

SOSC 4041.6 Alternative Economic Firms and Organizations

Class Presentation and Contemporary Research Paper

Feb. 27, 2008

A) Requirements

Contemporary Research Paper

On April 3 (a week after the last class) you are to submit a 15 page Contemporary Research Paper (CRP) which will report on your *organizational analysis* of your specific alternative firm from the southern Ontario region and compare it to another firm with similar structure, product or service line, issues, ideology, or goals. In other words, the CFP is a comparative paper that also delves deeper into the inner organizational workings of and the external environment of your firm. In addition, you are to discuss in some detail your firm's position within its constituent community. The goal here is to get a better understanding of two major things:

- 1) where your firm *fits* into the social economy in southern Ontario,
- 2) how the issues, problems, successes, etc., that you identified in your Alternative Firm Analysis compare to another firm in the same sector of the social economy as your firm or to a firm that engages in selling, provisioning, or manufacturing a similar product or service in the for-profit economy.

This means that, by the time you finish the CRP, you will be familiar with your current organization that you've been analyzing up till now plus another similar organization *or* the sector of the social economy that your organization operates within.

What will guide you with this last stage of your term project research are the research questions you came up with in your AFA. This means that you can get specific about what you will be looking for in the other organization you will be comparing your main organization to. But remember that, as I indicated to most of you in the feedback I gave you on your AFA, most of you will still need to do further research on your main organization as well. You might need to go back and do more interviews, perhaps spend an afternoon at your organization observing how things get done, or both. All of you will have to find out more about the particular issues you identified in your AFA and do background reading from journal articles and especially from our course texts to begin to decipher why certain issues persist at your organizations and perhaps the other organization that you are comparing your main one to. You will definitely also need to do secondary literature research to better understand the particular sector of the social economy that your firm belongs to.

This will require you to do three more major research steps for your final CRP:

- 1) you will need to delve into the inner and outer workings of a second firm or a related firm that your primary firm works with (see my comments to you in the AFA paper for details)

- 2) you will need to understand better the particular sector of the social economy your firm operates within, and
- 3) you will need to turn to secondary literature in journals to see if the issue(s), problem(s), success(es), or challenge(s) that you identified for your particular firm has been analyzed and written about by others; it probably has.

It is expected that you will also use their more theoretical and historical understanding of alternative economic firms developed in the first semester and the first part of this semester in order to expose areas of debate – i.e., the issue(s), problem(s), success(es), or challenge(s) you identified in the AFA – within the firms you analyze. The final aim (i.e., the conclusions) of your CRP will be twofold:

- 1) You will come up with a set of theoretical frameworks – i.e., a set of theoretical concepts and analyses – that will help you to better understand the particular issue(s), problem(s), success(es), or challenge(s) posed by your firm. Again, you will be drawing heavily from course materials and particular secondary literature to develop these theoretical frames. You can certainly adopt key theories from the course texts to accomplish this (I will discuss this in class on Feb. 27, or come and see me during office hours or phone me for assistance).
- 2) You will finally develop practical policy solutions for the southern Ontario firm you've chosen (i.e., the one you started analyzing since your AFA) that you will have developed from your set of theoretical frameworks that you worked out in the first part of your CRP.¹

Class Presentations

In the four weeks prior to the final week, students will make a formal 30-minute presentation of their research to the class to solicit suggestions, critiques, and solutions to potential problems that arose in their AFA work. In other words, you should use this time to engage with your classmates to better understand the particular issue(s), problem(s), success(es), or challenge(s) that you identified in your firm.

Presentations will be evaluated on their clarity, research, use of course material, and critical analysis. While this is still an intermediate step in your term research, you should by now have a bit more information on your firm hand than you did when you wrote your AFA. So tell us about it. You are beginning, in other words, to answer the research questions you came up with in your AFA, so tell us about your progress thus far.

In sum, in your class presentations, you will:

- 1) recap what you discovered in your AFA (highlights of your AFA),

¹ This is where your newly acquired expertise based on your reading reflection work and in-class discussions from the first semester will come in very handy. Again, significant use of course material from the first and second semester is a requirement for this assignment.

2) lay out the research questions you came up with and tell us WHY you felt these were important by using examples from your firm and/or your research into the social economy,

3) discuss how you intend to begin to answer or further explore in your CRP the particular issue(s), problem(s), success(es), or challenge(s) that you identified in your research questions and AFA, and

4) present us with a research plan of action for your final CRP work.

B) Important Considerations for CRP

1. Essays submitted via e-mail will not be accepted. Late assignments will not be accepted without a medical note signed and dated by a physician on institutional letterhead.
2. The final paper must include references to our assigned textbooks, as well as to other recognized sources including journal articles. Limit non-academic (i.e. newspapers, etc.) electronic resources to not more than a quarter of your total referenced material.
3. Please include a cover page. On the cover page include your name, student number, telephone number, email address, course title and number. The font should be Times New Roman, 12-point, double-spaced, one-inch margins, page numbers, single staple. Grammar, spelling and sentence structure, as well the organization of the essay, are important elements. You may find it helpful to make an appointment with the Centre for Academic Writing to have a draft of the essay reviewed by a writing instructor. I'll be available for questions during office hours for the rest of the semester.

C) Ideas on How to Organize Your CRP²

The following structure is a recommendation only. You do not have to follow it and can be creative with it, although it is a well-accepted format for the types of analytical paper I am asking you to complete. Whether you use the following structure or not, however, you will be laying out your paper in some similar fashion.

For the final paper please do not use colloquial terms or slang. Please try to structure your paper in a disciplined way. Remember, some of you might want to present your CRP to the organization you analyze, and some of you might want to use it as a writing sample for your CVs and resumes as you go on in your careers. Therefore, be as rigorous and as as possible with your language and presentation. Take pride in what you hand in and follow a methodical presentation style. Again, I would recommend that some of you, if not all of you, use the services of the CAW to have your work proofread by an expert in academic writing before handing it in to me on April 3.

1. **INTRODUCTION** The introduction identifies the firm(s) that you have analyzed and the major findings, issue(s), problem(s), success(es), or challenge(s) that you have identified in your term research. This section should be brief, but remember that, as Trent University's Prof. Roth writes, "you need to use [the introduction] to show the reader the value of what is to follow."

² This section courtesy of Professor Reuben N. Roth, Trent University.

2. **RECAPPING KEY FINDINGS FROM AFA.** In this section you will identify briefly the particular issue(s), problem(s), success(es), or challenge(s) that you identified in your AFA.
3. **LITERATURE REVIEW.** This section of the essay is a summary of the work by other researchers on the issue(s), problem(s), success(es), or challenge(s) you identified in your AFA. Here you are synthesizing the key theoretical aspects of the literature you have used. It is not a summary of the literature but a synthesis of its key findings and theories. Here you need to indicate to your reader that you have a solid understanding of the major issues related to the problems raised by your firm and how other authors and researchers have analyzed similar issues and problems in the cooperative or not-for-profit sector.
4. **FINDINGS/RESULTS/COMPARISONS.** In this section you present the most important findings from your field research and lay out your comparison work. Also indicate here very briefly how you conducted your primary research: interviews, etc. You might want to combine this section with the next one to allow for a better flow to your analytical sections.
5. **ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.** The purpose of this section is to explain and analyze the theoretical framework you have developed based on your literature review and findings/comparisons section. A critical aspect of this section is to relate your finding and theoretical framework back to the earlier research and existent theories that you synthesized in your literature review section.
6. **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS.** This is where you will present the particular policy recommendations to your firm, based on the analysis and the comparisons in the previous sections.
7. **CONCLUSION.** This is a summary of your paper: major findings, comparisons, theories, etc. You do not have to repeat your policy recommendations here, nor do you raise new questions. As Prof. Roth points out, “The best conclusions are those that follow logically from the introduction; that is, the reader need read only the introduction and conclusion to gain an overview of your essay. Try it before you hand in your essay.”