
BOOK REVIEWS

Apollo, Challenger, Columbia – The Decline of the Space Program: A Study in Organizational Communication, By Phillip K. Tompkins. Roxbury Publishing Company: Los Angeles CA. 2005. 288 pp.
Reviewer: Keith Appleby, University of Oregon
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Phillip K. Tompkins began studying organizational communication at NASA during the agency's "golden era" of the 1960's. In *Apollo, Challenger, Columbia*, Tompkins attempts to paint a portrait of NASA, under the leadership of Werner von Braun, director of the Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC), as an exemplar of successful organizational communication during the organization's 1960's "glory days." Tompkins then fast-forwards to the 1980's and what he views as the decline of the space program, culminating in the *Challenger* and *Columbia* accidents.

Tompkins hits his stride in his analysis of organizational communication during NASA's golden era. The author's analysis is buttressed through having conducted countless interviews and having spent two full summers in residence at the MSFC during the late 1960's. However, Tompkins analysis of modern-era NASA is much weaker. No doubt, part of this is due to a lack of rich data. In contrast to the many in-depth interviews that Tompkins conducted during the 1960's, the author only collected two days worth of interviews after the *Challenger* accident. And, after the *Columbia* accident, Tompkins stated, "I saw no reason to interview anyone." Hence, Tompkins' analysis of the *Columbia* accident consists entirely of providing commentary on the report of the *Columbia* Accident Investigation Board.

Tompkins devotes nearly half of his book to a strictly journalistic, narrative account of the *Columbia* accident. And, in contrast to the writing in the chapters devoted to organizational communication in the MSFC, the remainder of Tompkins work uses an overly familiar tone that is simply too casual by most academic standards. Tompkins does hit his mark when he hones in on how the both the *Challenger* and the *Columbia* accidents occurred when the "burden of proof" at NASA shifted from proving that something is *safe* to proving that something is *unsafe*. His analysis shows the communication failure that led to material cause of each accident, O-rings in the case of the *Challenger* and foam debris damage in the case of *Columbia*. But, ultimately, Tompkins has little to say about *why* these communication failures occur and how organizations can be changed so that these communication failures can be prevented. Readers

interested in the *causes* of organizational communication failures are referred to C. F. Larry Heimann's *Acceptable Risks*.



Employment with a Human Face: Balancing Efficiency Equity and Voice. By John W. Budd. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 2004. 263 pp.

Reviewer: Joel Schoening, University of Oregon,
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Employment with a Human Face is essentially an argument in favor of equally balancing the needs of efficient production, labor market equity, and employee voice. According to Budd, this triad of employment concepts is often out of balance, and results in inefficient production, underemployment, or poor worker satisfaction. Balancing the triad, in Budd's view will provide the best of all possible outcomes for the employment relationship and for the economy at large. Corporations will achieve sufficient efficiency for profit, the labor market will have sufficient equity to provide adequate opportunity, and employee input in the work environment will discourage major labor conflict and satisfy the emotional and psychological needs of workers.

Budd supports his case with a review of existing research, historical data and conclusions drawn from the philosophy of ethics. Budd does not unearth new documents or data and, therefore, readers familiar with United States labor history will also be familiar with this section of the text. Moreover, readers from a critical tradition will find that Budd's historical analysis is particularly weak in the area of class. Though, as a scholar of industrial relations, Budd recognizes the inherent power differential between workers and capital, he sees this conflict primarily in terms of a conflict between property rights and self-determination. He thereby sidesteps the reproduction of class inequality in the employment relationship in favor of comparing stockholders' property rights to workers' rights to self-determination and freedom from exploitation.

The strength of the book comes in Budd's ability to line up different schools of thought about the employment relationship, such as industrial relations, human relations, or critical industrial relations, with their ethical underpinnings. This allows him to look critically at efficiency, equity, and voice, as ethical

concepts and to find where they are at odds in the employment relationship. This ethical treatment provides complexity to issues like right to work laws, and fair share unions that require some dues from all workers. According to Budd, such rules reduce the individual voice of workers who cannot choose whether to support their union while at the same time increasing collective voice and protecting equity.

After dealing briefly with the inequalities brought to the employment relationship by globalization, the book concludes by arguing for a break with the purely economic view of employment, and a new perspective that evaluates the employment relationship based on the competing but balanced needs of efficiency, equity, and voice. No one familiar with Marxist thinking about labor, or the labor process perspective on the employment relationship, will find the discoveries made in this human relations and industrial relations perspective very enlightening. To its credit, the book does an excellent job of remaining within the dominant perspective on the labor relationship by avoiding debates over the labor theory of value. In this light, it would be an excellent teaching tool in combination with a book that explores the more critical side of labor studies, i.e., one that considers the fully human nature of work to mean that the physical, emotional, and psychological needs of workers might outweigh capitalist definitions of efficiency and that explores worker ownership and control as though they were legitimate possibilities.

Paradise Laborers: Hotel Work in the Global Economy. By Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004. 320 pp.
Reviewer: Julie Cherney, *University of Oregon*, jcherney@uoregon.edu

Paradise Laborers, by Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler, make a fine contribution to organizations, occupations, and work studies in this first ethnographic study of work culture among resort employees in Hawai'i, where tourism is the leading industry. The authors conducted participant observation, in five luxury resorts, with over 500 resort workers and interviewed 90 workers in-depth. These data provide rich texture to this multi-faceted study revealing resort workers' multiple layers of understanding and experience on the job.

Adler and Adler start by distinguishing two broad groups of laborers according to their relationship to the local labor market: trapped laborers and transient laborers. Trapped laborers' limited mobility subjects them to the local labor market's highs and lows. Transient workers choose resort work for the

temporary experience – to work in paradise – and move on when the local labor market declines.

The authors further classify these two groups into four types. Trapped laborers comprise immigrants and locals; transient laborers include seekers and managers. Each type is distinguished by patterns of race/ ethnicity, connection to their job, job options, lifestyles, and cultural capital. The authors also mention differences in family connections, lifestyle orientations, lifestyle trajectories, work adaptations, and labor relations among these subgroups of "paradise laborers."

Adler and Adler build their analysis to address how work culture creates and sustains the worker stratification system they observe in the resorts. They show how job funneling, via self-selection and organization type, works as a mechanism to create stratification. Then, management-created structural situations, such as job hierarchies and how the resorts implement certain policies, sustain stratification. Specifically, the resorts withhold opportunities from minorities and women and categorize specific job descriptions in ways that make such stratification a normal part of worker culture. The authors also show how the resorts use the local labor market's "seasons" to manage labor pool fluctuations in ways that further resort worker stratification.

This noteworthy book contains many other contributions that enrich the analysis. Adler and Adler show how the immigrants' resort experiences differ greatly from other commonly reported immigrant experiences. They also explain how resort workers adjust to post-modern temporality ("24/7") and how it impacts work culture.

Another unique and welcome contribution of *Paradise Laborers* is the authors' nitty-gritty details of the research process. Adler and Adler chronicle the realities of qualitative research, such as entrance, finances, interviewing methods, reflexivity, and ethics. This type of honesty is highly valuable for those new in the field.

As Adler and Adler conclude, some of their findings can be extrapolated to workers in the global economy. Ultimately, Hawai'i's resorts reproduce the same stratification systems found in the global labor market through mechanisms such as differential access to opportunities and differential pay scales, both based on the politics of difference.

