

A reflection on qualitative research papers

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Chosen readings and motivation

Shepherd, D. A., Maitlis, S., Parida, V., Wincent, J., & Lawrence, T. B. (2021). Intersectionality in intractable dirty work: how Mumbai ragpickers make meaning of their work and lives. *Academy of Management Journal*, (forthcoming).

Smith, W. K., & Besharov, M. L. (2019). Bowing before Dual Gods: How Structured Flexibility Sustains Organizational Hybridity. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 64(1), 1–44.

Case: compassion-venturing team leading a humanitarian aid project that has developed into a *de novo* social venture. The emergence of the team and its transition to constitute a more solid structure involved hybrid organizing and dependency on an NGO with differing identity and logic. The core team of the compassionate venture and the leaders of the NGO are professional and non-professional volunteers - many combine their social mission with other unrelated work and need to find balance in the process.

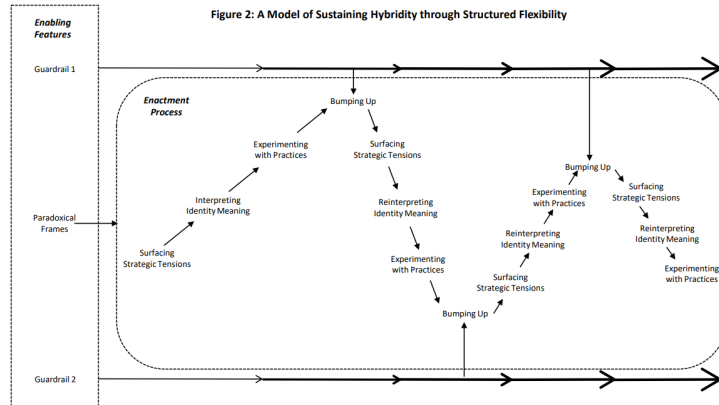
- Smith & Besharov (2019): maintaining organizational hybridity in a social venture.
- Shepherd et al. (2021): meaning attributed to work in adverse conditions – the case of ragpickers.

Articles' structure

IMRaD 'skeleton' structure: **Introduction** (+ theoretical framing), **Methodology** (methods with Data collection and analysis), **Results** (Findings) and **Discussion** (+conclusion, limitations).

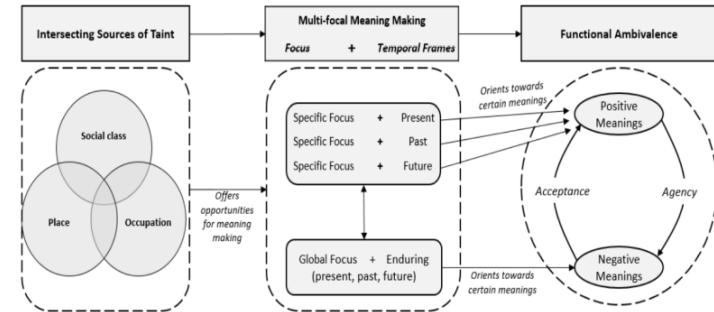
Other sections:

- **Smith and Besharov (2019): Model**



- **Shepherd et al. (2021): Model**

Figure 1: A Model of Multi-Focal Meaning-Making in Intractable Dirty Work



Theoretical framing

There are multiple ways to provide a conceptual or theoretical framing of a paper. In these papers, the authors used just a few paragraphs to highlight the theoretical angle.

- 1) Define and explain the main topic/theme of research (and sub-topics when applicable)
- 2) Elaborate: why this topic (sub-topics) merits our attention?
- 3) What research streams have contributed knowledge on this topic (sub-topics)?
- 4) What has research overlooked regarding the topic/sub-topics (identifying a knowledge gap)?
- 5) Why what has been overlooked is important to be studied?

Example Smith and Besharov's (2019) structure: 1) What does organizational hybridity imply 2) Sustaining hybridity in the L-T brings challenges and opportunities 3) Research streams (focused on S-T) → I. organization-level strategies, structures and practices to resolve conflicts in hybrid organizations, II. group and individual relations of hybridity. 4) S-T is studied, but sustainability of hybridity in the L-T is overlooked 5) hybridity challenges persist in the L-T because a hybrid organization implies changing dynamics and continuous tensions - not addressing those challenges might lead to the organization's failure.

Data collection and data analysis

- Detailed descriptions regarding data collection and analysis: transparency, accountability, responsibility + also an indicator to reviewers. Also: revision and external evaluation.
- Primary (access – local/friendship) and secondary data
- Smith and Besharov (2019) - inductive, single case research design; Shepherd et al. (2021) - inductive social constructivist approach - knowledge via sets of beliefs or mental models people use to interpret actions and events in the world.

Table 1: Summary of Data Analyzed

| | Era 1 (2001-2004) | Era 2 (2005-2008) | Era 3 (2009-2010) | Total |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Interviews | | | | 34 interviews |
| Founder/CEO (C) ¹ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 4 |
| Board Members (B) | | ✓ | ✓ | 9 |
| Managers (M) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 16 |
| Operators (O) | ✓ | ✓ | | 4 |
| External Advisor (EA) | | ✓ | | 1 |
| Observation | | | | 13 days |
| Daily operations, Cambodia (Ops1, Ops 2) | ✓ | | ✓ | 7 |
| Management Retreat, North America (Meeting1) | | | ✓ | 1 |
| Board Meeting, Cambodia (Meeting2) | | | ✓ | 3 |
| Board Meeting, North America (Meeting3) | | | ✓ | 2 |
| Archival documents | | | | 295 documents² |
| Board Meeting Agendas, Minutes (Board) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 29 |
| Grant and Fundraising Applications (Grant) | ✓ | | ✓ | 93 |
| Client Proposals (Client) | ✓ | | | 54 |
| Business Plans (BusinessPlan) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 7 |
| Media Mentions (Media) | ✓ | ✓ | | 49 |
| Internal Analysis (InternalAnalysis) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 30 |
| Communications, Annual Reports (Communication) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 7 |
| Legal Documents (Legal) | ✓ | | | 26 |

Table 1: Interviewed Ragpickers (names changed to protect anonymity)

| Name | Respondent information | Work experience |
|---|--|---|
| Ragpickers collecting scrap from residents | | |
| Ahmed | Age: 46 yrs. Gender: Male; Education: 8 th Grade; Family: Wife and kids; Native region: Uttar Pradesh | Prior Experience: Many yrs various businesses; Work experience: 12 yrs scrap shop |
| Vibhu | Age: 49 yrs. Gender: Male; Education: 5 th Grade; Family: Alone; Native region: Uttar Pradesh | Prior Experience: 10 yrs as scrap worker; Work experience: 25 yrs card drawer |
| Ananda | Age: 22 yrs. Gender: Male; Education: Graduate; Family: Father, mother, wife & kids. Native region: Rajasthan | Prior Experience: None; Work experience: 3 Yrs scrap shop |
| Arjuna | Age: 40 yrs. Gender: Male; Education: 10 th Grade; Family: Wife and kids; Native region: Uttar Pradesh | Prior Experience: 15 yrs working with father; Work experience: 15 yrs scrap shop |
| Bheru | Age: 39 yrs. Gender: Male; Education: 6 th Grade; Family: Alone; Native region: Rajasthan | Prior Experience: 5 yrs in family business; Work experience: 10 yrs scrap shop |
| Chand | Age: 28 yrs. Gender: Male; Education: 12 th Grade; Family: Wife and kids; Native region: Rajasthan | Prior Experience: 5 yrs with family scrap shop; Work experience: 5 yrs scrap shop |
| Chandrama | Age: 24 Yrs. Gender: Male; Education: 10 th Grade; Family: Father; Native region: Uttar Pradesh | Prior Experience: 2 yrs mechanic; Work experience: 10 yrs cart drawer |
| Ayyar | Age: 39 Yrs. Gender: Male; Education: Undergraduate; Family: Father, mother, wife & kids. Native region: Rajasthan | Prior Experience: 2 yrs electrician; Work experience: 18 yrs scrap shop |
| Din | Age: 45 yrs. Gender: Male; Education: Uneducated; Family: Alone; Native region: Uttar Pradesh | Prior Experience: Farming; Work experience: 15 yrs cart drawer |

Shepherd et al. (2021)

Data collection and data analysis

Example Smith and Besharov (2019):

DC: different sources, “following forward” and “tracing backwards” (Langley & Tsoukas, 2010). Interviews and observations unfolding events into the future and the archival documents supporting looking into the past. DA: prescribed analytical techniques to move from raw data to theoretical interpretations:

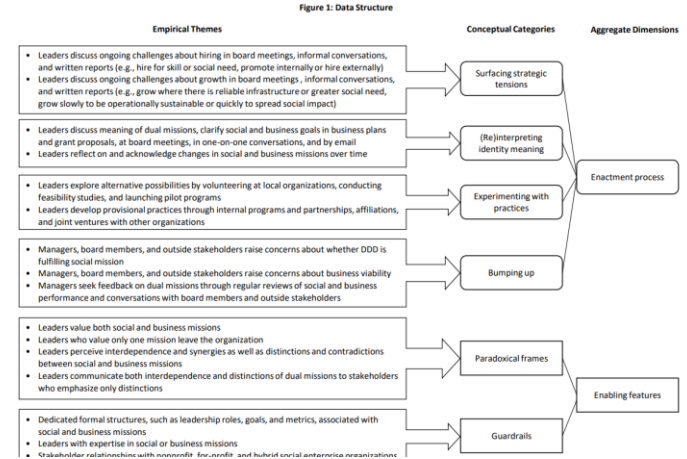
3 main steps (nonlinear, but for simplification):

1) A case study integrating interviews and description of events.

2) Return to the raw data to understand unfolding processes

Temporal bracketing: three distinct eras (from 2000 to 2010) → open-coding data for each era and converging with common themes supported by glancing at literature.

3) Understanding the connections between concepts and infused literature to create a theoretical model.



from more abstract understanding of the data to the creation of concrete meanings

Data and findings illustration

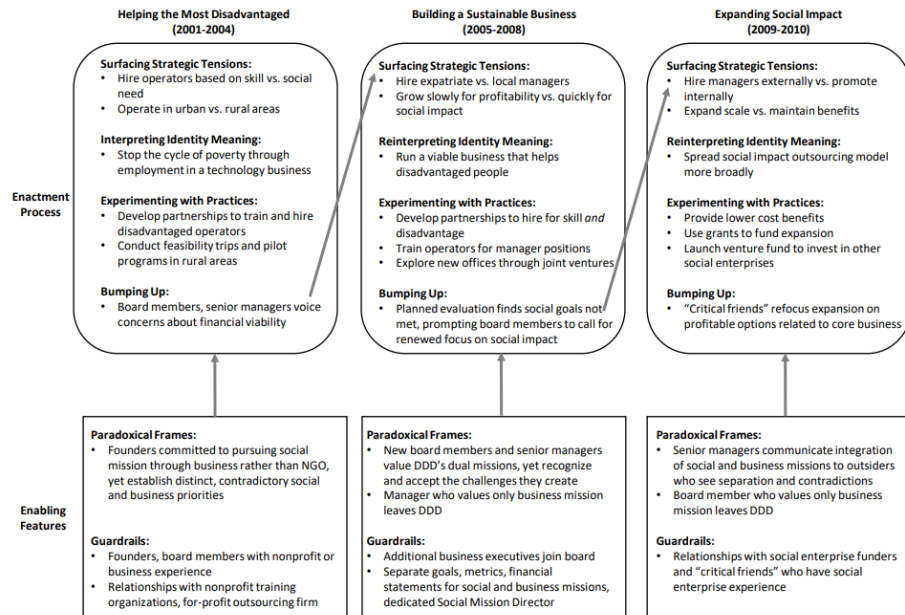
- Supportive materials for illustration
- Interview excerpts
- Model visualization

Table 2: Illustrative Data – Intersecting Sources of Taint

| Dirty Work |
|--|
| <p>“It stinks. I don’t know what is in there. Maybe potty and all sorts of garbage. It stinks, and it affects our body and mind. We also tie a handkerchief on our nose and mouth while picking up the garbage. But we can’t avoid it; it is our work, and we have to do it. At times, it [our work] is totally impossible without a small drink. ... We are not able to work without a small drink” (Amish, Ragpicker).</p> <p>“Also, at times, there are dead dogs, rats. There are many things in the garbage. ... We have been given masks to use, but most people don’t use them. We have to get habituated to it. ... When everything is mixed, it makes it all dirty” (Bana, Ragpicker BMC).</p> <p>“In fact, we are prone to illnesses like cold, asthma, etc. We do not have any advantage if we are going to live for 60 years. We will live 10 years less; our life span has decreased [from doing this work]” (Nakshatra, Ragpicker BMC).</p> <p>“The worker has to take care of himself, as in that garbage, there might be glass or hospital needles, and many other things can be there which are harmful to us. Because if any needle hurts him, there are chances of getting illness or infection. For precaution, Mahanagar Palika has given us equipment like hand gloves, masks, gumboots, and so on” (Raja, Ragpicker).</p> |

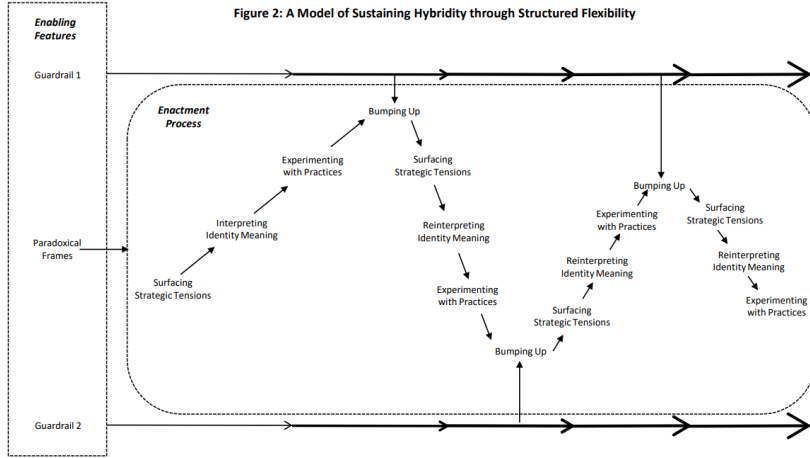
Shepherd et al. (2021)

Table 2: Summary of Findings – Three Eras of Sustaining Hybridity at DDD



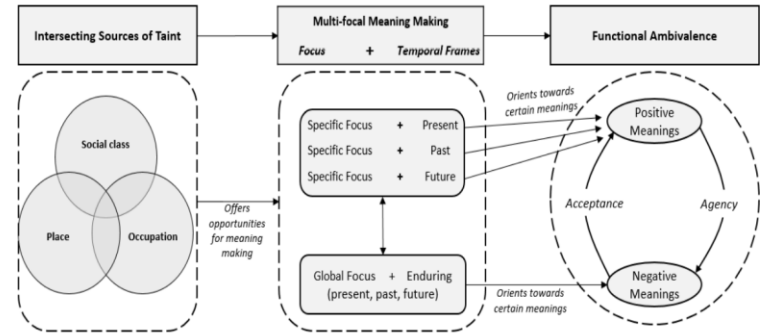
Smith and Besharov (2019)

Illustration



Smith and Besharov (2019)

Figure 1: A Model of Multi-Focal Meaning-Making in Intractable Dirty Work



Shepherd et al. (2021)

Theoretical insights/contributions

Shepherd et al. (2021) contribute to the literature on **dirty work and intersectionality**, particularly by showcasing how individuals performing difficult precarious work can make dual meanings of it (positive and negative) to continue on with their lives. The authors shed light on how workers can experience and combine both positive and negative meanings through “functional ambivalence” - embracing opposing meanings to keep going. The authors show that negative and positive meanings can co-exist and even be constructive and empowering.

Smith and Besharov (2019) on the other hand contribute to literature on **hybridity**, but also to paradox and dialectic theories, due to the case being one of dual tensions. Smith and Besharov’s (2019) work provides more knowledge on the interaction of competing demands. The model of structured flexibility introduced by the authors showcases the maintenance of organizational hybridity in the long term through the relationship of stability and adaptation which prior research overlooks. By providing a novel view on hybridity within organizations, the authors also advance understanding of stability and change, as well as on organizational identity and routines. The authors also add knowledge on system dynamics, cultural-historical activity theory, configurational analysis, etc.

Thoughts

- Similarities and differences: taste, preference, reviewers and journals requirements
 - Different ways to present data info, excerpts or findings
- Extension of the theory section of papers
- Number of interviews needed to conduct a full study
- Trust with interviewees and access to data
- Time allocated to data collection (for instance, 10 years)
- Forward and backward in interpretation and analysis
- Re-doing, re-checking, re-working
- What conversations are being contributed to?

Holistic approach + willingness to iterate

Thank you!



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