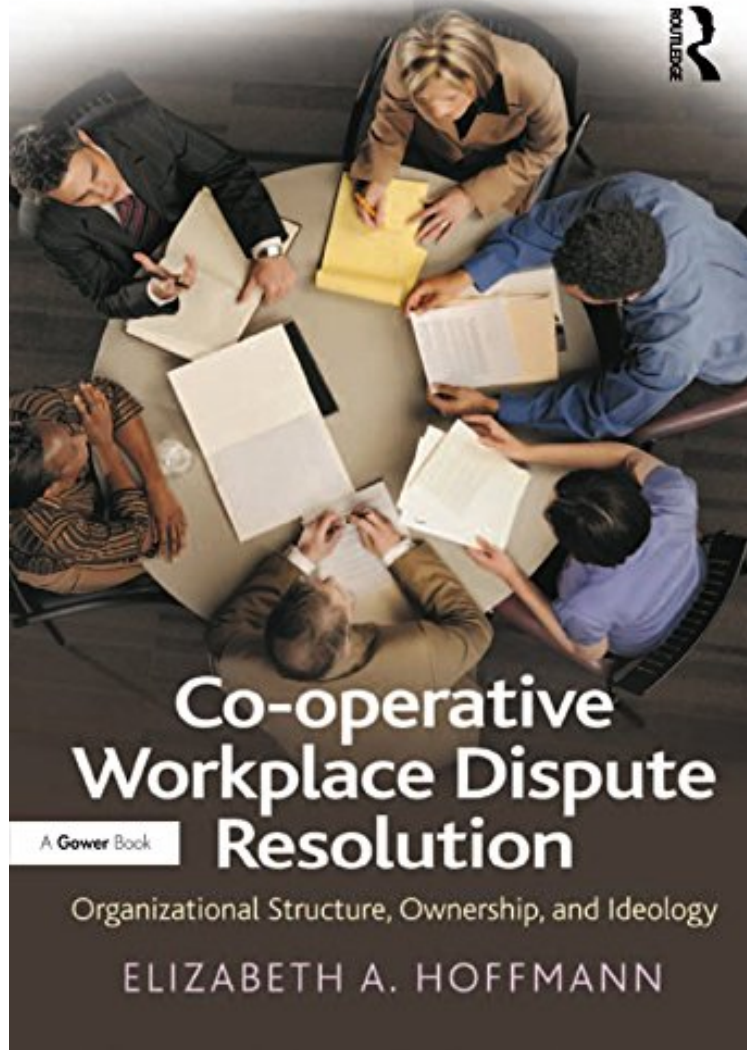


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# Co-operative Workplace Dispute Resolution: Organizational Structure, Ownership, and Ideology

*Elizabeth A. Hoffmann*

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**Elizabeth A. Hoffmann : Co-operative Workplace Dispute Resolution: Organizational Structure, Ownership, and Ideology** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Co-operative Workplace Dispute Resolution: Organizational Structure, Ownership, and Ideology:

Understanding the complex dynamics involved in workplace disputes helps improve the way organizations deal with

unwelcome but inevitable occurrences. These issues have been researched from different perspectives, but previously such research has failed to ask how flattened organizational form might impact ways of resolving disputes, focusing instead on what occurs in conventional, hierarchical organizations only. In *Co-operative Workplace Dispute Resolution*, Elizabeth Hoffmann considers the question of how workplace disputes are raised in the absence of formal hierarchy. In contrast to conventionally organized businesses, co-operatives attempt to evenly distribute power and ownership and encourage worker control through egalitarian ideologies, flattened management structures and greater information sharing. Like conventional businesses, though, they still pursue goals relating to profit and efficiency. Dr Hoffmann argues that lessening hierarchy and sharing power, as occurs in co-operatives, provides insight into how greater worker involvement and ownership might operate in a less extreme and more modest form in conventional mainstream business. This book focuses on dispute resolution strategies at matched pairs of worker co-operatives and conventional businesses in three very different industries: coal mining, taxicab driving, and wholefood distribution. The author's central finding is that the worker co-operative members have access to more dispute resolution strategies than their conventionally employed counterparts. This leads to the conclusion that benefits might be achieved by conventional businesses that wish to embrace specific attributes usually associated with co-operatives, including management-employee cooperation, shared ownership, or greater workplace equality.

'Hoffmann's fascinating book provides the first comparative study of worker cooperatives and conventionally structured enterprises in similar industries. This unprecedented methodological approach allows Hoffmann to isolate the effects of flattening the hierarchy on a central feature of all organizations-workplace disputes. Her findings are illuminating. Hoffmann discovers, for example, that while members of worker cooperatives generally have more options for resolving disputes than their counterparts in conventional workplaces, power differentials associated with gender and social status do not necessarily disappear in a worker cooperative, meaning women and people from working class backgrounds sometimes face the same kind of difficulties pursuing their grievances they face in the larger society.' James Tucker, University of New Hampshire, USA 'The book offers useful practical suggestions that can be readily incorporated into all organizations, whether they are conventional or cooperative, large or small, or for-profit or non-profit.' *Labor Studies Journal*, vol. 39, no. 4

About the Author Dr Elizabeth Hoffmann is an Associate Professor in the Sociology Department at Purdue University, Indiana, USA. She earned her BA, MS, JD and PhD degrees at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her scholarship bridges the areas of work and organizations and law and society. During her academic career, Dr Hoffmann has specialized in sociology of law, women's studies, workplace conflict, and grievance and dispute resolution. Her research has won awards from the Labor and Employment Relations Association, the Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, and the American Bar Foundation. Dr Hoffmann has been visiting faculty and a guest speaker in many places, including, in the UK, the University of Warwick and the London School of Economics. Dr Hoffmann continues her exploration of legal consciousness and dispute resolution in the workplace. Her current scholarship includes examining the implementation of recently passed workplace-focused laws.