

考試科目	專業英文	所(組)別	2121 社會學系一般生	考試時間	4 月 27 日星期六 上午 10:00-11:40
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The following excerpt came from James Coleman's article, "The Rational Reconstruction of Society" (American Sociological Review, 1993, Vo.58:8-10). Please read carefully and answer the questions (either in Chinese or in English) at the end of the excerpt.

A "corporate actor" is a constructed organization that stands as a principal in relation to each agent in the organization. The agents have not only a transaction with the principal, but as occupants of positions they also have transactions with one another—they must, if their joint activity is to produce something of greater value than the sum of their independent activities. But in a formal organization, the transactions or relations among agents, as occupants of positions, need not be independently viable. The principal (corporate actors) establishes a structure of transactions among positions; each agent occupies a position and produces services to that position, and that joint activity among the positions creates value for the corporate actor. The condition that must be met was described by Simon, Smithburg, and Thompson (1951):

An organization is "solvent"—and will continue in existence only so long as the contributions (from agents) are sufficient to provide inducements (from the corporate actor) in large enough measure to draw forth these contributions.(p. 382)

Only the overall set of transactions in which the agent engages as part of the corporate actor needs to be satisfactory for the corporate actor. I will call this a condition of "global viability": Only the global set of transactions in which each actor is engaged needs to benefit the actor. Because the structure of relations is a single complex structure, not composed of a set of independently-generated "spontaneous" relations, there is for each actor a single criterion for the whole structure. One can think of each actor as having "account balances."

Figure 4 shows the differences in the account balances necessary in a spontaneous or informal social organization consisting of relations among three actors and a formal organization consisting of a corporate actor and three agents. In a spontaneous or informal social organization (the top figure) six account balances are necessary for a system of three actors: Each of the three must have a positive account balance with each of the other two for the relations to continue. For the formal organization with three agents, only four account balances are necessary: Each of the agents (or employees) must have a positive account balance with corporate actor, and the corporate actor must have global "viability", that is a single positive account balance. Obviously, if the organization's size is larger, the disparity in account balances increases when compared to informal organization: In informal organization consisting of ten actors, 90 account balances are necessary; a formal organization with ten agents needs only 11 account balances.

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Perhaps the greatest difference between primordial social organization and constructed social organization is the modes of social control they use. Constructed organization uses rules, laws, supervision, formal incentives, and sanctions by designated agents. The corporate actor, as the actor that establishes the structure, holds the right to make rules or laws and to specify the structure of supervision and the sanctions associated with rule violation. It is also in a position to provide positive incentives for performance.

In primordial social organization, these formal modes of social control are only a small part of the total. Most control comes from social norms, status, reputation, and moral force. Provision of positive incentives or negative sanctions is quite problematic, for one reason: Apart from the family head, who holds authority within the family, and counterparts, at the clan or village level, no actor is in a position analogous to the corporate actor. Because each relation beyond the family is autonomous, no actor outside that relation has rights analogous to those of the corporate actor. Each has only rights to establish, break, or modify those relations in which he or she is directly engaged. Thus, social control in primordial social organization outside the family is problematic. Sanctions can be effective only when the sanctioner holds the right to sanction, a right recognized by the person being sanctioned, as well as by others. In constructed social organization, the policeman can arrest someone who has broken the law, and the supervisor in a firm can dock a worker's pay for violating company rules. These rights are delegated by the corporate body, which acquires them at the time of its formation. But in primordial social organization, such rights are born of informal social processes that depend on a dense and relatively closed social structure that has continuity over time. Closure and continuity provide a form of social capital on which the effectiveness of social norms depends. Throughout history, when primordial social organization was strong, it was so because the social capital which it depended was abundant: In formal consensus could generate norms, and rights could be allocated and enforced via that social capital.

The existence of norms, reputation, and status in informal social systems depends on two conditions being met: (1) that the actions of one or more actors in the system impose externalities (positive or negative) on others bringing about a common interest among those others to control the action; and (2) that there is sufficient social capital to allow appropriate collusion and sharing of the cost of sanctions (see Coleman 1990, chaps.) 10-12). What has happened over time is that the second of these conditions is no longer being met. The social capital on which primordial social organization depended for social control has been eroded. The closure of social networks has been destroyed by the technological changes that have expanded social circles and erased the geographic constraints on social relations. The stability of these structures, on which social capital equally depends, has been destroyed by the same technological changes that allow mobility and facilitate the breaking of relations. "Communities" of adults do form, not around physical places, but around common interests. Yet because these

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<p>communities ties encompass only one aspect of their members' lives, they lack, except in that one domain, the coercive power on which the effectiveness of norms, status, and reputation depend. For example, a sociologist may be constrained by the occupational community from violating its norms, whether these are norms against faked data or norms against research on forbidden topics. But the occupational community does not induce sociologists to be trustworthy in financial obligations, nor to be charitable toward others less fortunate, nor to raise their own children properly—nor does it provide the social capital that can help them raise their children.</p> <p>As the social capital of primordial social organization vanishes, new entities provide social control—new entities that are part of constructed social organizations. The new corporate actors I described earlier, not derived from the family, constitute formal organizations that impose and enforce the rules that constrain many of our actions; and a related invention, the nation state, imposes laws enforced by designated agents of the law—all this replaces the norms, reputation, status, and moral force imposed in earlier societies by the family, the community, and religious bodies.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are differences in the overall set of transactions and account balances necessary in formal and informal organization? (30%) What are your comments on this comparison of formal and informal organizational structures by James Coleman?(20%) 2. What are differences in modes of social control between primordial social organization and constructed social organization? (30%) What are your comments on modes of social control by James Coleman? (20%) 					

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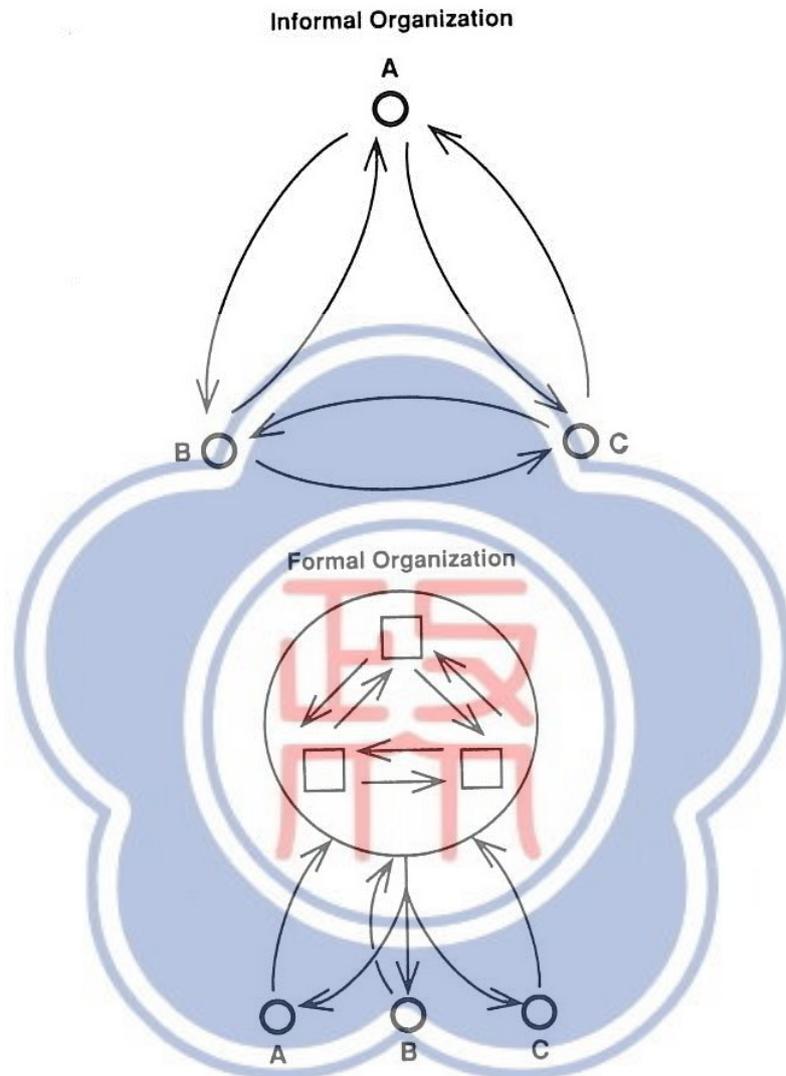


Figure 4. Account Balances Among Actors: Informal and Formal Organizations

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