Public Abstract

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Title:Organizing Alternatives: Examining Normative and Alternative Nonprofit Organizing Practices

Homelessness presents a massive organizational problem in the United States, with over 400,000 men, women, and children making use of shelter services each night. In this study, I take a comparative ethnographic approach to study how the use of the organizing Discourses of feminism, paternalism, neoliberalism, and anarchism result in more normative or alternative organizing practices. My project examines the organizing practices at two shelters for homeless women. One shelter is affiliated with an international religious nonprofit organization and self-identified anarchists run the other. Using the communicative constitution of organization (CCO) and institutional logics theories, I propose a theoretical framework for understanding how organizing Discourses are enacted or resisted at the organizational and individual level. My findings highlight how the institutional logics of responsibility, social welfare, and market manifest in different and sometimes paradoxical organizing practices based on the Discourse that is being translated. In this project, I highlight and critique how Discursive translations of institutional logics structure relations of power that impact agency at the individual and organizational level. My project has implications for understanding why the United States organizes around the social problem of homelessness the way it does, and explores alternatives to normative nonprofit organizing practices.