

This Week's Citation Classic

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March J G, Guetzkow H & Simon H. *Organizations*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1958. 262 p.
[Graduate School of Industrial Administration, Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh, PA]

Organizations provides a theoretical framework for knowledge about human behavior in organizations, and reviews the empirical evidence for the propositions that make up the theory. The theory emphasizes the motivations for organizational participation and the processes of decision making within organizations. [The *Science Citation Index*[®] (SCI[®]) and the *Social Sciences Citation Index*[™] (SSCI[™]) indicate that this book has been cited over 950 times since 1961.]

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"In 1949 a new business school, the Graduate School of Industrial Administration, was created at Carnegie Institute of Technology. The faculty of the new school proposed to build business education on a solid social science foundation. Organization theory was selected as a major focus of research, and a program of empirical studies of managerial decision making processes was launched. I was a member of the original faculty of the school, Guetzkow joined in 1950, and March in 1953.

"At this time, the Ford Foundation decided to commission a series of 'propositional inventories' in the behavioral sciences. The idea was to 'propositionalize' the theory of some domain, and then to summarize the empirical evidence relevant to each proposition. We agreed to take on such an inventory for the Foundation.

"The product of our undertaking, *Organizations*, does not really look very

much like a 'propositional inventory,' although the first five chapters conform more closely to that model than the last two. The difficulties were numerous. A body of scientific theory is not a set of isolated propositions, nor can particular pieces of evidence be matched to particular propositions. Moreover, much of the empirical work in organization theory takes the form of case studies, which are difficult to handle according to customary criteria of objectivity and encodability. We discussed alternative frameworks for organization theory in the opening chapters, then devoted the remainder of the book to motivation and decision-making theory.

"*Organizations* is still in print, without revision, after twenty years. Its references are now badly out of date, but its theoretical structure does not appear to have been superseded by any subsequent work, and indeed has obtained considerable new empirical support.

"Whether the book's durability is a tribute to our foresight or to the slow development of the field, is best judged by others. The work was simply one step along the route of the authors' continuing research in organizational behavior. In the ensuing twenty years, their work has taken divergent paths. March went on, with R. Cyert, to produce their equally 'classic' *Behavioral Theory of the Firm*.¹ Guetzkow focussed more and more upon the simulation of decision making in international relations.² My own research has led me into the study of problem solving processes, and to the work with A. Newell that is summarized in our *Human Problem Solving*.³

"Organizations and families are the most important environment of human behavior. My greatest personal satisfaction from our book was the knowledge that it helped to establish organizational behavior as a basic domain of the social sciences."

1. Cyert R M & March J G. *A behavioral theory of the firm*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963. 332 p.'
2. Guetzkow H, Alger C F, Brody R A, Noel R C & Snyder R C. *Simulation in international relations; development for research and teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. 1963. 248 p.
3. Newell A & Simon H A. *Human problem solving*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972. 920 p.