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The cult of culture: An analysis and plan for teaching about organizational culture

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**The cult of culture: An analysis and plan for teaching about
organizational culture**

Mason, James E., M.A.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1993

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THE CULT OF CULTURE: AN ANALYSIS
AND PLAN FOR TEACHING ABOUT
ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

by

James E. Mason

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Communication Studies

Department of Communication Studies

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

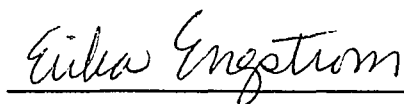
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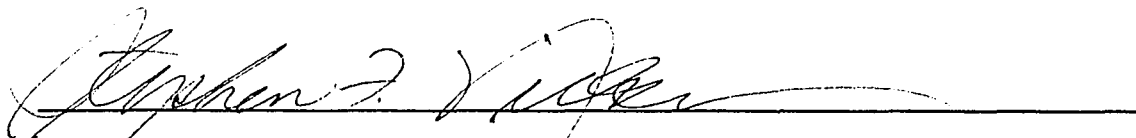
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ABSTRACT

Five general themes are prevalent in the literature of organizational culture: Meaning, structure, language, stability/instability, and reification. This thesis gives a broad general overview of the concept of culture as it relates to communication, analyzes the literature in terms of the above, and makes suggestions for its use to develop in students an understanding and appreciation of the concept of organizational culture. A prescriptive reading plan and a teaching plan are included to allow teachers to select topics that have importance either for themselves or their students.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Humans have always organized themselves into groups. Beginning with the hunter-gatherers who formed tribes, and continuing to the large multi-national conglomerates of today, we seem to need to form groups with other people of like mind. One consequence of organizing ourselves into groups is that often, we begin to share values with other group members. The recognition of this fact spurred some of the first research into cultural anthropology (Malinowski, 1948). Cultural anthropologists were the first group of social scientists who sought to define the features of individual cultures so that the differences between them and "common cultures" (e.g. cultures with which anthropologists were already familiar) could be explored in a common framework (Geertz, 1973).

However, as cultural differences were identified and explained, social scientists began to take note of another type of "cultural society"; the society of organizations. In 1956, W. F. Whyte, a leading cultural sociologist, published *The Organization Man*, the first attempt to explain how cultures evolved in organizations. While Whyte answered some questions for social scientists, he left many others unanswered. Specifically, social scientists wanted to know why organizations influenced their members to act in certain unique

ways that were inconsistent with their social station, training, or backgrounds. Other writers, notably Etzioni (1961), explained that people in organizations conform because of "normative pressures", but Etzioni did not describe what exactly constituted a normative pressure was, and the question as to why organizational members modified their behaviors in the corporate realm was left unanswered.

In 1973, Clifford Geertz, an anthropologist, published a book entitled *The Interpretation of Cultures* that explained Geertz's conception of the importance of studying "culture" as a distinct variable impacting on the formation of human communities, of whatever size. In addition, Geertz set forth some general guidelines for the "interpretation" of cultures. As he points out:

Nothing is more necessary to comprehending what anthropological interpretation is, and the degree to what it is interpretation, than an exact understanding of what it means - - and what it does not mean - - to say that our formulations of other peoples' symbol systems must be actor-oriented (p. 14).

The Shift Away from Functionalist Literature

Geertz's book was seminal for several reasons: first, it afforded researchers an opportunity to think about cultures as symbolic systems, and to look for the meanings inherent in various symbolological constructs. Second, it greatly expanded the perceived utility of interpretive schemes on cultural analysis; in fact, a look at the literature will demonstrate that nearly all

interpretive/ethnographic organizational studies were published after Geertz's book. Third, it legitimized the value of interpretive processes in attempts to explain why organizations work the way they do. And finally, Geertz's relatively free use of the word "culture" to apply to all sorts of social groups "unfroze" the attitudes of some readers who had previously been afraid to use it in the context of organizational research. Geertz showed that, as with Maori tribes or French soldiers, cultures could be used to describe virtually any group.

Previously, the literature in organizational theory was marked by functional or empirical studies in an attempt to "change" either employee actions or their attitudes (i.e. Herzberg on "motivating employees"; Kerr on "rewarding employees"; cited in Ott, 1989a); however, the shift to less functional approaches to organizational behavior and action was accompanied by changes in both theory and literature, as is noted below.

Interdisciplinary Approach to Culture

Before any discussion of "organizational culture" can be undertaken, it is necessary to come to some understanding of what is meant by the term "culture." Prior to about the 1920s, culture represented what relatively "developed" countries had, and the lack of culture was what undeveloped countries had. However, in the early 1900s, both sociologists and anthropologists began to look at culture as the way of a people themselves. But it has always been difficult to define culture. As Geertz (1973) points out, even in Clyde Kluckhohn's *Mirror for Man* (cited in Geertz, 1973) the author

defined culture at least a dozen ways. Other authors have similarly had difficulty defining the concept of culture. Malinowski (1948) defined it variously as a "way of being" and also as a "collection of activities" [Malinowski himself is much more vague than I am in paraphrasing him].

The organizational culture perspective, as defined by Ott (1989b) is a "counterculture within organization theory. Its assumptions, theories, and approaches are very different from those of the dominant structural and systems perspectives" (p. 2). Specifically, organizational researchers have begun to apply models of culture development and change from those in whose province culture has always resided, anthropologists. Anthropologists such as Geertz (1973) Goodenough (1964), Levi-Strauss (1967), and Malinowski (1948) have been writing on the development of culture for many years, but the anthropological approach to organizational culture is a fairly recent phenomenon.

Part of the difficulty of applying anthropological models to organizations is the relative instability of anthropological models over time. Specifically, anthropology requires that authors not only try to understand "how" culture develops, but also "why" it develops. This has engendered a number of approaches to its study. For example, Goodenough (1964, 1970, 1971, 1974) is considered a "cognitive" anthropologist. His approach to culture development and transmission is based on the mental model of culture (i.e. culture as a set of cognitions held in the minds of cultural members). In contrast, Levi-Strauss is considered a "structural" anthropologist. His focus is on the development of culture as it is

constrained by the historical rules of a given culture and its continual reinterpretation by cultural members. Finally, Geertz (1973, 1983) is an "interpretive" anthropologist. For him, there is no specific formula for understanding culture. Rather, the idea is to try to determine what and how things mean for any given culture, and then apply these findings to determine what things "stand for" in that particular culture. The culture model in organizational development is interesting because it gives researchers another way to look at organizational life. It concentrates less on external pressures to the culture, and more on how organizational reality and meaning are negotiated "inside" a given organization.

Lately, however, organizational culture and the concept of organizational culture have come under attack. From researchers on one side calling it a "fad" (Pascale, 1985; Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, and Sanders, 1990), to researchers on another side who call it merely a repackaging of ideas (Moran and Volkwein, 1992), or "fuzzy sets" (Pierce, 1977), organizational culture has come under fire. These authors contend that "organizational culture" as a term is, at best, marginally descriptive, and, at worst, not explanatory. However, this is more than likely a result of the different conceptions of organizational culture, rather than the fault of the term itself. Putnam and Cheney (1990) point out that:

The diversity of ways that organizational culture is examined is not surprising given the ambiguities that surround 'culture' itself. Thus, we view the concept's usefulness to organizational study as a 'family of concepts' [cited in Pettigrew, 1979, p. 574],

rather than as a unitary perspective. As an anthropological concept, culture refers to a social unit's collective sense of what reality is, what it means to be a member of a group, and how a member ought to act (p. 54).

The implications of considering culture as a "family of concepts" are, of course, one of the problems of the organizational culture model. However, as an "umbrella" conception, the culture model does have certain advantages over other approaches in the organizational research vein because it helps to highlight new problems in organizational life.

Suggests New Ways of Managing

The advantage of the organizational culture perspective is that it may lead to new insights about the nature of organizational life. This broadened view may assist consultants, researchers, and educators to help organizational leaders and their respective management teams find new ways to improve organizational efficiency, enhance productivity, and increase profitability. Since managing implies some sort of control over the actions taken and the decisions made by organizational members, a fuller understanding of the concept may assist managers to find new, creative ways of meeting organizational goals. However, by its very nature, organizational culture is a vague, somewhat "amorphous" concept, one that is difficult to explain clearly in the business environment. For this reason, it is imperative that some type of framework for understanding be provided for college students and their instructors.

The benefits of thinking in terms of organizational culture are manifold. First, organizational reality is demonstrated to be highly subjective and intersubjective (Weick, 1979). On that level, it becomes clear that management practices which don't recognize the impact of culture and the "enculturation" process are less than likely to be effective.

Second, by making the term more understandable for communication and management scholars with different backgrounds, it becomes less "clumsy," easier to integrate with their academic backgrounds. Once the idea of "organizational culture" is made more user-friendly, it is easier to conceptualize for students and others with a need (or desire) to increase their familiarity with practices that don't focus only on the "bottom line."

Third, more familiarity with different approaches to organizational life offers increased opportunity for managers and others to experiment with practical, real-world alternatives to accounting-oriented (i.e. "bottom line") management practices. Currently, there is an enormous gap in management and organizational communication education. Students are encouraged to specialize in one area or another (i.e. rhetoric, public relations, accounting, finance) in order to maximize their familiarity with the tools and processes of the area, but they are given little opportunity to see that, by integrating knowledge of organizational life in general, they can begin to think of their work in terms of what it means to others in their respective organizations.

Currently, the watchword in organizations is teamwork. Other words such as quality, productivity, value added service, organizational efficiency, and other abstract concepts are shown to be meaningful when looked at from

the organizational culture perspective. Mundane management or communication processes no longer seem mundane, and the importance of interaction in organizational settings is highlighted. From this perspective, a manager can get an enlightened view of his/her potential effectiveness as a leader during corporate "downsizing," "rightsizing," or "strategic modification." In this respect, if for no other reason, the organizational culture perspective is important.

Focuses on Communicative Aspects of Organizational Life

Organizational culture is frequently defined as:

. . . a pattern of basic assumptions - - invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptations and internal integration - - that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1991, p. 5).

This definition has guided much of the research into the problematic of understanding "what" organizational culture is, and is similar to the definition of culture that has been used in analysis of culture in organizations. The analysis of culture in organizations has been applied to a number of organizational types, notably NASA (Goodall, 1989), police organizations (Van Maanen (1988, 1991), industrial organizations (Roy, 1990), and multinational corporations (Schein, 1991). Organizational culture has also been defined as "a social construction of rules that guide perceptions and

thinking. It supplies the conceptual designs that provide standards for deciding what is, what to do about it, and how to go about it" (Sackmann, 1991, p. 22). Phillips (quoted in Sackmann, 1991) provides a slightly different definition of culture:

Culture is a set of assumptions commonly held by a group of people. The set is distinctive to the group. The assumptions serve as guides to acceptable perceptions, thought, feeling, and behavior, are tacit among members, are learned, and are passed on to each new member of the group (p. 23).

To date, there has been no comprehensive investigation of the concept of organizational culture, and its importance to both organizational researchers, and teachers of organizational communication. The objective of this thesis is to define the concept of organizational culture, to review the major pertinent literature in the field of organizational culture, and to make general recommendations for its use in the field of organizational study, through the use of a prescriptive reading plan, and a teaching plan that can be used in college and university classrooms. In order to accomplish this task, it will be necessary to limit the coverage in the reading and teaching plan to major (i.e. "essential") works, and to suggest other works that should be used as supplemental.

The literature in organizational culture is varied and complex. Background literature is composed of theoretically based papers, case studies, and research that approaches organizational culture from a variety of disciplines and perspectives. Originally, writers on organizational culture

took a functional or structural-functional approach to defining the term. According to Astley and Van de Ven (1983), "At the level of individual organizations, structural functionalism and systems theory have been the dominant schools of organization thought" (p. 248). They note that the functionalist perspective influenced classical management theory and bureaucracy, which led to the development of structural contingency theories (p. 248). Alvesson (1989) describes the functionalist perspective as one in which "culture tends to be reduced to those limited aspects of this complex phenomenon that are perceived to be directly related to organizational efficiency and competitive advantages" (p. 125). Wert-Grey, et al., (1991), suggest that "Functionalists view reality as objective, work as rational and purposeful, and the goal of research as prediction and control" (p. 143).

Another way to conceptualize culture is to consider it a "collection of fuzzy sets" (Pierce, 1977). Pierce points out that "one can define culture as a system of classification which must be shared and transmitted from generation to generation" (p. 197). He goes on to describe culture as a "set of abstract classes" in which the "objects and behaviors we observe are representatives of these classes" (p. 197). However, this definition reifies culture on a functional level, although it does not rule out the possibility of reclassification by cultural members.

Perhaps the most appealing approach to organizational culture is the interpretive paradigm (Kuhn, 1970). According to Putnam (1982), a paradigm basically "represents an implicit or explicit view of reality, a set of core assumptions about alternative world views. Paradigms encompass beliefs,

values, and methods that guide researchers in selecting basic premises and methodologies" (p. 192). She further argues that "In the interpretive paradigm organizational reality is socially constructed through the words, symbols, and actions that members use. It is language use and the meanings enacted from verbal and nonverbal messages that create and sustain social reality" (p. 200).

Organizations have been studied in various ways (Goodall, 1989; Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983; Sackmann, 1991; Smith and Eisenberg, 1987; Smircich and Stubbart, 1985; Van Maanen, 1988, 1991), but, to this date, there has never been a body of research prescribed for new students in the field to become familiar with. Additionally, even when a student has read the literature, there is no specific description of the types of research available to organizational researchers with an interest in culture.

The research question to be answered in this thesis is:

Can a resource base of materials be developed so that students and teachers can refer to important literature in the field, thereby gaining an understanding of the concept of organizational culture? The importance of this research is that it analyzes the major literature in the field, describes various research techniques that are used by organizational researchers, and makes recommendations for a comprehensive body of literature to which instructors and students can turn if they have a desire to learn about the concept of organizational culture. This analysis should lead to a better understanding of the role and/or importance of culture in organizations, assist in developing a standard body of work to which people interested in

organizational culture can turn, and help to encourage a new body of scholars whose interest in organizational culture may lead them to create a framework for guiding future research into the culture of organizations.

Typology of Cultural Concepts

One way of understanding the research on organizational culture is to think of it as a body of work that can be arranged in a typology. Bullock, Stallybrass, and Trombley (1988), define a typology as "any system for classifying things, people, social groups, languages, etc., by types. . . . the grouping of a series of artifacts according to type, and the arrangement of like types in the form of a type series. . ." (p. 879). Thinking of the research in terms of a typology is heuristically appealing, because it allows researchers to classify objects (in this case, work on culture) and describe them using a particular framework. This typology utilizes the interpretive framework as a guide. The interpretive paradigm varies from the normative, positivist viewpoint by interpreting not merely actions, but the reasons for those actions. It seeks to uncover a underlying framework of assumptions (both conscious and unconscious) that guides organizational members in their daily actions. While differing from the structural-functional approach, the interpretive paradigm does not deny their validity. Rather, it seeks to integrate various competing frameworks in a more holistic manner than the structural-functionalist approach. Instead of reifying organizational structures and boundaries into objectified, rationalized containers,

interpretivists view these structures as "traces" of organizational relationships and processes. Putnam (1983a) points out that organizations are not "monolithic entities; rather they are coalitions of participants with different priorities" (p. 37). The various priorities of individuals both conflict with and complement one another. In order to understand how organizations "work," researchers need to be able to track interindividual relations (i.e. relations between persons, not necessarily "interpersonal" relations), and determine how the pursuit of individual goals is operationalized. Putnam indicates that interpretivists "adopt a meaning centered view of organizational communication. Social reality is constituted through the words, symbols, and actions that members invoke" (p. 40). In order to understand organizational communication, it is necessary to understand the meanings given various communications by the organizational members engaged in communicating. One way to get at the meanings invoked in communication by organizational members is by performing naturalistic research. Putnam notes that naturalistic research:

focuses on how organizational reality is constituted. It seeks understanding of symbol systems, rules, and norms that account for everyday routines and organizational practices. The researcher learns the language of the actors, assembles their texts, and then derives a sense of unity from interpreting the whole in light of its parts (p. 48).

Naturalistic research seeks to give a contextual validity to the interpretive perspective by locating it in the framework of the organizational whole. This

is important for several reasons. First, interpretivists look for meanings that are constituted in the reality of organizational life (Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982; Putnam, 1983). Second, in order to achieve a sense of validity, it must fairly represent the actual views of organizational members, be understandable to outsiders, and reflect the actualities of organizational life to the rest of the world. Bantz (1983) gives a framework for judging naturalistic research that includes five criteria:

We can evaluate a research report by determining whether (1) it reflects an understanding of organizational messages, meanings, and expectations; (2) the researcher remained open to a reflection of the social reality of the organization; (3) members of the organization can recognize the researcher's interpretations; (4) the researcher's interpretations make the organization accessible to nonmembers; and (5) the research report demonstrates skillful use of language or media (p. 70).

Thus, naturalistic research can influence reports on organizational culture in a positive way, by allowing for varying accounts of organizational realities as enacted by members of the organization. A further justification for naturalistic research is that it allows the researcher to better determine how an organizational member identifies him/herself with an organization.

Tompkins and Cheney (1983) point out that:

By examining what an individual says about his or her activities in a organization, we can better understand how one comes to identify (or not identify) with an organization. As an

organizational actor explains particular decisions, he or she may reveal the means by which alternatives are found and choices made (p. 3).

The literature suggests the use of interpretive techniques (Geertz, 1973, 1983; Goodall, 1989; Van Maanen, 1988) to better understand how the social reality of organizational culture is constructed and transmitted. Because culture is elusive (Geertz, 1973), several paper and pencil instruments have been developed in the attempt to "capture the essence of culture." One of these is The Organizational Culture Assessment Inventory (OCAI), developed by Steinhoff and Owens (1988b). The OCAI asks questions of organizational members that assist investigators in finding the *root metaphors* (Smircich, 1983a) of an organization, described as "the essence of the organization itself," (Steinhoff and Owens, 1988b). Morgan (1986) explains that: ". . . the use of metaphor implies *a way of thinking* and *a way of seeing* that pervade how we understand our world generally. . . . We use metaphor whenever we attempt to understand one element of experience in terms of another" (p. 13). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) point out that ". . . since much of our social reality is understood in metaphorical terms, and since our conception of the physical world is partly metaphorical, metaphor plays a very significant role in determining what is real for us" (p. 146). Additionally, Morgan (1986) states that one of the greatest advantages to the culture metaphor is that it ". . . directs attention to the symbolic or even "magical" significance of even the most rational aspects of organizational life. . . . numerous organizational structures and practices embody patterns of subjective meaning that are

crucial for understanding how organization functions day by day" (p. 135). Metaphors can also be used in organizational transformation (Sackmann, 1989). Sackmann suggests that, if an organization is undergoing a change, it can be beneficial to analyze the use of metaphors in the organization. The power of metaphor to express meanings in the organization can be beneficial to both organizational researchers (e.g. in analyzing the culture), and organizational change agents (i.e. people involved in organizational transformation).

Metaphorical analysis is not the only analytical framework however. As both Jick (1979) and Denzin (1978, quoted in Tompkins and Cheney, 1983) have observed, qualitative research is generally more reliable and valid if more than one method of analysis is used in a study. The process of using more than one methodological process to analyze or capture data is known as triangulation of research. Jick also points out that triangulation can give a "more complete, holistic, and contextual portrayal of the units under study" (p. 603). Tompkins and Cheney (1983, quoting Bouchard, 1976) note that "Convergence or agreement between methods enhances the researcher's confidence that the results are valid and not simply methodological artifacts" (p. 134).

In order to introduce the reader to a number of different conceptions of organizational culture, a typology of cultural concepts was developed into which selected research was filtered. The typology defines the research approach as one of either: (1) Culture as something organizations have; (2) Culture as something organizations are; or (3) Culture as something

organizations do. Culture as something organizations have is a consideration of culture as a "feature" of organizational life, something that is attached to the organization. Research in this area usually has a functional orientation, and the goal in most of this research is to "give" culture to organizations, or to "change" it to make it better. The idea of culture as something organizations are is essentially a sociological perspective. The focus here is description of the process whereby organizational life is understood, and an explanation of how organizational reality is negotiated. Considering culture as something organizations do requires the researcher to focus on the "performative" nature of organizational culture. It also requires that the entire organization be thought of as a "text" (Ricoeur, 1971), and "read" or interpreted. Conceptually, these approaches to organizational culture differ substantially from one another. It is hoped that this three-way view will help scholars to better understand the complexity of organizational culture, regardless of how it is "framed." The difference in perspectives arises more from how organizational researchers think about culture, and influencing it, than from any particular theoretical split. In practice, most organizational consultants try to influence culture in one way or another. The distinction, however, is considerable.

Culture as something organizations "have"

Organizational researchers who think of culture as an "attribute" of an organization concern themselves with manipulating features of the organization, such as rites, rituals, ceremonies, and procedures. They contend that, if the culture is not working (i.e. the cultural features to which members

impute values are not in line with management's ideas of what is important), then one merely has to change those attributes, or refocus the members' interest on other "more important" cultural values, actions, or "realities." One way that culture can be influenced is by changing the "recipes" (Sackmann, 1991) by which things come to have meaning in the organizational realm. Sackmann points out that culture is a social construction of rules that influence organizational action. By changing meanings or the influence those meanings have in the organization, culture can be modified to change current circumstances, or to fall more in line with organizational beliefs (i.e. the beliefs of organizational leaders). Sackmann supports the notion of culture as something an organization "has" (1992). In her paper on cultures and subcultures, she extends the "knowledge" metaphor; she stipulates that the differences between the types of knowledge an individual (or group of individuals) has regarding organizational life give rise to the development of subcultures that may or may not be congruent with the organizational culture. Sackmann suggests that culture as a whole may be strongly differentiated in any organization, depending on the amount and type of "knowledge" needed by specific persons doing a specific job. By implication, this would support the notion that changing a culture may only be a matter of supplying new or "different" knowledge to the targeted group.

Dandridge (1985) points out that one way to influence organizational culture is to manipulate symbols that have meaning in the organization. Specifically he suggests that by being sensitive to "the symbolizing potential of a story or action, but also to the characteristics of each individual in the

potential audience of the story" (p. 151), a symbol can be manipulated such that new meanings (or "a" new significance) can be attached to it. Once the new meaning is accepted by the group, behaviors will change in the desired fashion. An example where the use of symbols was disastrous is provided by Brown (1985). Brown notes that NASA's use of Challenger as a symbol of American's pre-eminence in space backfired after the Challenger incident. Because NASA had put so many of its "eggs" (its image) in one symbolic "basket" (Challenger), its image as a whole was threatened. Brown points out that "NASA had begun to see itself as an agency that could do no wrong, and that attitude may have led to overconfidence in their ability to carry out a successful mission" (p. 118). In this case, the members themselves imputed meaning to a symbol that was rigid and specific. The approach in this research underlines the appeal of thinking of organizations as "having" culture. In this framework, had the "culture" changed, a disaster could have been prevented.

A slightly different approach to describing organizational culture is provided by Gordon (1991) who believes that different environments may influence the development of different types of cultures. This approach also implies that, if the culture "needs fixing" then environmental changes will accomplish this task. He writes ". . . The culture is not deterministic of specific forms, but exerts an influence upon the *nature* of the forms that will be developed" (p. 398). Additionally, Gordon imputes a great deal of influence to the structure of the organization. This is consistent with Schein's (1981, 1983, 1986) description of the influence of organizational

leaders and the structure of the organization on the formation of basic assumptions which drive the culture. Essentially, Gordon believes that industry (an environment) constrains both management action and employee reactions. This two-way process "creates" cultural assumptions that are consistent with general beliefs (and values) about the nature of the industry. When management is uncertain (because of changes in the industry [i.e. the environment]), it acts to reduce that uncertainty.

Management actions then drive changes in the culture. These changes are influential because, as Firsirotu (1987) points out, "cultural members work very hard to preserve their creations while simultaneously forgetting that they are creations" (p. 4).

One interesting view of organizations that have cultures is provided by Martin and Siehl (1983). In this article, they review the development of an organizational "counterculture" at General Motors (GM), which was fostered by John DeLorean. They point out that GM is "strongly centralized in that authority and responsibility for financial control and the long-range strategy of the firm rest in the hands of the corporate headquarters" (p. 55). According to Martin and Siehl, the core values of respecting authority, fitting in, and being loyal influenced members' actions. When DeLorean challenged these views, he was attempting to make changes in the assumptions held by organizational members. Martin and Siehl point out that "several managerial techniques may have a detectable impact on the trajectory of a culture's, or a subculture's, development" (p. 63). In describing these they suggest making structural (or functional) changes which are likely to

influence the construction of meaning. As meaning is reconstructed, the culture that the organization "has" will change. Wilkins (1983a) supports this idea as well, suggesting that the appropriate use of a "Culture Audit" can help managers to influence or even change organizational culture. In fact, Wilkins suggests that organizational stories function as organizational controls (1983b), and that, by changing stories in the organization (or inventing new ones), management can influence changes in the culture.

The above discussion illuminates one approach to culture as a way of thinking about organizational life. However, as was shown above, culture is not usually as clear as some organizational researchers consider it to be. The value of the model of culture as something organizations "have" is in its ability to suggest that culture is "real"; that it has an actual influence in an organization; and that, if an organization's culture is "sick" or inconsistent with expressed organizational values and goals, culture members may find negotiating the organizational terrain to be rough.

Culture as something organizations "are"

Another approach to organizational culture is to think of cultures as something that organizations "are" (Smircich, 1983a, 1985). This approach is strongly based on the interactionist perspective (i.e. Bormann, 1983; Whyte, 1959), with influences from Burke (1966) and Goffman (1959). Essentially, the approach to interaction used by organizational researchers suggests that, as people interact with one another (that is, as people conduct themselves during their daily lives), they construct shared meanings to explain "what" things "are." Weick (1979, 1982, 1989a, 1989b) takes this approach with his

description of organizations as "loosely coupled" systems. However, he does not take a strictly systems approach to organizational culture. Weick's conception of culture is based on the influence of symbols in constructing "meaning structures." People act according to the meanings they impute to symbols. When they act a particular way, according to a rule or policy, they are "enacting" the culture (1979).

Weick points out that, particularly for organizational theorists, developing a clear understanding of culture can be challenging. He writes: "By their very nature the problems imposed on organizational theorists involve so many assumptions and such a mixture of accuracy and inaccuracy that virtually all conjectures and all selection criteria remain plausible and nothing gets rejected or highlighted" (1989, p. 521). He suggests that by thinking about organizations as "cultures", some of the problems faced by organizational researchers may be minimized. The concept of loose coupling is consistent with Peters and Waterman (1982) who describe excellent companies as having "simultaneous loose-tight properties" (p. 15). While they usually use this term to describe the centralization/decentralization idea in organizations, they also apply it to organizational structure, and communication in the organization.

Weick also suggests that "to understand organizing is to understand jazz" (1989a, p. 242), because of people's desire to coordinate movement with inputs (p. 243). He compares this with the act of improvising in a jazz group. When they improvise, musicians play to one another, but make subtle changes as they continue to play. Occasionally, one member might "take the

floor" (solo) while the others play for support. However, this is not consistent, and there is no real regularity to solos. This feeling is echoed by Meyerson and Martin (1987), who believe that organizational cultures are continually in flux (p. 623). To think of organizational culture as dynamic, jazz-like, hard to track (or trap) is to deny that culture is something that can be changed like a flat tire, or replaced, like motor oil.

Louis (1983) suggests that organizations "bear cultures" because the settings (*milieux*) of necessity require interaction between members. Through these interactions, cultural rules are established, negotiated, and "enacted." In this view, then, organizations allow for the development of cultures, after which the cultures (or subcultures) "become" the organization, in the sense that the members ascribe meanings to organizational actualities. The idea of organizations as shared meanings is echoed by Smircich (1983c), who writes "organizations exist as systems of meaning which are shared to varying degrees" (p. 64). According to Smircich, because meanings are shared between members, the continuous need for reinterpretation is minimized. However, she does not suggest that reinterpretation and renegotiation don't occur. Rather, she suggests that, since an organization exists as "a" shared meaning, the idea of "organization" is kept inside the members' heads, and doesn't need to be reinterpreted unless specific changes force a reinterpretation. However, the interactionist perspective is also beneficial to organizational researchers who look at organizational members' actions to signify their cultures. This will be addressed next.

Culture as something organizations "do"

The performative nature of organizational life has been addressed previously, but, as a consequence of meaningful behavior (i.e. behavior that explains cultural beliefs, values, or processes), its value takes on greater importance. This perspective is highly interpretive, and differs from the idea that organizations "are" cultures by looking for specific significations of cultural beliefs. The advantage of this perspective is that actions can be observed, and meanings found for them later, especially if the researcher is using multi-methods of research (i.e. interviews, questionnaires). However, the idea of "performance" varies with the individual researcher. Recall that earlier, it was suggested that "texts" could be performed (Brown, 1987; Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982; Ricoeur, 1971; Strine and Pacanowsky, 1985). Almost anything can represent a text: ceremonies, folklore, myths, rituals, stories, anything that is a part of organizational life.

Valentine, Jacobsen, and Mondoza (1985) contend that an organization's values and attitudes can be determined by analyzing its "oral traditions" (p. 4). They suggest that oral traditions carry culture in them, and that "performing" these traditions (passing them on) is one way organizational members act to become part of the organization. As new members see the performances, they adopt the cultural patterns of the organization. This is consistent with Pacanowsky and O'Donnell's (1982) ideas about cultural performances. They write, "organizational members do not 'conform' to behavioral laws, but rather act (or more precisely, choose to act) in ways which reflect (or flout) the social conventions of other

organizational members" (p. 6). The action a cultural member takes is in line with their conception of who they are in the organizational context. Thus, they act (or perform) in order to convey a distinct impression (Goffman, 1959) to other cultural members.

Holt (1989) suggests that stories structure organizational performance by providing either "action" or "constraint" markers for organizational members. He suggests that members in conversations negotiate with one another to define "the degree to which they can act as free agents in the organization" (p. 376). By repeating stories, members describe which actions are acceptable, and which are not. In addition, by "performing" these stories, they replay the action/constraint markers for themselves, and, in this way, they confirm (or deny) their validity.

Organizational performance is a dramatic process that encapsulates meanings, actions, and values that represent the culture's view of itself. The idea of organizational folklore and action as being representative of culture and therefore similar suggests that both functions imply a historical view of the organization. To the extent that cultural members share in this history, and perform it for one another, it becomes part of them, and they in turn become part of the organization.

Barley (1983) points out that the nature of shared meanings and actions in the organizational context is semiotic in nature. He writes "from the semiotic perspective, the members of a social group will act similarly, to the degree that they share the same codes for imputing meaning to the world" (p. 398). He suggests that the way to determine (identify) organizational culture

is to look for "behavioral regularity" (p. 398) in members' actions (i.e. their "performances"). This method was used by Faules and Drecksell (1991), who analyzed organizational cultures according to "work justifications" across work groups (p. 91). They define a work justification as "what people say about their work activities. These accounts or reasons for proceeding in certain ways are observable in communication" (p. 91). They found that justifications for behavior are contextual, and varied according to the situation, the individual's identification with the group, and their knowledge of the "accounts" of the group (p. 92).

However, accounts aren't the only way to get at the symbolic meaning of performance. Boland and Hoffman (1983) analyzed the use of humor as an indicator of cultural meaning in a machine shop. They found three types of humor devices: language jokes, physical jokes, and machine jokes (p. 190). They point out that these jokes were used as "problem solving devices" in the sense of negotiating organizational reality. The jokes were used to give members a chance to socialize and create a self-definition in the shop. As a worker came to advance through the "hierarchy" (p. 193) in the shop, humor was used to either confirm his [all the workers were male] self-identity, or to inform him that he was not yet "one of them." The performance of jokes identified the members' relationships with one another and helped them to negotiate the various meanings implicit in the jokes they played.

Performance in an organization is never without meaning for the participants. More than describing what the organization is, performances describe what the organization is to the member with respect to his/her

relationship to it. Performance isn't limited to considerations of members' actions as they perform their work. Gardner (1992) shows that, even in a job interview, a person is considered "in relation to" the job he or she is interviewing for (i.e., the interviewer is comparing the person to organizational, that is to say "cultural" norms). Thinking of cultures as "performances" by organizational members reframes the meaning of culture for organizational researchers, and invites them to interpret how culture is influenced by continuous performance(s).

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Regardless of the approach taken or the paradigm through which organizational culture is filtered, there are some broad general themes in the literature, themes that have heuristic appeal to scholars regardless of the orientation of the author. Because of the depth and breadth of literature on organizational culture, it is necessary to determine which research is the most explanatory in the field, to decide which authors or articles most clearly express, in understandable terms, the general conceptions of organizational culture, and to identify research which most effectively operationalizes organizational culture without getting bogged down in theoretical or philosophical debates with other frameworks.

Organizational culture is essentially atheoretical. That is to say, there is no specific body of work, nor any standardized method for tracking, identifying, or diagnosing, that applies specifically to the concept of organizational culture. Therefore, the methodology of this thesis is substantially different than for other theses. Specifically, the body of literature selected has been analyzed for recurrent themes, ideas that are repeated or "show up" in research of very different types (e.g. a theme that is noted in both structural-functional and interpretive work), or themes that seem to

explain essential elements of organizational culture as currently understood. The themes developed are meaning, structure, language, stability/instability, and reification.

Meaning themes are those which relate to the "shared understanding" (Weick, 1983) of meaning as negotiated between cultural members. Structure themes are those which relate to either behavioral structures (rituals, routines, actions), cognitive structures (beliefs, values, goals), or rules-based structures (formal/informal rules; rules which enable or constrain actions by organizational members). Language themes focus on the use of language by organizational members to negotiate meaning, pre-structure action (filter), symbolize or represent symbolically, or represent reality to themselves and others. Themes of stability and instability refer to the differences between thinking of culture as a process versus thinking of it as a product. Additionally, a comparison of the strong culture/weak culture framework is made. Finally, the idea of organizational culture as a reification is considered. Reification through language considers the use of language to abstract organizational reality. Reification through ritual, rites, and ceremonies considers how these events function to reify organizational reality. The section on reification and ideology is a comparison of the two terms as they relate to organizational culture. Reification and control is an evaluation of the notion of "strong culture" and the implications of abstracting control to a term like "strong culture."

Following this section, a description of foundational literature in organizational culture is provided to give the reader a brief overview of work

that is of substantial importance, either for its heuristic value, or its explanatory power. This is followed by a section that gives a broad overview of the implications of this research. The conclusions reached in this thesis are explored with regard to their importance in teaching about organizational culture.

Subsequent to the conclusions section are three appendices. Appendix A is a chart listing the foundational literature by author, year, and title. Important points about each foundational reading are listed also. This chart has two sections. The first section deals with papers that have relevance for either communication scholars interested in this research, or business/management scholars who are interested in the implications of organizational culture on recent developments in organizational theory.

Appendix B is a teaching plan and course outline for an undergraduate course on organizational culture. The reader will find a teaching plan and course outline that should work for a standard semester-long class. By the end of this course, an undergraduate student should have a clear picture of the major themes and approaches in organizational culture. This course will also prepare students from dissimilar backgrounds for additional work in organizational theory, organizational consulting or advising, and public relations and marketing courses, and will provide excellent preparation for graduate work in organizational communication, communication theory, organizational culture, or advanced management.

Appendix C is a teaching plan and course outline for an introductory graduate level course on organizational culture. The books and readings

selected give a broad overview of current thinking on organizational culture on an advanced level. Students in this course will be well prepared to do advanced research in organizational communication, management, and public relations, as well as theoretical work in organizational culture and transformation. At the end of this course, students should have substantial knowledge and experience in both theoretical and methodological approaches to organizational study, and will be prepared for additional work in organizational theory, communication, and practice.

Understanding organizational culture is complex, challenging, and occasionally frustrating, but the concept, as it is now being developed, may be promising for organizational researchers. This thesis was undertaken in hopes that the promise may more quickly be realized.

CHAPTER 3

THEMES IN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Highlights New Problems

Organizational research, as its general goal, has the objective of reducing uncertainty in organizational life, in order to maximize profitability, efficiency, consistency, or predictability. Much of the organizational and management literature reflects this focus. However, new research has brought with it new problems.

The Problem of Meaning

Berger and Luckmann (1966) note that institutions are historicized and objectified constructions of reality, modified by people's understandings of their ways of socializing organizational members. This phenomenological approach is supported by other researchers who identify organizations as collectivities of persons engaged in related work or activity, or oriented toward a common goal (Bantz, 1983; Bormann, 1983; Brown, 1987; Morgan, 1986; Smircich, 1983b; Weick, 1983). While this is ostensibly true, the problem of how organizational members negotiate these realities has been taken up as a new focus. The idea seems to be that, if researchers can determine the structures that govern the negotiation of organizational reality, then management can have greater control (i.e. influence) over these structures,

which will allow management to meet its goals of predictability, efficiency, and consistency. These authors go about their discussions in various ways, but it seems that the best way toward understanding organizational "reality" is by taking a hermeneutic approach.

Hermeneutics is the process of interpretation, of ". . . understanding the significance of human actions, utterances, products and institutions" (Bullock, Stallybrass, and Trombley, 1988, p. 380). Specifically, hermeneutics is a process of intellectual study that seeks to explain the "essence" of things, rather than merely measuring or "weighing" them. The purpose of taking a hermeneutic approach is to capture not just the message, but its meaning(s) as well, to convey the context and import of an utterance as well as record the utterance itself. Jackson and Patton (1992) point out that a hermeneutic approach to research "requires that investigators work to identify and challenge *a priori* assumptions" (p. 203). They also suggest that the focus is on the "process as it occurs in context, not on events or theories imposed on the process" (p. 203). However, one aspect of hermeneutic analysis that must be considered in organizational culture is its relation to the concept of "praxis." Banks (1990) states:

Praxis theory says, in essence, that the qualities of human relationships and social arrangements are knowable only through knowing the virtual everyday practices and individuals histories of persons; those qualities are inscribed in personal and group histories in the very act of performing practices that encompass shared cultural traditions (p. 279).

In order to understand the praxis (here, praxis refers to ". . . the idea of a unity of theory and practice" [Bullock, Stallybrass, and Trombley, 1988, p. 676]) of hermeneutic analysis, it is important to note the variation between communication scholars as to the meaning imputed to "organizational reality." For instance, Brown (1987) suggests that:

Reality is imagined as literal and objective, whereas symbols are seen as metaphoric and subjective. This distinction has value in denoting the status of different types of experiences or the referential relations between them, but it clouds awareness of an alternative view; that the realities to which symbols refer are also symbolic--that is, that they are intended by human actors and apprehended within some shared frame of vision (p. 118).

Bormann (1983) also takes a symbological approach to the understanding of organizational culture by noting that:

Culture in the communicative context means the sum total of ways of living, organizing, and communing built up in a group of human beings....Important components of an organization's culture include shared norms, reminiscences, stories, rites and rituals that provide the members with unique *symbolic* common ground (p. 100) [italics added].

Aside from organizational culture's importance as a conceptual model for understanding meaning and reality in organizations, it also serves to lend importance to the less rational, less bounded aspects of organizational life, namely the need for people to express their emotions.

Emotional/expressive Aspects of Organizational Life

Aside from merely understanding what organizational reality means, it is important to note that organizational members are instrumental in their own socialization to the organization. Tompkins and Cheney (1983) note that "Typically, individuals sacrifice a degree of decisional autonomy when they participate in organizational life. They literally decide to accept certain organizational premises and approach work-related decisions from the organization's perspective; that is, they assume the role of the organization" (p. 125). In this way, organizational newcomers are integrated into the organizational 'corpus'. Jablin and Krone (1987) call this process organizational assimilation, and note that "in general, the assimilation process consists of both explicit and implicit attempts by organizations to influence their employees (socializations), and corresponding attempts by employees to influence their organizations (individualization)" (p. 713). This two-way process of intraorganizational influence gives rise to some distinct notions of culture.

Specifically, the idea of two-way attempts to influence is consistent with Geertz's (1973) conception of "webs of significance." According to Geertz, because of the nature of human life and humans as actors, people usually try to arrive at common conceptions for things (e.g. constructs), and they try to transmit to one another their individual valuations about these constructs, giving rise to the notion of "shared meanings." Additionally, Smircich (1983b) notes that organizations themselves "are understood and

analyzed nor mainly in economic or material terms, but in terms of their expressive, ideational, and symbolic aspects" (p. 348).

Ways of Explaining Differences in Cultures

The idea of shared meanings is consistent with Bormann's (1983) description of "symbolic convergence." As he notes, "People tend to make human motion into symbolic action. That is, they tend to attribute meaning to action by trying to figure out why the actors did what they did and what the action symbolizes" (p. 102). However, it is not merely action that counts as a symbolic representation of reality. Brown (1987) points out that language provides a "grammar" (cf. Burke, 1945, cited in Gusfield, 1989), of actional motives for individuals that can be interpreted in light of its hermeneutic value to actors. In other words, what we say is as instructive as to our motives as are our actions. Specifically, Brown suggests that language is semiotic as well as hermeneutic, and therefore, recommends itself as "textual" and suitable for analysis. Brown suggests that society at all levels can be represented and interpreted as a text which can be read. This conception of society (i.e. culture) as text has been advanced by Trujillo (1983) who notes that organizational enactments can be read as performative texts, and by Pacanowsky and O'Donnel-Trujillo (1987) who consider organizational enactments to be "cultural performances." The performative aspects of organizational culture are not inconsistent with the dialectic of organizational culture. In fact, writers on organizational culture often refer to "enactments" of the intraorganizational culture, such that anything an organizational member might say or do is an "enactment" of the culture.

Such enactments reinforce both the performative focus of organizational culture (Trujillo, 1983; Pacanowsky and O'Donnel-Trujillo, 1982), and the internalized "culture as symbological/epistemological constructions of reality" (Bormann, 1983; Sackmann, 1991; Weick, 1983). Organizational culture, then, can be identified as a multi-perspectival, multi-dimensional construct, applied to settings by scholars in such a way as to determine which factors of organizational life contribute to the development of cultural reality, constitute meanings and attach them to actions made by organizational members, and provide frameworks for the interpretation of communication by, about, for, and between organizational members as they go about their daily lives. As Schein (1990) points out, "there is presently little agreement on what the concept does and should mean, how it should be observed and measured, how it relates to more traditional and organizational psychology theories, and how it should be used in our efforts to help organizations" (p. 109). For example, Pierce (1977) defines culture as "a system of classification which must be shared and transmitted from generation to generation. Following this definition, one is faced with the situation wherein the culture is a set of abstract classes and the objects and behaviors we observe are representative of these classes" (p. 197).

In order to study culture, it is important to come to some agreement as to its essential nature. Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1990) suggest that ". . . culture is to be studied. . . as sensemaking, as a reality constructed and displayed by those whose existence is embedded in a particular set of webs" (p. 143). This perspective favors interpretive and naturalistic analyses of

organizations, rather than the traditional rational, structural-functionalist approaches favored by other organizational researchers. Putnam (1983) endorses the interpretive viewpoint, writing ". . . interpretation centers on the study of meanings, that is, the way individuals make sense of their world through their communicative behaviors. . . . it refers to the sources, nature, and methodology for investigating organizational life (p. 31).

Meaning

One recurring theme in the organizational culture literature is the theme of meaning. Organizational actors impute meaning to the things people do, the things they say, and the way in which they say it. Barth (1981) points out that: "actors can and must act in terms of their own awareness and consciousness, i.e. their 'meanings,' and this must entail the shaping of the act in terms of its symbolic context" (p. 82). For Barth, meaning is determined by imputing a value to any action taken, and then interpreting the action symbolically. Additionally, by imputing value, meaning is created. As Jackson and Patton (1992) point out, "the process of valuing is a process of making meaning in one's life. Indeed some would argue that the study of values is the study of meaning" (p. 202). Obviously, the term "meaning" is also symbological and doesn't necessarily have any impact by itself; it is a concept. Nevertheless, Gray, Bougon, and Donnellon (1985) argue that: "At the most basic level, meaning is encoded in the form of concepts. Concepts result from a categorization process by which we group similar experiences. It has been suggested that concepts are classes of objects or events that can be defined by identifying one or more features common to all members of that

class" (p. 85). Even if the term "meaning" is a concept, it has utility in helping make sense of organizational life. Meanings have the ability to influence members on five levels: interaction, emotion, development of community, behavior, and rationality. Each of these will be considered below.

Meaning facilitates interaction

Meaning facilitates interaction because, as organizational members spend time with one another, they tend to develop consistent understandings of symbols frequently used in the organization. Smircich (1983b) says: "In order to explain the thematic systems of meaning underlying activity, anthropologists show the ways symbols are linked in meaningful relationship and demonstrate how they are related to the activities of people in a setting" (p. 350). Meaning requires interaction between organizational members in order for organizational experience to be transformed into understandable activity. Eoyang (1983) says that "understanding or attribution of meaning is an interactive process in which new information and experiences are translated into the context of the familiar and the familiar is elaborated and transformed in terms of the new" (p. 114). Thus, construction of meaning is important because it requires interaction between organizational members for its construction, and it facilitates interaction between organizational members so that they can "make sense" of activity in the organization.

Meaning influences emotional experiences

By saying that meaning influences emotional experiences, what is meant is that, as meaning is constructed and negotiated, organizational

members are "informed" as to how a specific event should be interpreted. This is important, because organizational members do not put their feelings on hold, simply because they are at work. In fact, it is because they are at work that they value organizational occurrences on an emotional level. Adams and Ingersoll (1985) write:

Organizations are center stage for the action in a drama that includes and evokes a wide range of emotions, dreams, and dark desires. The workplace isn't incidental to anyone who spends a third of his or her life there; it matters very much. It influences physical and mental health, it affects families, it determines where people live, and it provides key sources of a person's identity, sense of self-worth, and social need satisfaction (p. 225).

The dramatization of organizational life helps members deal with its various inconsistencies, partially because, since members abstract meaning into either metaphors (Smith and Simmons, 1983) or symbols (Burke, 1966), the symbols can help organizational members to "distance" themselves, and to reinterpret the symbols without making an emotional investment.

Meaning influences a sense of community

Members in organizations frequently develop a sense of community about their organization. Many represent their place of work metaphorically (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Morgan, 1986). For example, members might describe their place of work as a "family." Metaphors of this type are known as root metaphors (Gagliardi, 1990; Smircich, 1983a; Smith and Eisenberg, 1987, Steinhoff and Owens, 1988a, 1988b). According to Gagliardi (1990), a root

metaphor is "the area of common-sense fact which mankind uses as a basic analogy in its striving to understand the world" (p. 27). When organizational members describe their places of work in terms that personalize them or reconstitute them in a different form (for example: IBM as a "family"), they may be said to be conceptualizing using a root metaphor. One example of this is Smith and Eisenberg's (1987) analysis of culture at Disneyland. Their analysis showed that most of Disneyland's employees thought of it as a "drama" or as a "family." Conceived of in this way, certain standards of behavior were expected. For example, when management made changes in park policies, some employees remarked "My family wouldn't treat me this way" (p. 375). Clearly, the way meaning is negotiated by organizational members encapsulates many expectations about how to interpret that meaning. The sense of community is expressed by organizational members, and then certain expectations are made as to how to operate in the community.

Meaning influences behavior

One consequence of negotiating meaning in organizations is that it frequently leads to redefinition of meanings. This circularity implies that, as things "mean" differently, people will often change their behavior to match a newly negotiated meaning. Louis (1983) points out that:

. . . the codes of meaning or relevances indigenous to a social system serve as behavior-shaping social ideals (i.e. 'thou shalt', 'thou shalt not'). Social ideals constitute a system of values and

relevances by which individuals and institutions set goals and aspirations, sanction behavior and judge performances (p. 43).

These (behavior shaping) ideals inform members of expectations, meanings, and consequences of behaviors, as well as the constraints placed upon acting or failing to act. Also, behavior is informed by norms and rules in the organization. Frequently these norms are tied directly to performance. Akin and Hopelain write that ". . . people's behavior tends to be congruent with the meanings that their setting (in this case the work setting) holds for them. To understand behavior, we have to try to understand the meanings of setting and how those meanings come to be understood" (p. 21). Since meanings are negotiated between cultural members, changed through interaction with other cultural members, and provide structure for actions in the organizational setting (behavioral norms), it seems clear that, as meanings are imputed to actions, those actions are continuously reinterpreted.

A final consideration of the influence of meaning on behavior is provided by Bantz (1990) who notes "The enactment of the environment is a consequence of actors imposing order on their world through their actions (Weick, 1979, pp. 164-169). That is, organizing tends to construct or enact the environment in which it takes place" (p. 137). Therefore, as organizational actors restructure and redefine their environments, they also reorder their meanings. To the extent that they have imposed a new order on their environment, it becomes necessary to reinterpret what their actions mean in relation to the new environment. This reflexive-recursive fact of organizational life is one of the only constants in organizations.

Meaning influences rationality

It is almost axiomatic that organizations and their members are expected to be "rational." However, the concept of rationality is almost as abstract as the concept of "love." Weick (1985) makes the observation that "rationality is one (and only one) theory about how to express oneself clearly and interpret what others are doing. Rationality is not indigenous to organizations; rather, it is a choice about what to affirm, restrict, and permit. Other choices are possible" (p. 387). However, Weick also makes the additional point that rationality is modified by what organizational members decide is rational. And, in many cases, their determinations of rationality may not in fact be "rational" at all. Putnam and Mumby (1992) write that "Bureaucracy is intertwined with the system of dualisms that privileges rationality and marginalizes emotional experience. That is, emotion is normally juxtaposed against rationality as a marginal mode of experience to be minimized in routine organizational life" (p. 2). Organizational life is bounded by organizational goals in tension with the individual goals of organizational members. Weick (1979) calls this "bounded rationality." He points out that rationality may be expressed in any number of ways, including strategic plans: ". . . trappings of rationality such as strategic plans are important largely as binding mechanisms. They hold events together long enough and tight enough in people's heads so that they do something in the belief that their action will be influential" (1985, p. 127). However, the notion of individual actors having influence on organizations is disputed by Mumby (1987) who claims that rationality is a justification by organizational power-

holders for their attempts to mold ideology and structure organizational reality to meet their own ends. Mumby construes organizations to be power-mediated and oriented, and suggests that the idea of rational decision-making is a synthesized approach to power-brokering that he refers to as the "mode of rationality." Regardless of the validity of these claims, there is substantial support for the notion that organizational reality and meaning are expressed in terms of rationality. Meaning is interpreted different ways, depending on either the actor's point of view, the researcher's point of view, or the organizational leader's point of view. To suggest that rationality is not a valid "lens" through which to view meaning is to miss the point of meaning completely.

Structure

Organizations are generally considered to have structural elements which compose them. It is also usually accepted that these structural elements are visible, and can be interpreted on the basis of their essential nature. The structuralist paradigm imputes this value to the structure of organizational reality. According to Riley (1983):

Structures are the rules and resources people use in interaction, and they are analyzed as dualities; they are both the medium and the outcome of interaction. They are the medium, because structures provide the rules and resources individuals must draw on to interact meaningfully. They are its outcome, because

rules and resources exist only through being applied and acknowledged in interaction (p. 415)

In this way, structures act as constraints over functions in organizations. In fact, the structural approach to culture is frequently called structural-functionalism. Sanday (1979) says that the key concepts in this approach are "process, maintenance, survival, adaptation, change, imbedded in, and integral part of..." and that "Each part of the system has its function, no part can be studied without considering its relation to other parts, and each new part which is added to the system must find its accepted fit." (p. 532). In other words, structures exist to provide for needed functions in the system, and functions in the system need some type of structure. Culture in this framework is a dynamic system, but it is still a system, striving toward equifinality, greater output than input. Structure and function are mechanistic conceptualizations of the nature of organizational work.

Behavioral (rituals, routines, etc.)

Any system needs components and, in a structural-functional system, these basic components are roles (Astley and Van de Ven, 1983). Astley and Van de Ven say that roles "predefine the set of behavioral expectations, duties, and responsibilities associated with a given position. . . . Individuals are thereby immersed as component parts of an interdependent collectivity - - a structured, interlocking system that shapes and determines their behavior" (p. 248). Even when individuals believe they are acting out of choice in an organizational setting, this may not necessarily represent an instantiation (Ricoeur, 1971) of freedom to act. Holt gives a perspective on this

phenomenon when he writes "The paradox that individuals act freely in organizations, but are at the same time constrained by regulative organizational features, has been noted by many researchers" (p. 378).

One way in which actions are constrained is by their encapsulation in a role.

A role is defined by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1971) as:

a set of expectations about behavior for a position is a social structure. Expectations define behavioral requirements or limits ascribed to the role by the focal person filling that position, or by others who relate to the role or simply have notions about it (p. 155).

Roles are expectations of behavior modified (constrained) by historical, theoretical, or empirical beliefs held by organizational members about their work and the work of others. Miller (1988) suggests that roles are important because a role "points to the interrelationship of individuals within the organizational system. . . . for each organizational role is composed of a set of required behaviors and relationships that can have a strong influence on the role holder's attitudes and values" (p. 708). In summary, roles are important because they lend a sense of predictability to organizational members, who have developed a set of expectations about the behaviors of organizational others with whom they interact. One consequence of this is that, often, role mandated behavior is converted into a ritual. Rituals are "customary and repeated actions which take on meaning within an organization. Rituals serve to establish boundaries and relationships between customer and representative, unions and management, or employees and managers. . . .

They indicate the values espoused in the organization" (p. 121). However, actions are not the only factor that structures reality in an organization.

Cognitive (beliefs, values, goals)

Cognitive structures are not visible to researchers, but their existence is essentially presumed. Organizational researchers make the assumption that behaviors are mediated by thought processes (whether conscious or not), which match expectations to actions. Gray, Bougon, and Donnellon (1985) write that meaning "has to do with the connection of personal value to one's cognitive schemes" (p. 87). Values are defined by Lundberg (1985) as "the evaluational basis that organizational members utilize for judging situations, acts, objects, and people. Values reflect the real goals, ideals, standards, as well as the sins of an organization and represent members' preferred means of resolving life's problems" (p. 171). The relationship of cognition to behavior is expanded on by Saffold (1988) who notes, "As cultural values are more fully elaborated, a greater range of organizational behaviors is brought under cultural control" (p. 549).

The distinction between a belief and a value is made by Rokeach (1973) who says "a value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (p. 5). The relationship between values and behavior is also noted by Ulrich (1984) who indicates that values "are reinforced by reward and recognition procedures, punishments and sanctions, socialization procedures for new employees or new promotees. . . ." (p. 122). The importance of values to organizational researchers is explained

by O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell (1991), who point out that research on culture "usually begins with a set of values and assumptions. These values, whether conscious or unconscious, typically act as the defining elements around which norms, symbols, rituals, and other cultural activities revolve" (p. 492). Organizational goals may be considered "the ideal codes of behavior espoused by organizational literature and inculcated in the training of organizational participants. . . ." (Wells, 1988, p. 111), and are important in considering cognitive structures only to the extent that the intensity of goals may be modified by organizational members as they structure their behaviors around them. This can be particularly difficult for organizational members that don't commit deeply to organization goals. For these people (called "free agents" by Smith, Piland, and Discenza, 1990), accepting the organization's goals *in toto* is often seen as subsuming their individual value systems.

Rules (formal/informal, enabling/constraining)

Another important aspect of structure is the notion of rules that govern the behavior of organizational members. The rules-mediated approach to culture is based on work done by Cushman (1977), Harris and Cronen (1979), Pearce (1980), Shimanoff (1980), and Sigman (1980). While these theorists vary in their specific interpretations of the meanings of individual rules, they all essentially agree that there are two primary types of rules, constitutive and regulative. Constitutive rules are those that people use to determine what things mean (how they are constituted). For example, if an organizational member needs to divine the meaning in an expression used by a manager, he or she would refer to a constitutive rule that tells how

to interpret the utterance. Regulative rules are those which tell people how to behave. Extending the above example, if the manager had expressed a desire for "consistency in your productivity" regulative rules would tell the member how to go about insuring increased productivity in a way that would be acceptable in the organization. Obviously, the rules paradigm can be challenging for members, particularly when some rules are implicit (understood) and others are explicit ("do this"; "don't do that"). Another challenge to the rules paradigm is the problem of ambiguity or equivocation. Equivocation on the part of organizational members may lead to improper interpretation of the rules, which can harm an organizational member's success, status, or future. How the structures and meanings discussed above impact on action in organizations has been looked at, but there is another major consideration in organizational life, language.

Language

Possibly part of the difficulty with defining culture is that it informs so many aspects of people's lives (and also of *a* people's lives). One writer who has attempted to provide a description of culture is Edward Sapir (1949). For Sapir, language is part of culture, as is culture part of language. In his various works, Sapir does not give any type of meta-framework, but presupposes the development of language as a precursor to the development of culture. He notes that:

The content of every culture is expressible in its language and there are no linguistic materials whether as to content or form

which are not felt to symbolize actual meanings, whatever may be the attitude of those who belong to other cultures (1949, p. 6).

It is clear that, whatever else culture may be, Sapir feels that it is encased in the particular language of a group, and that, regardless of who may be observing the group, its language has meaning and power for those who are part of the instant group. One reason that language and culture may be so closely tied is their salience for group members. As Sapir points out, "Language is heuristic. . . in the. . . sense that its forms predetermine for us certain modes of observation and interpretation" (1949, p. 7). Since language has an influence on group members in any case, it may be that language is a primary modifier of culture in any group. Support for this position is given by Sapir, who writes:

It is important to realize that language may not only refer to experience or even mold, interpret, and discover experience, but that it also substitutes for it in the sense that in those sequences of interpersonal behavior which form the greater part of our daily lives speech and action supplement each other and do each other's work in a web of unbroken pattern (1949, p. 9).

Language and Meaning

The concept of language as being important to culture (and vice versa) is widely accepted by writers on organizational culture. Sapir's observation that the cultural significance of language lies on a deeper level than overt culture patterns is supported by Schein (1986), who notes that the primary factors leading to development of a "unique" cultural reality is buried in basic

assumptions about the nature of reality. This view is also consistent with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) discussion of organizational reality. According to them, organizational reality is negotiated by members of a group. This assumption of cultural reality is echoed by many other organizational theorists and researchers (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Martin, 1988, 1992; Ott, 1989; Pacanowsky, 1983; Putnam, 1983, Weick, 1979,1985). However, Ortner (1973) points out that organizational reality is encased in and expressed by the use of key symbols. Key symbols are those that are most salient to group members. Key symbols are of two types, summarizing symbols and elaborating symbols. Ortner writes:

. . . when we say a summarizing symbol is 'key' to the system, we mean that its substantive meanings have certain kinds of priority relative to other meanings of the system. When we say an elaborating symbol is key to the system, we refer to the power of its formal or organizational role in relation to the system (p. 1344).

The link between symbols and language is well established. For example, Morgan, Frost, and Pondy (1983) point out that "the use of language is rich in symbolic significance. It carries patterns of meaning which do much to evoke and define the realities of organizational life, and is a topic central to the analysis of organizational symbolism" (p. 11). As a consequence of language's power as a force for shaping symbol use and creation, it often mediates in the creation of new meaning. Holt (1989) points out that "Conversationally co-constructed stories are the linguistic means whereby a new context is

reformulated, providing frameworks in which to cast narrative events each time the story is retold" (p. 379). Another way in which language affects organizational culture is by acting as a filter to pre-structure meanings for organizational participants.

Language as Pre-structure (filter)

Evered (1983) points out that language is often the first instrument used to assist new members in acculturating to an organization. He notes that:

Organizations typically provide orientation sessions, apprenticeships, and training programs for newcomers in order to instruct the newcomer in the *language* of the organization; the unique terminologies, codes, acronyms, and sign systems, as well as the symbols and metaphors that convey the culture of the particular organization (pp. 125-126).

Evered argues that language creates organizational reality to a large extent. He writes "The 'organization' has no objective reality (in a positivistic sense), but rather *is created daily by the linguistic enactments of its members in the course of their everyday communications between each other . . .*" (p. 126).

Aiex (1988) provides support for this position, noting that:

The manner in which organizations and the people who work within them use language is directly related to the concept of organizational culture, since language is the prime element with which values are articulated, heroes purport those values, most

rites and ceremonies are conducted, and communications are transmitted and understood (p. 3).

Language used in a culture pre-structures meaning because it is used in codes, slang, jargon, specialized vocabularies, and wordplay. Evered (1983) points out that organizations and their members create ". . . their own informal lexicons that help characterize and give meaning to their particular circumstance. The slang, jargon, and cant of a group provide the connective idioms that significantly define the group's reality and differentiate it from that of other groups" (p. 139). Members of organizational groups "navigate" in organizations by the way they use language. Their use of specialized or technical language helps to make them unique, and also provides a way to validate group membership. Additionally, organizational members signal which aspects of organizational life have the most salience for them by the words they use. Brown (1991) remarks that "members talk about those aspects of organizational life which most concern them" (p. 57). Thus language filters knowledge for new organizational members by structuring it in highly differentiated ways, depending on group distinctiveness (i.e. the development of special lexicons, technical languages, or idiomatic expressions), and it also acts to "filter" reality as expressed by members because they talk about organizational happenings that are most salient for them. Weick (1979) provides an interesting perspective on this concept when he describes organizational sensemaking as a process where organizational members say "How can I know what I think until I see what I say?" (p. 133). When members negotiate language between themselves, they function to filter it in

such a way that (presumably) the rules and expectations (see above) are clearly reflected by their use of language.

Language as symbol for organizing

However, language doesn't just filter meaning. It also reflects the people's natural desire to represent their reality symbolically. Almost all occurrences, beliefs, desires, and concerns are represented symbolically. Morgan, Frost, and Pondy (1983) demonstrate that ". . . any phenomenon can be vested with [such] symbolic status, and human beings in all spheres of life create and inhabit milieux which are rich in symbolic significance. . ." (p. 7). The importance of symbolization hinges directly on its efficacy in structuring knowledge. Eoyang (1983) writes that "symbolic meaning is an attribute of the interaction whereby the symbol is integrated into our previous body of knowledge" (p. 115). Symbolizing is important because it is used for sensemaking. Frost and Morgan (1989) point out that "one important aspect of symbolism in organizations is the way people use symbols to make sense of situations which are problematic, ambiguous, or unsettling" (p. 207). When people can use symbols to clarify things for themselves, they feel more secure about organizational life and their respective roles in it. The use of symbols in organizations seems to have value on three levels. According to Daft (1983), organizational symbols seem to communicate both instrumental (logical, rational, thinking) value, and expressive (underlying feelings or emotional needs of individuals) information to participants; (2) instrumental symbols pertain to well understood phenomena, and expressive symbols pertain to poorly understood phenomena; and (3) instrumental symbols

describe concrete organizational phenomena, and expressive symbols describe abstract organizational phenomena.

Understanding symbols is important because, in many respects, organizing is nothing more than a symbolic abstraction. Weick (1990) calls organizing a "grammar" because it "is a systematic account of some rules and conventions by which sets of interlocked behaviors are assembled to form social processes that are intelligible to actors" (p. 126). Gray, Bougon, and Donnellon (1985) suggest that organizations should be conceptualized as "the dynamic construction and destruction of meaning" (p. 95), owing to the fact that, by their very nature, organizations have a "dynamic, processual nature" (p. 93). This view is supported by Evered (1983) who points out that "organizations only really change when there are concomitant changes in the words, symbols, and metaphors of an organization" (p. 141). The notion of organizing as an abstraction is also argued by Bantz (1989) who writes "organizations can be seen, not as systems or networks, but socially constructed realities constituted in communication" (p. 236). Finally, the importance of understanding (or considering) organizational reality as a symbolic approach to sensemaking is provided by Riley (1985) who points out that:

Through the study of symbols, a symbiotic relationship between humanistic approaches to individual and societal action and the social science study of management and organizations is possible; so too is the integration of micro- and macro-analytic investigations. The importance of these analyses stretches

beyond their theoretical implications to a practical understanding of the sense-making process - - how people communicate (p. 49).

Language and representation

The link between language and culture has been investigated by Boas (1948), Goodenough (1964) , Sapir (1949) and Sherzer (cited in Eastman, 1990). One particularly interesting approach is Sherzer's, who contends that different cultures develop their own systems of cultural logic, "with regard for example to how their members view time, space and the like, using grammar and lexicon features" (Eastman, 1990, p. 36) Eastman further notes that culture is expressed in language used as discourse; she describes discourse as "speech use in a cultural context involving the level of speech structure above the sentence. It is talk in chunks functioning to construct the shared beliefs of people within a group" (1990, p. 36). While Boas, Goodenough and others primarily viewed culture as a "structural" feature of groups, their insights nevertheless have important application to the concept of culture on a broader scale. Culture as an expressive system of meaning in a bounded group (e.g. a society, a town, or an organization) obviously relies on its expression in a linguistic form. Therefore, language has an impact on culture, functioning both as a framing process, and also as a discriminating process. This description of the language/culture link does not deny other methods of cultural patterning, but it does explain why cultural factors expressed in linguistic forms help define cultural differences between groups.

Extending the view of language as a cultural modifier also assists in explaining the impact of Levi-Strauss on the development of symbolic anthropology. Chiefly noted for his work on myth and its impact on culture, Levi-Strauss also contributed the view that cultural development (the creation and distinctiveness of autonomous cultures between varying social groups) was essentially symbolological in both form and function (Levi-Strauss, 1967). As Eastman (1990) points out, "To Levi-Strauss, myth exists in a culture as the culture's way of resolving certain contradictions between the culture bearers and nature" (p. 46). It is not important here to discuss Levi-Strauss's approach to the structural analysis of myth. What is important is to point out that the functional salience of myth to cultural members is as real to organizational members today as it was to pre-literate societies. A further point from Eastman will help underscore this fact: "Everything in nature can, thus, be imbued with symbolic significance--indeed, systems of symbols such as kinship, myth, and language may be seen as mediating the overarching distinction between Nature and Culture" (p. 48).

Another approach to culture is its description as an "ideational order." According to Goodenough (1964), culture is an ideational order "composed on ideal forms as they exist in people's minds, prepositions about their interrelationships, preference ratings regarding them and recipes for their mutual ordering as means for organizing and interpreting new experience" (p. 11). Eastman provides insight to this proposition when she points out that "Cultures are expected to vary greatly in content and in particular rules, yet all

cultures, like all languages, are expected to be similar in overall design" (1990, p. 68).

As important as language and symbol are to culture, there is one other aspect of culture that deserves consideration; the importance of context. Understanding the contextual nature of any culture is problematical at best, but as Scharfstein (1989) points out ". . . the attempt to be thorough in understanding context leads to a total contextualization, in which everything becomes the context of everything else. Such a contextualization is equivalent to total relativity" (p. xii). The problem is that once one submits to the "attractiveness" of contextual relativism, one finds that "total relativity is very difficult to defend and seems at odds not only with essential human impulses but with science as well" (p. xiii). It is clear also that an absolutist framework of analysis with regard to culture is not only unreasonable, but also unworkable. Scharfstein's work reminds us that, while an understanding of context is necessary to any typification of culture, the desire to contextualize must be tempered by a resistance to the natural impulse to make absolutist distinctions in cultural analysis.

A good starting point in any discussion of context is an acceptable working definition of context; one which provides enough richness to explain the concept, but is not too limiting. Scharfstein (1989) offers the following definition of context:

context is that which environs the object of our interest and helps by its relevance to explain it. the environing may be temporal, geographical, *cultural*, cognitive, emotional - - of any

sort at all. . . . A context is by definition relevant to whatever it is that one wants to explain and excludes everything, no matter how close in some way, that lacks the required explanatory power" [italics added] (p. 1).

Scharfstein further states that "It is clear that to understand one another better, we have to become more aware of the textural differences between our lives, the different ways in which we are woven into the world and into one another" (1989, p. 4). It is clear that any notion of cultural analysis (or "reportage") requires a consideration of the context of cultural reality.

Accordingly, the idea of context as a necessary element in the framing of cultural reality takes on additional importance. When considered in view of the symbolicity of cultural reality, context has an even greater impact. While the salience of context as an element of cultural reality may seem somewhat relativistic in nature, it is with good cause that it is considered. Given the essentially symbological nature of cultural reality, consideration of the context(s) of that reality is critical. As Cassirer (1953) and Durkheim (1961) have pointed out, man lives in a symbolic universe (Scharfstein, 1989, p. 11). Understanding the context in which those symbols express themselves is necessary in order to arrive at any understanding of any particular cultural reality at any particular time, place, or happening. In ending the discussion of context, Scharfstein again provides insight:

. . . our grasp of a situation is invariably limited if cognitive alone, if, that is, we have not undergone the experience or lived the life that we are trying to understand or judge. This view is

self-serving to be sure; but it is time that the analysis of human belief and conduct is hampered if the analyst has never shared the context that makes them natural (1989, p. 16).

A final consideration of representation concerns the use of stories in organizational life. Stories are, in a sense, an empirical example of organizational members talking about themselves (Weick, 1979). But, according to Wilkins (1984), "stories are powerful in passing on a culture because they are like maps that help people know how things are done in a particular group" (p. 45). In addition, stories also describe what an organization, in general, thinks of itself. Ulrich (1984) indicates three general themes to organizational stories: equality, security, and control. Ulrich suggests that the content of organizational stories expresses (i.e. represents) the organization to itself, and, by focusing on the elements of organizational life that intersect with the primary themes, organizational researchers will gain insight into "some unique quality or characteristic which epitomizes an organization" (p. 124). Organizational stories are also seen to describe members' freedom to act as they wish. Holt writes:

by viewing organizational story talk as an indicator of how conversants negotiate with each other to define the degree to which they can act as free agents in the organization, I am reaffirming that such discourse is co-constructed, is unique to conversational context, and is an effective way to show how story 'facts' serve to define the organizational roles of the conversants (pp. 376-377).

From this perspective then, it seems clear that organizational stories are important to members in the sense that they help them define their reality in an organization. One reason this may be so is that stories may function as scripts. As Wilkins (1984) points out, "many stories are interpreted as scripts which tell employees what behavior or attitudes are acceptable or what they can expect the organization to do in the future" (p. 46). Wilkins gives some characteristics that determine whether organizational stories can function as scripts: "(1) they are *concrete* ; (2) they are *common knowledge* among some group of people in the organization. . . ; (3) they are *believed* by some group of people. . . ; and (4) they are typically about the *social contract* of the organization" (pp. 46-47). In this way, organizational reality is represented to all organizational members by virtue of the content of stories that are passed between them. Since "reality" is constructed in the organizational domain, it follows that the language used, and its meaning, as indicated by organizational members, is a powerful shaper of action in organizations.

Stability/Instability

The foregoing discussion has focused on the interrelationship between language, symbol, and context with regard to culture. Culture is not separable from the things that frame it, structure it, give it meaning, or modify it. To think otherwise is to deny the impact that culture has on "creating" its own reality. We are not just members of cultures, but members of numerous different cultures all at the same time. We do not simply create culture,

culture also creates us. The notion of culture as both creator and created, negotiator and negotiated, modifier and modified, will be considered next.

The notion of what culture is has been hotly contested for years (Shweder, 1984, p. 6). However, a definition which works admirably for this discussion is Geertz's (1973) definition of culture as: "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (p. 89). Another definition that is equally plausible is given by LeVine (1984) who describes it as "a shared organization of ideas that includes the intellectual, moral, and aesthetic standards prevalent in a community and the meanings of communicative actions." (p. 67). D'Andrade (1984) sees culture more as a "package" of knowledge, meanings, and symbols (Shweder, 1984, p. 20). To D'Andrade, culture is also a system of "constitutive rules" in that, for every cultural happening, there is agreement on some level that it means something to the members in that culture. As D'Andrade puts it: "To agree that something will count as something else is more than simply knowing about it, although knowing about it is a necessary precondition. . . . The *agreement* that something counts as something else involves the *adherence* of a group of people to a *constitutive rule* and to the entailments incurred by the application of the rule" (p. 91).

LeVine points out that culture "cannot be reduced to its explicit or implicit dimensions. . . .In culture, as an organization of shared meanings, some meanings are more explicit than others, for reasons having to do with

the pragmatics of social life and their history for a given society" (p. 77).

Given the lack of agreement on what constitutes a culture, although generally consistent meanings can be extrapolated depending on which approach is taken, the following definition of culture, closely approximates a fusion of the clearest and most understandable of the definitions offered, irrespective of their genesis or "school of thought": (1) Culture is a body of conceptions, framed symbologically, arising out of a historical understanding of one's group, which gives direction, knowledge, meaning, and significance to whatever elements of a person's reality are modified as a result of his/her membership in the group; (2) the reality described is implicitly understood AND believed to be the correct way to think, behave, and act, and is constantly renegotiated in response to both external and internal pressures, regardless of their genesis; and, (3) the renegotiation of cultural rules generally follows some mutually agreed upon set of conceptions governing the process of renegotiation, that exist as a holistic set of symbological tools and are used consistent with generally agreed upon cultural norms.

Aside from the fact that this particular definition of culture is long and somewhat vague, it doesn't necessarily explain how culture is negotiated in the organizational realm. Organizational leaders and organizational researchers like to conceptualize culture as relatively stable, but, as has been shown above, it is very unlikely that organizational cultures are ever truly stable. The overwhelming amount of research seems to indicate that cultures are always in flux. In order to understand the importance of cultural stability,

it is necessary to compare three different conceptions of culture in organizations.

Culture as Process

One perspective conceptualizes culture as a process. This is the functional-structural approach. Culture "happens" to an organizational member as a result of actions taken by organizational leaders or others, who are interested in having the new member "acculturate" quickly and smoothly. Until this process occurs, a member is not necessarily an asset. In this perspective, ambiguity and uncertainty threaten the accepted organizational order. The culturing process is a rationalized approach to control. Lack of control threatens the entire organization, because the system only works right when every cog and wheel turns in the proper direction at the proper time.

This rationalized approach to organizational culture suffers from four conceptual flaws: (1) since culture is consistently and continuously in the process of change, the acculturation process is never complete; (2) new members in the organization impact the culture and also cause incremental change, increasing dynamism; (3) organizational control is never in the hands of leaders to the extent that members continuously renegotiate their meanings; and (4) control requires extended periods of stability, and cultures rarely seem to offer that.

Culture as Product

Viewing culture as a product implies thinking about culture and its creation as a part of organizational life. This view is consistent with Weick's

(1979, 1983, 1985) conception of culture as a sociological phenomenon, a consequence of organizing. This perspective imagines cultures as something organizations are. New members become part of the organization, and thus part of the culture. Their influence on its creation is expected and understood as a consequence of their participation in organizational life. This notion of organizational culture doesn't lead toward rationalization of cultural factors, rather it assumes that the development of cultures is a natural part of the development of organizations. Acculturation is seen as a necessary and dynamic part of organizational reality, and, to that extent, culture becomes a "lens" through which organizational reality is observed (Ott, 1989).

Evaluation: Strong vs. Weak Cultures

A third view of culture is a comparison of strong versus weak cultures. This perspective views cultures as tangential to organizational reality. What this means is that, in this view, culture's importance is subsumed by its presence. If an organizational culture is strong, it has great power in modifying organizational reality. If the culture is weak, it has less power to modify organizational reality. The problem with this perspective is that it assumes that "culture" is salient only to the extent that its presence is felt. It denies that culture is the medium of transmission for organizational reality.

One reason for the idea of organizational culture as either exhibiting itself strongly or weakly (i.e. "culture is strong" vs. "culture is weak") may be that there is continuing debate over the distinction between organizational climate and organizational culture. Moran and Volkwein (1992) point out that:

Climate exhibits those behavioral and attitudinal characteristics of participants which are more empirically accessible to external observers. Culture, on the other hand, represents a more implicit feature of organizations. It contains the fundamental collective values and meanings of organization members which are represented indirectly through metaphor and an interior sense of shared mentalities which are not immediately interpretable by outsiders (p. 42).

This notion of culture is appealing, until one considers that the use of the word "culture" is a metaphor for organizational life. Deetz (1982) points out that:

the concept of culture as a guiding metaphor for organizational study directs attention to the variety of activities, beyond simply getting the job done, which constitute organizational life. . . . it focuses analysis on the processes by which the meanings of organizational events are produced and sustained through communication (p. 132).

If this definition is compared to the Moran and Volkwein definition, some obvious inconsistencies are pointed out. The distinctions Moran and Volkwein point to are subsumed by meanings of culture given by other writers. In particular, their definition of culture clashes with Ulrich's (1984) who observes that "organizations, like people, establish personalities or identities, both by modeling one another and by distinguishing themselves from one another as they react to the environmental challenges around

them. These processes contribute to the organization's unique personality - - its culture" (p. 118). Given these considerations, the debate between culture strength and weakness constitutes merely a reification of the concept of culture. Saffold (1988) points this out when he notes that "culture can shape organizational processes, but processes also act to create and modify culture. Culture's contribution to performance is a consequence of this ever-evolving interaction" (p. 553). The concept of strong/weak cultures will be further explored below in the consideration of organization culture as reification.

Reification

Bullock, Stallybrass, and Trombley (1988) define reification as "the act of regarding an abstraction as a material thing" (p. 735). Obviously, the use of the term "culture" to describe an influence on organizational life is an abstraction. To make culture manageable culture theorists have had to decide what culture "looks like." In essence, this is very similar to the process of developing operationalizations for abstract variables in variable-analytic research. Mumby points out that reification "deals with the degree to which humanly constructed social relations and meaning formations come to be perceived as 'objective' and independent from those who created them. In this way, what is 'real' becomes fixed and immutable, i.e., 'the way things are.' " (p. 119).

The two concepts that are most commonly associated with culture are language and rituals. The two *functions* these concepts are believed to

perform are the perpetuation of corporate ideology and the constraint of organizational behavior. I will discuss each of these in order.

Reification through Language

Language reifies organizational happenings because it constructs meaning between organizational members. Evered (1983) points out that "words are markers of the class/caste/status/role of the members of the group. Perhaps more than anything else, it is this particularization of group language that differentiates and structures a social system" (p. 141). Meaning is also reified through the *context* of the language used to describe organizational happening. Evered notes that "organizational events and actions have no meaning until we learn the *language* of the particular organization that provides the context for meaning" (p. 125). By selecting or valuing certain types of linguistic devices (i.e. metaphors, stories, rumors), organizational members construct their worlds inside organizations. As a corollary, the functions of language may have variable meaning in the organization. Stohl (1986) discusses this phenomenon in analyzing "meaningful messages." She writes, "memorable messages are heuristic devices people use for understanding and behaving in new situations. They may be significant symbols of the acculturation/communication process in organizations" (p. 233). While Stohl focuses on new organizational members, it is clear that "memorable messages" have salience for anyone who hears them.

Another aspect of reification through language is the impact of "deep structure" on organizational reality. Reilly and DiAngelo (1990) write "The

organization has as deep structure of meaning which contains a cognitive map involving symbols, meanings, myths, and ideologies. These are the elements which tell people what is important, who is important, and therefore the 'significance' of the communication element" (p. 129).

Language in the organizational realm often refers to implicit meanings buried in the "deep structure" (Geertz, 1973) of the organization. Schein (1984) points out that organizational culture has, at base, a set of assumptions about the nature of reality (p. 14). The implicit meaning(s) of organizational assumptions is (are) buried in the deep structure of organizational life.

Language assists members in constructing meanings and sharing ideas about an organization's deep structure.

Reification through Ritual/Rites/Ceremonies

Even though language mediates in the construction of reality, it is often "wrapped" in formalized procedures. These procedures are operationalized in the form of rituals, rites, and ceremonies. Pettigrew notes that a ritual "may provide a shared experience of belonging and express and reinforce what is valued" (p. 576). By engaging in prescribed and "sanctioned" actions, members often reinforce organizational attitudes about the nature of life and characteristics that are deemed important in the culture itself. A ritual is a shared, public process, wherein organizational members behave according to a strict set of guidelines (i.e. they "enact" [Weick, 1979] a ritual). Rituals help bond organizational members because of their shared experience. The difference between a ritual and a rite is difficult to describe, but generally,

a rite is more involved, lengthier, and more complex. Beyer and Trice (1987) give insight into this distinction, writing:

. . . in performing the activities of a rite, people generally use other cultural forms - - certain customary language, gestures, ritualized behaviors, artifacts, settings, and other symbols - - to heighten the expression of shared understandings appropriate to the occasion. These shared understanding are also frequently conveyed through myths, sagas, legends, or other stories associated with the occasion. Thus rites provide a richer outcropping of cultural understanding than do single cultural forms (p. 37).

Gagliardi (1990) points out the impact of ritual on organizational "meaning" writing ". . . it is probable that the bolder the convictions of an organization - - and, in general of a social group - - the more it will be concerned to reify them, to immortalize them in lasting things, passing them on to succeeding corporate generation through the language of the senses" (p. 25). This viewpoint is fairly descriptive of the conception of symbolic behaviors (i.e. rituals, rites, and ceremonies). The distinction between rituals and rites, and ceremonies is essentially buried in their connotation(s) to organizational members. Essentially, ceremonies are celebratory in nature, and they are frequently used to note an important event for an organization or its members. However, ceremonies do not usually have sacred or "special" undertones to them. An example might clarify the distinction. When a graduate student attends his or her graduation exercises, there are certain

ritualistic procedures (in fact, the words of the rite are specific ". . . according to the ancient forms and practices. . . ."). These procedures are followed according to a strictly determined pattern. After the graduation exercises, however, the graduate student may find him/herself dragged off to the local watering hole where friends and family are treated to a round of drinks by the newly minted graduate. This *ceremony* is practiced all over, but it is usually quite flexible. However, the rite of graduation is traditional, inflexible, and prescribed. Dandridge, Mitroff, and Joyce (1980) point out that "an important property of a myth, a ritual, or other symbol. . . is its consensual function. This function directs individual action in collective endeavors toward common goals" (p. 78). The practices engaged in by organizational (i.e. *cultural*) members help increase consensus and agreement between them. They also reinforce deep structures pertaining to the meaning of symbols in the organizational realm.

Smircich (1983a) points out that ". . . such symbolic processes as organizational rituals, organizational slogans, vocabulary, and presidential style contribute to, and are part of, the development of shared meanings which give form and coherence to the experience of organizational members" (p. 55). Members of organizations shape reality by the meanings they impute to it, but prescribed rituals have an influence on the meanings imputed to them.

Reification and Ideology

One of the objectives of organizational leaders is to maintain control over happenings in the organization. As Mumby (1987) notes, one of the

ways of doing this is by "rationalizing" organizational behavior. The function of these rationalizations is to increase predictability, consistency, and (theoretically) objectivity. He writes, "in the context of organizations, power is most successfully exercised by those who can structure their interests into the organizational framework itself. Ideology therefore acts to support these interests by continually reproducing the structure of social practices that best serves them" (p. 119). Ideology is the fundamental beliefs of those in the organization who have the most power, and are therefore most able to influence organizational actions. Abravanel (1983) notes that "Organizational ideology can be defined as a set of fundamental ideas and operative consequences linked together into a dominant belief system often producing contradictions but serving to define and maintain the organization" (p. 274). This is supported by Brown (1978) who writes "in the social process of symbolic abstraction inheres the power of ideology to reify interpersonal roles, status, and hierarchy; participants in an ideology negotiate and ratify such relationships" (p. 124). By making organizational values concrete, leaders can (presumably) more likely predict the outcomes. This notion is also supported by Abravanel (1983) who points out that "concrete versions of organizational life demand commitment, preference, and decisions that leave signs and traces (outcomes), which together constitute the organization. The organization can be viewed as a regenerative residue that is a result of a dialectical process requiring legitimation and justification" (p. 285). By legitimating (sanctioning) and justifying (rationalizing) organizational

behaviors or expressions, leaders exert tremendous influence on the development of organizational culture. Martin and Powers (1983) argue that ". . . organizational stories legitimate the power relations within the organization; they rationalize existing practices, traditions, and rituals, and they articulate through exemplars the philosophy of management and the policies which make the organization distinctive" (p. 97). However, organizational control does not necessarily mean that a strong culture will be developed. As the above discussion pointed out, strength of culture is not necessarily related to its influence over organizational life.

Reification and Control (strong cultures)

Mumby (1987) discusses the impact of reification on organizational behavior, particularly with respect to hierarchy. He points out that:

the issue of decision-making is normally understood to be contingent on organizational hierarchy (the more important a decision the higher the level at which it will be made). The concept of hierarchy, however, is an inherently political construct which gives power to a small percentage of organization members. Organizational culture can reify hierarchy, making it appear as a tangible, physically existing structure characterized by the formal organizational plan, office size, number of secretaries, thickness of carpet, and so on (p. 119).

One problem in defining organizational culture, either for oneself or for others, is the fact that organizational reality is constantly being reshaped according to circumstances, new staffmembers, changes in the competitive

environment, and other factors (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Eisenberg and Goodall, 1992; Peters and Waterman, 1982). Strong culture is a term that was used by Deal and Kennedy (1982) to describe the importance and value of culture. According to them, strong cultures are beneficial because they involve all the members of the culture, and the culture then supports and sustains members. However, this perspective is not shared. Wilkins (1984) states that "strong company cultures not only motivate coordinated action in service of particular values, they may also resist management efforts to redirect the company in alternative strategic directions" (p. 41). Weick (1985) agrees noting "strong cultures are tenacious cultures. Because a tenacious culture can be a rigid culture that is slow to detect changes in opportunities and slow to change once opportunities are sensed, strong cultures can be backward, conservative instruments of adaptation" (p. 385). The variety of opinions on strong culture indicates that the heuristic value of this term is ambiguous at best. What constitutes a strong culture as opposed to a weak one is not clearly delineated in the literature. If "strong culture" is used as a term that expresses management control over organizational reality, its value is suspect. If "weak culture" represents management's opinion of its ability to shape organizational reality, it may be that it is more representative of organizational members' conceptions of their reality, which may or may not "track" with management's. In any event, the strong/weak culture controversy will not be resolved in this thesis.

Summary

Organizational culture may be considered an expression of organizational members' views of organizational reality at any given moment in time. Organizational researchers have looked at the concept of culture from many different points of view, but there seem to be some broad categories into which the concept of organizational culture fits; these are meaning, structure, language, stability/instability, and reification. As organizational members negotiate their way through organizational life, they attempt to create a "picture" for themselves of what the organization means, what it does, and what it stands for. These pictures are represented symbolically, are subject to change, and are difficult to observe directly. Since members continuously renegotiate their individual views of organizational reality, it is liable to be re-created at any time, and on any level.

Organizational culture is a valuable heuristic device because it allows researchers to try to conceptualize "organization" as it is understood in the organizational setting. As a research tool, it is an important addition to the "kit" of methods researchers use to understand organizations, their members, and their various realities. Because culture is a concept borrowed from sociology and anthropology, it requires researchers to think about it in different terms than they would as communication or management researchers. The use of this tool may lead to new answers about the nature of people, organizations, management practices, and their interrelationships.

CHAPTER 4

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS

Every discipline has its foundational literature, and culture is no different. The foundational literature in organizational culture is important for three reasons: (1) It has high heuristic value; (2) it explains varying perspectives of culture in a relatively unambiguous manner; and (3) it "grounds" the concept of organizational literature in a clear manner. Because the foundations of organizational culture are so varied and cut across so many disciplines, the literature listed here represents work that seems to have the greatest value for individuals with an interest in finding out more about organizational culture. Research is discussed chronologically. Where necessary, explanations of the content of the research are made.

Papers

One of the first papers on organizational culture written was Pettigrew, 1979. He approached organizational culture research as a "study of a set of social dramas" (p. 570). Pettigrew also recommended studying symbol, language, ideology, belief, ritual, and myth (p. 574) to gain an understanding of culture in organizations.

The next significant work was Morgan (1980). He advanced the idea of studying organizations from a radical-humanist perspective. In this perspective, reality is a process which "may be influenced by psychic and social processes which channel, constrain, and control the minds of human beings. . . ." (p. 609). Additionally, he discussed the nature and importance of metaphors and their use by humans to solve problems.

One of the most valuable papers for a person interested in organizational culture is Putnam, 1982. In this paper, Putnam discusses the four basic paradigms in organizational communication research; functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist, and radical structuralist. Each of these requires a different "outlook" in terms of the researcher's approach to research. It gives a thorough grounding in organizational thought and extends some of the views expressed by Morgan (1982).

Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo gave a new framework for organizational analysis on two levels - - culture as structure and culture as process. They also suggested the use of multi-methods in organizational research (specifically observation and interview), and reinforced the importance of interpretive research.

A critical approach to organizational communication was suggested by Deetz (1982). He suggested that research would be enhanced if organizations and the actions that occurred in them were treated and interpreted as "texts." He also covered some elements of organizational research that are practically *de rigeur* today: meaning, objectivity, and coherence. In addition, he

discussed the utility of research reports and gave suggestions about improving them.

The next significant foundational reading is Smircich, 1985. Smircich traces the development of organizational culture in organizational research as both a variable and a metaphor. She suggested that culture could be considered in a variety of ways, and that each perspective had problems and advantages. In particular, this paper glosses substantial foundational literature that has led to the development of the concept of organizational culture. Finally, Smircich makes an important point: "it is difficult to engage in contextual, reflexive management and research, with the requirement of examination and critique of one's own assumptions and values" (p. 355). This statement points out the necessity of maintaining a cautious outlook on any particular analytic scheme.

A theoretically-based approach to organization was provided by Astley and Van de Ven (1983). This paper discussed the "theoretical pluralism" in organizational literature (p. 245), and suggested four different views of organization and management: natural selection, collective-action, system-structural, and strategic choice. Astley and Van de Ven advanced the view that organization theory both reflects and produces organizational reality (p. 269), and suggested that organizational research concentrate on finding consistencies in research, not just theoretical clashes.

Schall (1983) took a communication-rules approach to culture. She conceptualized culture as a rule-based phenomenon (p. 558), and described how that perspective gave insight into commonalities between conceptions of

culture. The rules approach used gave statistically valid results. As a consequence, Schall suggested that its value in organizational culture research should be considered.

A critical approach to the organizational culture paradigm was outlined by Smircich (1983). She pointed out that the term "culture" was "powerfully evocative" but that it wasn't an "intact structural package ready to serve as a paradigmatic foundation on which to build the analysis of organizations" (p. 57). She also discussed the importance of the "culture" paradigm to teachers, researchers, and organization members. As Smircich indicates, "There are no authoritative conclusions, just the confrontation of our multiple interpretations" (p. 73).

Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) made a comparison of schools of thought in anthropology and linked them to notions of organizational culture expressed in the literature. They then tried to suggest an integrative concept of culture that cut across inconsistencies, in order to develop a theoretical framework for organizational culture. Their findings supported the notion that organizations are "sociocultural systems, with an ideational, cultural component that is presumed, postulated, to be isomorphic and consonant with their social or structural component" (p. 217). In short, they determined that organizational culture was consistent with respect to organizational constraints. This view was helpful, but not particularly insightful, as the question of "so what" was never answered.

A framework for "reading" organizational life was proposed by Strine and Pacanowsky in 1985. They suggested that the heuristic value of research

would be enhanced if a "schema" for interpretation was used in organization analysis. However, this framework was fairly specific to "written accounts" and was not explained in terms of its value for reading the "texts" of organizational reality. Nevertheless, it was valuable because it gave insight into the importance of discourse in organizational research.

An excellent description and evaluation of both the state of research and the importance of the organizational culture model was provided by Smircich and Calas (1987). Aside from a thorough explication of major themes and literature in organizational research, this paper discussed postmodern conceptions of culture and their impact on the paradigm. This paper called into question the idea that conceptualizing culture from a functional perspective was valuable.

Comparing the culture model with the idea of instrumental value, Alvesson (1989) suggested that a meta-theoretical perspective could be developed which would give researchers additional insight into organizational culture. Alvesson pointed out that the current "pragmatic view" of culture led to its "impoverization" as a concept (p. 123). He also critiqued the Western view of culture, and suggested that the "Western managerial culture" led to cultural blindness which could obscure meanings in different contexts. This essentially postmodern view of cultural analysis suggested that organizational culture research could be enhanced by de-emphasizing the Western conception of management.

One particularly important paper was written by Wert-Gray, Center, Brashers, and Meyers (1991). They traced the development of the literature in

organizational communication from 1979-1989, and analyzed trends in topic selection in that period. They found that the primary research topics during that time were: climate and culture, superior-subordinate relations and communication, and power, conflict, and politics. They also found that naturalistic and critical frameworks were less frequently used than modernistic (i.e. functionalist) frameworks, which suggests that these two frameworks could provide additional insight into organizational culture and communication.

Sackmann (1992) attempted to distinguish between organizational culture and subculture in order to determine whether a lack of homogeneity in organizational cultures was being "read" as evidence of the existence of subcultures. She found that organizational culture was not expressed consistently across functional categories. However, she was not able to confirm that the lack of homogeneity was indicative of multiple organizational subcultures in tension. Nevertheless, her analysis did point out some weaknesses in the inductive/comparative framework frequently used in organizational research. She suggested that "strong cultures" could be less consistent and homogeneous than they appear (p. 157).

The postmodern critique of organizational culture (Schultz, 1992) was important for several reasons. First, it questioned the assumption of organizational culture as patterns of meanings buried in the deep structure of organizations, and instead identified them as "hollow rituals based on the rupture between form and content" (p. 17). Second, it suggested that culture in the modernist view has usurped organizational originality. And third, it

denied that organizational cultures have the ability to regulate members' behavior. This critique of organizational culture has broad implications. If, as Schultz writes, the modernist notion of organizational culture has left "a simulated reality without original [sic]" (p. 31), conceptualizing culture may not be valuable to either organizational researchers, or organizational members.

Books

Some of the most important work in organizational culture is found in books. All of the books listed have great value for organizational researchers and should be considered foundations for any advanced study of organizational culture and communication. Here, I will list what I believe is an ideal order of study.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) wrote the first widely read book on organizational culture. Even though it was marketed as a trade book, it gives a thorough, basic understanding of organizational culture and communication, and should be read before any other book.

The next book of importance to organizational study is Pondy, Frost, Morgan, and Dandridge, (1983). *Organizational Symbolism* explored the concept of symbols as they applied to organizational life. The insights from this book had substantial impact on the development of the organizational culture metaphor.

A critical juncture was reached in 1985. Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg, and Martin published *Organizational Culture*. The papers in this book laid the groundwork for much of the research that has been generated to date. Its

importance cannot be overstated. However, another book was published the same year. Schein's (1985) *Organizational Culture and Leadership* discussed his clinical/psychological approach to understanding culture, and articulated the idea of hidden (i.e. buried) assumptions as a foundation for the development of organizational culture.

The last two books of major importance are Ott (1989) *The Organizational Culture Perspective* and Martin (1992) *Cultures in Organizations: Three Perspectives*. Both of these books outline the most recent thought in organizational culture and communication, but each has a slightly different focus. Ott divides both the research and the literature into broad general themes, which develop a generalized idea of the concept. Martin analyzes the concept in terms of three primary perspectives: integration, differentiation, and fragmentation. Each of these gives a different view of organizational culture and its relation to organizational communication.

This list is not exhaustive by any means, but it does indicate a wide variety of research approaches which can be beneficial to organizational researchers, interested students, or instructors who are looking for additional material with which to enrich their classroom work. Particularly for classroom instructors, these books will become valuable additions, especially for those instructors who teach courses on communication theory, organizational communication, management, or public relations.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Historically, the work on organizational culture was done from a structural/functionalist perspective. This perspective viewed culture as a "feature" of an organization, one which could be manipulated ("changed") by organizational leaders or others in response to their desires to maintain control. A more recent approach, one which is more heuristically appealing, is the interpretive perspective. The interpretive perspective considers organizational culture to be a social construction, created by organizational members, for the primary purpose of determining, as best they can, the realities of organizational life.

A typology of organizational culture compared three different perspectives on its importance. The idea of culture as something that organizations "have" describes culture as an attribute which can be changed, modified, moved around, whatever, in response to actions taken by organizational leaders. The concept of culture as something organizations "are" describes cultures as mini-societies in which members adapt, negotiate and renegotiate meanings between themselves, and communicate based on those meanings. Describing culture as something that organizations "do" focuses on the performative aspects of culture. When culture is "performed" it impacts both the performer and the performee. To that extent, any cultural

performance, whether written, spoken, or acted, can reinforce the values or assumptions of organizational members, as well as demonstrate the beliefs of members in the culture.

In this thesis, I have considered a number of themes that seem to pervade the literature in organizational culture. The organizational culture metaphor is concerned with meaning, structure, language, stability/instability, and reification, as they relate to organizational activity and organizational life. Meaning was shown to be the essential "link" to the identification (and creation) of organizational culture. All other themes impact on how meaning is made, transmitted, shared, and changed.

Structure has an impact on culture because it defines how meaning is shared. The behavioral carriers of culture (rituals, routines) were shown to be necessary for organizational members to engage in. Cognitive structures represent the essential elements that give rise to organizational culture, by providing a foundation ("anchor") from which culture develops. An evaluation of the influence of rules and the rules-based approach to culture demonstrated that rules have some ability to transmit meaning, and that, as rules transmit meaning, they also influence cognitive and behavioral factors that affect the development of culture.

The importance of language to culture can not be overstated. Language is symbolic representation of meaning through utterances. As cultural members learn what meanings to impute to various utterances, they also learn to filter out other meanings. The symbolic effect of language also influences the representation of meaning to organizational members. As

new members join the organization, they can have an effect on the representation of meaning to existing members, to the extent that they may influence renegotiation of the meaning(s) imputed to certain linguistic constructions.

Because of the constant renegotiation of meaning, culture is sometimes considered a process (i.e. "enculturation" of organizational members) or a product (i.e. an attribute of the organization, what the organization "is"). The distinction between these isn't really clear, but, when culture is considered a process, members are seen to be "blank slates" onto which culture can be written. If culture is seen as a product, it is believed to be the natural result of interaction between cultural members. When the meaning of things in the organization is believed to be consistent between organizational members, the culture is sometimes said to be "strong." However, a strong culture may be one which resists attempts by organization members to renegotiate cultural facts, which can reduce organizational effectiveness. Sometimes, there is little agreement between cultural members, or a number of interpretations of meaning for various things in the organization. This is considered a "weak" culture, but there is little evidence to support the notion that a "weak" culture is necessarily a bad one.

The final theme, reification, indicates the tendency of organizational leaders and others with influence to consider the abstraction "culture" to be an "objective" fact. Reification can be likened to the idea of creating operationalizations for abstract concepts. Two concepts that are commonly

associated with culture are language and rituals. They function to perpetuate corporate ideology and constrain organizational behavior.

A section on foundational readings was included for two reasons; (1) to acquaint interested people with important work which has driven organizational research for the past decade, in order to increase their familiarity with the concept of organizational culture, and (2) to provide an overview of the material which should be considered in courses on organizational culture. The foundational readings were analyzed for their content, methodological approaches, and salience for organizational researchers and students.

Because organizational culture is often poorly understood by students, teaching plans were developed to aid in the development of courses dealing with organizational culture. Appendix B is a teaching plan and course outline for an undergraduate course on organizational culture that should work for a standard semester-long class. The concern for an undergraduate class is that students be introduced to the term in a way that is relatively non-threatening, and with foundational literature that is engaging, understandable, and assimilable with other literature. By the end of this course, an undergraduate student should have a pretty clear picture of the major themes and approaches in organizational culture. This course will also prepare students from dissimilar backgrounds for additional work in organizational theory, organizational consulting or advising, and public relations and marketing courses. The project on organizational culture is meant to supplement in-class discussion and the readings by tying together

various themes in organizational culture, and may be used in any management, communication, or public relations environment. Additionally, the project can be used to supplement internship reports and independent study requirements. Finally, this course will provide excellent preparation for graduate work in organizational communication, communication theory, organizational culture, or advanced management.

Appendix C is a teaching plan and course outline for an introductory graduate level course on organizational culture. The books and readings selected give a broad overview of current thinking on organizational culture on an advanced level. The approach in the course is to present different viewpoints of organizational culture, as well as a variety of perspectives taken by organizational researchers. Students in this course will be well prepared to do advanced research in organizational communication, management, and public relations, as well as theoretical work in organizational culture and transformation. This course is structured to provide insight on various research methodologies, as well as an introduction to consulting practice. The project for this course is envisioned as a "capstone" to the theoretical background provided in the reading. Students should be expected to do primary research in an organizational environment, either on the program development or consulting level. At the end of this course, students should have substantial knowledge and experience in both theoretical and methodological approaches to organizational study, and will be prepared for additional work in organizational theory, communication, and practice.

The organizational culture perspective is a powerful tool for organizational researchers and academics. It points out the non-rational, emotional, expressive nature of organizational life. It encourages us to think of organizations as social groups who join together in order to accomplish certain goals. It allows us to investigate organizations and what happens in them on more than one level. It shows us what's behind the "numbers" that are usually used to describe organizations, and gives new insights into ways of improving effectiveness, efficiency, and profitability. It is integrative and instructive, and is a valuable addition to the traditional "toolkit" that we use when we look at an organization.

Thinking about organizations as cultures asks us to "recast" the way we view them. Instead of faceless constructions of brick and mortar, cold and unfeeling, the culture metaphor asks us to look at them another way: as living breathing entities, filled with the excitement, drama, and challenges of everyday life.

APPENDIX A
Foundational Readings-Papers

<u>Author</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Title of Paper</u>	<u>Comments and Views</u>
Aiex	1988	Communicating within organizational cultures	Literature Review Communication/culture
Allaire and Firsirotu	1984	Theories of organizational culture	Typology of thought in organizational culture.
Alvesson	1989	The culture perspective on organizations: Instrumental values and organizational culture	Meta-theoretical view of culture. Critique of pragmatic perspective.
Astley and Van de Ven	1983	Central perspectives and debates in organizational theory	Glosses on structure, behavior, change, roles.
Brown and McMillan	1991	Culture as text: The development of an organizational narrative	Organizations as "texts" which can be "read" for meaning.

Deetz	1982	Critical interpretive research in organizational communication	Critical evaluation of organizational research.
Diamond	1991	Dimensions of organizational culture and beyond	Leadership and group dynamics/identity.
Donaldson	1992	The Weick Stuff: Managing beyond games	Critique of functionalism and anti-positivism.
Golden	1992	The individual and organizational culture: Strategies for action in highly ordered contexts	Describes differences between cultural impacts on individual and collective action.
Moran and Volkwein	1992	The cultural approach to the formation of organizational climate	Distinguishes between culture and climate.
Morgan	1980	Paradigms, metaphors, and puzzle solving in organization theory	Defines radical-humanist critique and discusses metaphor.

O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell	1991	People and organizational culture: A profile comparison approach to assessing person-organization fit	Functional analysis of culture and satisfaction. Claims there must be a fit between person and job
Ortner	1973	On key symbols	Defines key symbols.
Pacanowsky and O'Donnell -Trujillo	1982	Communication and organizational cultures	Describes interpretive approach to culture.
Pettigrew	1979	On studying organizational cultures	Describes basic process of organizational analysis.
Putnam	1982	Paradigms for organizational communication research: An overview and synthesis.	Describes functionalist, interpretive, and radical paradigms.
Sackmann	1992	Culture and subcultures: An analysis of organizational knowledge	Critical evaluation of culture/subculture paradox.

Saffold	1988	Culture traits, strength, and organizational performance: Moving beyond "strong" culture	Describes powerful role of culture and links it to increased levels of performance.
Sanzgiri and Gottlieb	1992	Philosophic and pragmatic influences on the practice of organizational development	Historical, theoretical impacts on organization development.
Schein	1990	Organizational culture	Review article.
Schall	1983	A communication-rules approach to organizational culture	Talks about culture as mediated by rules.
Shockley-Zalabak and Morley	1989	Adhering to organizational culture	Relationship between values, culture, behavior and results.
Smircich	1983	Concepts of culture and organizational analysis	Discusses themes in culture analysis.

Smircich and Calas	1987	Organizational culture: A critical assessment	Evaluates impact of culture on thinking
Strine and Pacanowsky	1985	How to read interpretive accounts of organizational life: Narrative bases of textual authority	Good background on organizations and their happenings as "text."
Schultz	1992	Postmodern pictures of culture	Critical evaluation
Wert-Gray, Center, Brashers, and Meyers	1991	Research topics and method- ological orientations in organizational communi- cation: A decade in review	Excellent review of literature and research orientations in culture/ communication research

Figure 1. Foundational Readings-Papers

Foundational Readings-Books

<u>Author</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Title of Book</u>	<u>Comments and Views</u>
Berger and Luckmann	1966	The social construction of reality	Talks about meaning, reality, the myth of objectivity.
Deal and Kennedy	1982	Corporate cultures	Excellent basic reference on corporate culture.
Gagliardi	1992	Symbols & artifacts	Discusses artifacts and symbols in organizational life
Lakoff and Johnson	1980	Metaphors we live by	Meanings of metaphors.
Martin	1992	Cultures in Organizations: Three perspectives	Culture from three points of view: integration, differentiation, and fragmentation

Morgan	1986	Images of organization	Thorough analysis of organizational metaphors
Ott	1989	The organizational culture perspective	Excellent evaluation of the state of culture
Putnam and Pacanowsky	1983	Communication and organizations: An interpretive approach	Discusses the interpretive paradigm and its influence on research

Figure 2. Foundational Readings-Books

APPENDIX B
Teaching Plan and Course Outline
Undergraduate Section

Recommended prerequisites: Upper Division Management Course, Organizational Behavior, or Organizational Theory, or Communication Theory, or any of these as a co-requisite.

Course Objectives: At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Give a general definition of organizational culture
2. Identify the differences between the structural/functional and interpretive paradigms in organizational culture.
3. Describe the importance of metaphor in the development of organizational cultures.
4. Describe the differences between language, symbol, and performance, as they relate to organizational culture.
5. Discuss the differences between the organizational culture perspective and other theoretical approaches.

Project: The final project for this course is to do a cultural analysis on any organization. Describe the culture, the assumptions, and the paradigms used.

Syllabus

WEEK	READING	DISCUSSION
1	Pettigrew, 1979	Culture Definition
2	Morgan, 1980	Paradigms/metaphor
3	Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983	Culture/Performance
4	Putnam, 1982	Paradigms in Research
5	Deetz, 1982	Critical Review
6	Astley and Van de Ven, 1982	Structural/Functionalism
7	Schall, 1983	Rules-based approach
8	Smircich, 1983	Themes in culture
9	Allaire and Firsirotu, 1984	Typology of thought in Culture/communication
9	Strine and Pacanowsky, 1985	Organizations as "texts"
10	Smircich and Calas, 1987	Why so many models of culture
11	Alvesson, 1989	Values as culture "containers"
12	Schein, 1990	Review clinical methods
13	Wert-Gray, et al., 1991	Review research methods

14	Moran and Volkwein, 1992	Climate vs. culture
15	Sackmann, 1992	Comparison of thought
16	Schultz, 1992	Postmodern critique
	Project Due	Personal Definition
Finals	Final Exam	

Figure 3. Undergraduate Syllabus

APPENDIX C
Teaching Plan and Course Outline
Graduate Section

Recommended prerequisites: Graduate course in Management, Organizational Behavior, or Organizational Theory, or Communication Theory, or any of these as a co-requisite.

Course Objectives: At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Give a general definition of organizational culture
2. Identify the differences between the structural/functional and interpretive paradigms in organizational culture.
3. Describe the importance of metaphor in the development of organizational cultures.
4. Describe the differences between language, symbol, and performance, as they relate to organizational culture.
5. Discuss the differences between the organizational culture perspective and other theoretical approaches.

Project: The final project for this course is to do a cultural analysis of any organization, and then to report your analysis to the class. Describe the

culture, the assumptions, and the paradigms used. You will be expected to be familiar with the material in the text as well as assigned readings.

Syllabus

WEEK	READING	DISCUSSION
1	Pettigrew, 1979	Culture Definition
2	Morgan, 1980	Paradigms/metaphor
2	Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983	Culture/Performance
2	Putnam, 1982	Paradigms in Research
3	Deetz, 1982	Critical Review
3	Astley and Van de Ven, 1982	Structural/Functionalism
3	Schall, 1983	Rules-based approach
4	Smircich, 1983	Themes in culture
4	Allaire and Firsirotu, 1984	Typology of thought in Culture/communication
5	Strine and Pacanowsky, 1985	Organizations as "texts"
5	Smircich and Calas, 1987	Why so many models of culture
6	Alvesson, 1989	Values as culture "containers"
6	Schein, 1990	Review clinical methods
7	Wert-Gray, et al., 1991	Review research methods

7	Moran and Volkwein, 1992	Climate vs. culture
8	Sackmann, 1992	Comparison of thought
8	Schultz, 1992	Postmodern critique
9	Review	Review for exam
10	Ott Text	Chapters 1, 2, 3
11	Ott Text	Chapters 4, 5, 6
12	Ott Text	Chapter 7 and Review
13	Gagliardi Text	Introduction, Part 1
14	Morgan Text	Chapters 1, 5, 11
15	Project Due	
16	Final Exam	

Figure 4. Graduate Syllabus

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