 total. Large Agencies had staffs over 2,000 employees strong and indeed no firm in this category had fewer than 4,000 total staff.

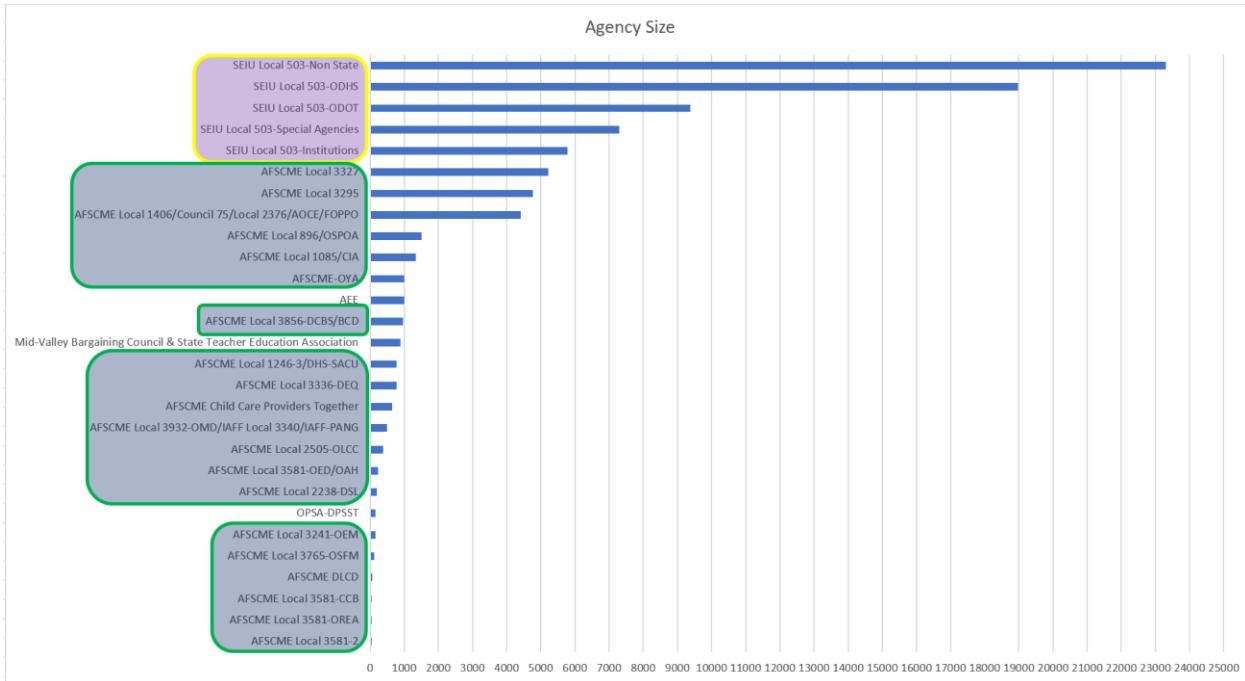


Figure 1

Similarly, each Firm/Labor Union couplet remained clustered within these three size categories when looking at the sizes of their Collective Bargaining Agreements directly, as measured by the total number of both Articles and Letters of Agreement. Most of the Small Agencies had only one labor union affiliated with their staff, though the largest firm in this category, the Oregon Military Department, had three separate bargaining units affiliated with two labor unions. The Medium Category transposed this relationship, with labor unions beginning to become larger with affiliations to multiple state agencies. These two trends both were reflected among the Large Agencies, as some had multiple labor unions present among the staff in a singular agency, such as the Department of Corrections, while other state agencies were clustered into coalitions that had thousands of employees represented under a single CBA with numerous Articles and LOAs.

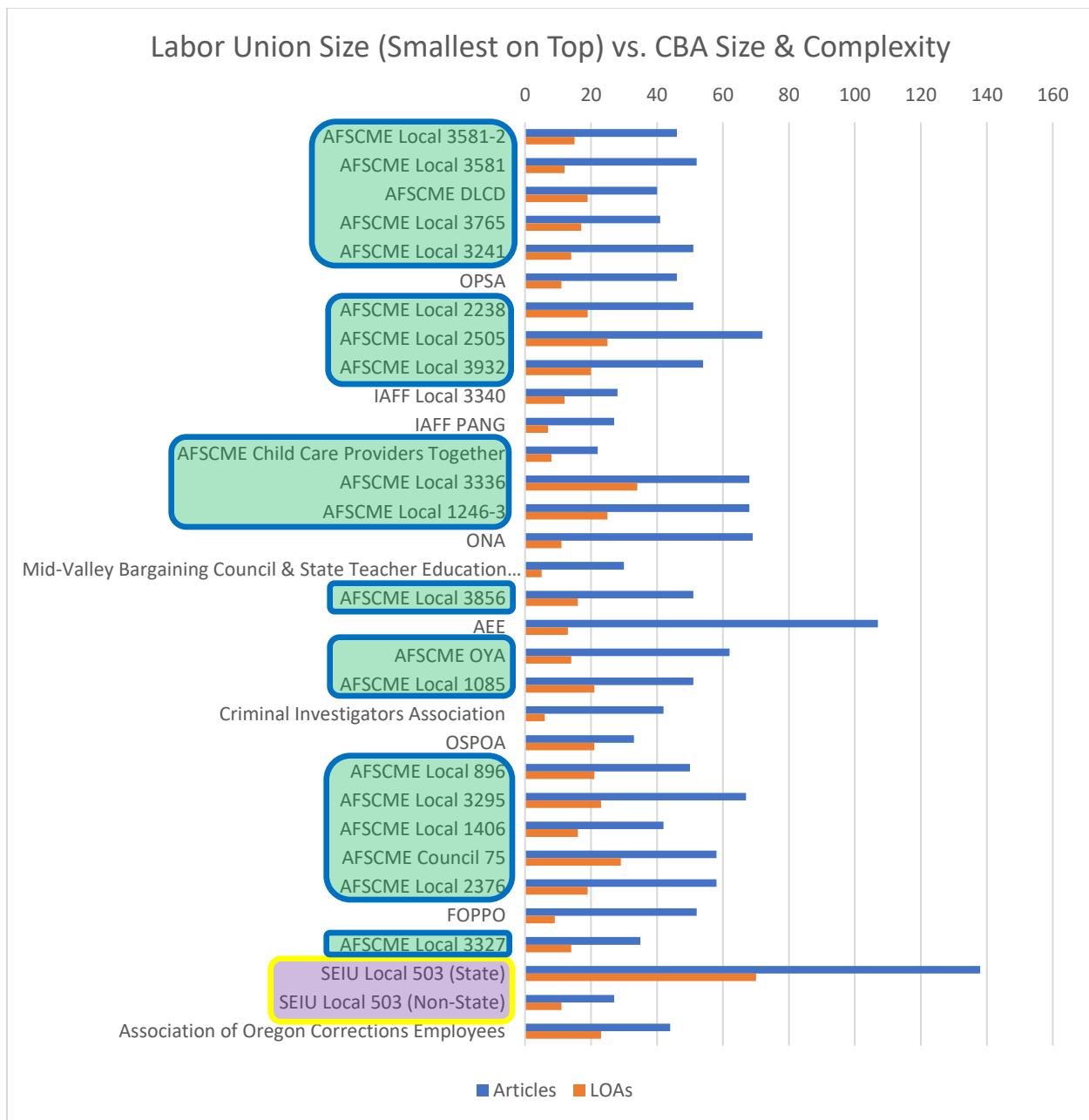


Figure 2

Results

When looking across the above figures, it becomes apparent quickly that increasing an agency's size has a direct relationship to the increase in complexity of the Management/Labor dynamics at work within each organization. The work within each agency begins to become

more specialized, which introduces the possibility of multiple labor unions emerging among the non-management staff. On the labor side of this increase in workforce, there also are signs that a divide in attention between the two dominant labor unions has formed over the last two decades.

AFSCME, which by its very name is a labor union that also has affiliations with lower tiers of public administrations, has carved out a niche among public agencies below the 6,000 employee threshold (*State of Oregon: Employee Resources and State Workforce - Labor Relations*, n.d., *Oregon Transparency : State Budget : State of Oregon*, n.d.). Conversely, **SEIU** becomes the prevalent labor union above this threshold in Oregon, aided in part by aggregating state employees into broader coalitions aligned with the public service missions of the administrative gestalt (Figure 1).

At the top of this colossal population of civil servants, the SEIU-brokered CBA that confederates all non-state employees who provide home caretaking services together serves as a labor contract that governs the work of the largest single bloc of public service workers in the state of Oregon. This may represent a peak in labor union efficiency, as 23,300 workers all work in distinct work environments across the state, at various scales of enterprise, and some may work in a fixed facility that houses those under their care while others provide house calls, partial in-home services, or even round-the-clock companionship.

This appears to also be reflected in the size of their CBA itself, which has only 27 Articles and 11 Letters of Agreement (Figure 2) This streamlined document may be a result of the scale of the CBA's coverage itself, the nature of the workers being independently contracted by the

state to provide public services to the most vulnerable Oregonians, or it could even be that the work tasks and duties remain fairly homogenous, even as the clients served and working environments vary significantly from workplace to workplace.

Lastly, and of direct salience to this paper's primary research question, is the content of these CBAs themselves, and the interests of the workers they cover as expressed by the topics of each Article. Out of 32 separate CBAs, a total of 30 contain Articles to govern a committee between Management and the Labor Union. These meetings are intended to provide ongoing dialogue between the parties to discuss topics of mutual concern and to share information to resolve challenges semi-formally. Any agreements reached in such meetings are considered non-binding (for the terms of the CBA), but the issues raised may certainly become items for future collective bargaining sessions. The fact that such committees are to be formed, and in some cases prescribed with explicit numbers and compositions of committee members, *is* a legal requirement and therefore directs both parties to convene regularly. They must come together for discussion, sharing information and perspectives, and to foster an environment where the topics of conversation may be challenging, but the forum offers a chance to hear from multiple perspectives and consider alternative decisions.

Analysis and Interpretation

Having completed a review of literature, defined key terms, and then collected & organized some of the qualitative data at hand, the task now turns to analyzing the data to understand what it tells about the organizations that produced it. Some of these will be easy to

show relational ties between, but other connections may remain implied only at this stage and may provide a jumping off point for others to continue the work.

First, it is worth pointing out the difference in how Articles from a CBA are produced, and under what conditions, compared to LOAs. For the duration of a given CBA, Articles are only selectively opened and modified during periodic bargaining at both local tables (directly between a union and the firm which employs workers that it represents) and at central tables, which see representation from a variety of smaller organizations/agencies across a larger umbrella enterprise, reflected both by Management as well as Labor. It is also during these bargaining periods where novel Articles may be proposed and negotiated between both sides. Because of the approaching deadline of working beyond the stability of a mutually agreed-upon contract, there often can be a contentious and anxiety-soaked atmosphere surrounding bargaining. Both sides find themselves trapped within a paradox as each seeks to further priorities within their agenda, some visible while others remain latent, yet the parties collectively understand that a compromised bargain is in the interest of all stakeholders. This can result in approaching the bargaining table with the intent to compromise less and secure more for the side of the CBA that individuals represent during contract negotiations.

Conversely, Letters of Agreement are spontaneously drafted in the workplace as a response to internal & external stimuli. They may arise because of formal grievances or legal actions. Their substance may be formed from conversations that take place at routine Labor-Management Committee meetings and are then brought back to the constituents each side represents for a direct democratic endorsement to propose the LOA be adopted for the remainder of the CBA's lifecycle or a different, specified expiration date. They represent

decisions and actions that are taken as precautions, they allow agencies to experiment with pilot actions or to research alternative solutions (Coutts, 2021), and the interactions required to generate them suggest positive, engaging activity wherein trust can be established and grow between both sides. While the content of LOAs may evolve over time to become permanent Articles, this is not in itself a foregone conclusion. This would appear to lower barriers for both sides to come together in good faith to resolve issues and alleviate strain in the workplace.

It is worth pointing out that some of the smallest state agencies, as defined by their total staff population, have CBAs with collected Articles & LOAs that remain consistent with agencies that may be several times larger. This is reflected even as some agencies begin to find themselves coordinating with multiple labor unions to negotiate CBAs, and some larger labor unions find themselves arranging coalitions of similarly tasked workers across a plurality of state agencies. This may indicate that levels of trust follow a pattern of high concentration among both small agencies as well as in smaller agencies that are assembled into a broader coalition. This would also be supported by the CBAs of Medium Agencies having the most variation of Article & LOA amounts. Dr. Brené Brown cites Charles Feltman's definition of trust as "choosing to risk making something you value vulnerable to another person's actions" (Brown, 2021, p. 191).

As Oregon is one of fifty such distinct jurisdictions across the United States of America, there are also some implicit biases present when both sides convene for a meeting. In looking at the way that organized labor has been portrayed over the latter 20th century and early 21st century in the U.S., this can manifest in setting a stage where labor officials and other union officials are viewed as less educated, narrow-minded, and even greedy special interests (Eidlin,

2015). This may create the space, however, for prevailing views to shift subtly by the circumstances by which the table is set for such meetings. If it is a bargaining table, where power, conflict, and interests among working conditions may be discussed and bound by contract at the end, Management & Labor may unknowingly find themselves viewing the situation through a Political lens. (Morgan, 2006). Even though legally both parties come to the table as equals, this represents a change in the power dynamic between the two entities compared to their daily interactions; Management may psychologically interpret the equity and equality afforded Labor as somehow reducing their own authority, status, and power in a zero-sum game (Morgan, 2006).

If the table is a smaller, informal meeting between a worker & a supervisor with a member of the Union present or a bigger gathering of the established Labor-Management Committee, this potentially allows for dialogue to emerge that will be viewed through a Cultural lens (Morgan, 2006). All members convene with the explicit understanding that everyone present works on commonly held tasks, in communal settings (though increasingly virtual as well as conventional) and the group experiences the daily rhythm of the larger organization from the vantage points where their work is focused (J. Cole et al., 2014). The considerable time, energy, and emotion invested in the work creates a shared experience for everyone, even as individuals may occupy distinct roles within the wider organization. Together, the stakeholders gathered around the table, however large or small, build upon their established rapport to discuss topics of interest; these can occasionally be on subjects that are controversial, embarrassing, or sensitive in other ways. (Daly, 2012)

While the personalities of each participant in this dialogue will be unique, as well as their professional relationship, unseen cultural factors that prevail also guide both how these conversations unfold as well as what potential outcomes & solutions may be considered possible, preferable, or prohibited by the traditions, values, and expectations of the agency (Morgan, 2006). This can become further complicated if some of the participants occupy one or more identities that intersect with the organizational culture in ways that are not reflected across the agency. A difference in age, sex, gender, access & functional needs, education, or myriad other dimensions of self may, if not addressed here, lead to either an escalating spiral of conflict or a deescalating spiral of engagement in the workplace (Kelly & Nelson, 2022).

Under either set of circumstances, it also bears considering how conversation, dialogue, and even debate occur when parties sit down at the table together to discuss matters in the workplace. A bias towards speaking, rather than listening, and doing so in a way that communicates that a decision has already been made or a topic is no longer open for discussion is anathema to building trust and promoting transparency if facts negate assumptions that might otherwise go unchallenged (Marquet, 2020). The “Share of Voice,” as measured by what is called the *Team Language Coefficient* (TLC), expresses the power dynamic between members of a group by capturing the proportion of communication shared by each participant. In situations where Management does not respect the ideas, motivations, or intentions of Labor, conversations would be heavily skewed towards their talking, as they leverage their perceived power to dominate the conversation. The TLC value, measured on a scale of 0.0 to 1.0, would be high, 0.8 or higher, in this scenario. In a more equitable environment, the TLC value would be closer to 0.5, indicating that each side speaks & listens in equal measure. This could, of course,

vary significantly among individuals on either side who may be more vocal or less vocal as a matter of personality (Marquet, 2020). In discussions where the outcome may be skewed visibly toward one party or the other based upon the language of a LOA, a sensitive Article, or the entire CBA, the attitude walking away from the table with a clean contract and cordial handshakes may indicate a vastly different emotional state. After discussions with a more evenly balanced TLC value, both sides may exhibit positive impressions that they were able to express themselves freely, feel that the other side truly listened, and that future interactions could be just as productive if the parties were to convene again.

In collecting this data, organizing it for further analysis, and viewing it through the review of literature to seek greater context, evidence of a hypothesis begins to emerge for further research. Given what is known about social dynamics in smaller groups compared to larger groups, as well as the conditions necessary to craft both Articles and Letters of Agreement for CBAs, I propose that the number of LOAs within a CBA is a direct indicator of the level of trust and cooperation between a Union and the agencies that employ the workers it represents, much more so than the number of Articles. Letters of Agreement are only produced when one side approaches the other with a topic or issue in mind, and they both participate fully in a dialogue seeking to outline where they may find initial agreement. This is done within the framework that both parties also cannot make bilateral decisions on the spot, but must then confer with their constituency to explain proposals and persuade a majority to support an endeavor before any actions are taken. Furthermore, these portions of the CBA allow for either party to propose an adaptive or experimental approach to resolving an issue with the resources at hand, and that implies a level of trust & vulnerability (Brown, 2021) that allows risks to be

taken, makes room for failure to occur, and sees such near-successes as an opportunity for learning to occur.

Today, before any further CBAs are negotiated and ratified, and before any further research into this topic (or related themes) is undertaken, both Management and Labor have tools at the ready, in both sets of hands, to come together and shape organizational culture together. Labor-Management Committees are the primary studio where this creative enterprise is best situated to take place, but the design of these committees needs much more intentional thought than the thin language currently on the books that simply states the purpose, the composition, and the frequency of these meetings. Both parties shuffle in to these meetings treating them much like other meetings that either organization would routinely host, but therein lies the fundamental misunderstanding: Organizational culture is an output, either intentional or as a by-product of other achievements, unlike any other that a public service institution generates. It responds to both internal and external stimuli, and it is slowly shaped over the course of many, many smaller interactions over an extended period. Taking a problem-solving framework like the EMERGE platform (Morgan et al., 2018) and using it to reimagine Labor-Management Committee dynamics offers a novel way to address an established, contentious relationship that neither side is particularly well-served by currently.

Conclusion

As demonstrated across every sector of the economy in the U.S. recently, workers are increasingly vocal in expressing their unhappiness if they view their workplace as one devoid of trust, respect, and opportunity to both show themselves & grow themselves professionally

(Parker & Horowitz, n.d.). Experiences like this which can strain and sever connections for people have also been shown to affect their health and wellbeing over both the short-term and for enduring periods of time, whereas capitalizing on positive, nurturing environments for social interaction in turn can produce beneficial outcomes both for individuals and organizations (Murthy, 2020). This is, therefore, of direct interest to both Management and Labor to approach with curiosity and positive intent, achieving better outcomes for workers and the agencies that they work in as professionals.

The data, as collected and analyzed using tools presented by the literature, supports the concept that formal Management and Labor do coproduce organizational culture together. They do this through both formal and semi-formal interactions, primarily in the form of Bargaining Sessions and Labor-Management Committee meetings. Unlike the environment that produced Scientific Management divisions of labor between managers & executives engaged in Blue Work, while rank-and-file workers that inhabit most organizations completed Red Work, modern public agencies across Oregon's state enterprise are staffed by workers who have increasingly evolved into knowledge workers who accomplish both Red & Blue Work (Gallos, 2006; Marquet, 2020). The seeds that bore this fruit were identified and planted long ago, as the system of government created in the United States of America at the lower levels of authority disperse power among multiple civil servants, granting each just enough to accomplish the tasks assigned to unto them (Tocqueville et al., 2003).

It is in these ways that both Labor and Management contribute towards the environment that employees feel when they enter the workplace each day to produce public goods or otherwise be of service to the public (Mercier, 2019). This, in turn, determines the

organizational health of an agency and its capacity (or lack thereof) to respond to changes in society, current events, and other stimuli that can provoke responses (Bridges & Bridges, 2016). The values of the agency will either align with or clash with the values of the people who comprise it (Dilg, 2009), and their level of engagement will determine whether they remain affiliated and advocate for change and the pursuit of more harmonious interactions or if they instead vote with their feet, seeking to find other opportunities where they may instead find a missing sense of belonging (Brown, 2021). It is incumbent upon both sides, however, to understand their dual responsibilities in stewarding this organizational culture, and to accept that it is in the interest of neither party to attempt to shape the culture without the assistance of one another (Haneberg, 2005).

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