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The organization in front of the text : a critical hermeneutic inquiry in employee policy appropriation

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The Organization in Front of the Text: A Critical Hermeneutic Inquiry in Employee Policy Appropriation

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education

Department of Organization and Leadership

In Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Education

By

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This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER I: STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH ISSUE

<u>Introduction</u>

Policies come in many designs and formats, but they remain a significant symbolic device in the realm of organizational communication. This study endeavors to reveal the symbolic and linguistic significance of employee-related policy as organizational texts. In doing so, new understandings may inform individuals as they interpret their positions in front of a text and within their organizations.

The art of policy creation is the topic of many books, seminars, and consulting modules for good reason; it rises to the seemingly impossible challenge of gently leading while stirring the spirits of organization's members. This task is confounded by the nature of a collective identity which constitutes the organization through the individual beliefs, actions and narratives of its members. The policy is thus a cultural artifact that, if appropriated by its referents, can inspire a collective identity rooted in discourse; existent in the actions of its individual members.

The exploration of policies as texts will serve as a point of departure from which themes of identity, action, and possibilities emerge as do the relationships that collectively constitute organization. This inquiry approaches employee calls-to-action (also known as codes of conduct) to explore how they are interpreted, appropriated, and embraced as mediums for organizational action. Three privately held service-oriented organizations of different ages provide the contexts for this study. The industries to which these organizations belong is discussed on a descriptive level and more closely analyzed, however their differences in purpose did not emerge as meaningful influences on the issue of employee action policy. I found that the interpretive nature of being is more universally

shared than the particulars of industry, but I moved forward with openness to what would arise. The analysis discloses the discursive backdrops, in front of which actors make meaning and create community.

Several research questions guided the exploration and sought to inspire discourse-driven understandings of identity and meaning in professional contexts. Conversation partners were asked to share their understandings of identity, work, and work-related texts such as their respective vocational policy statements. The research questions were offered as starting points from which conversations may begin, and are grouped into porous categories of narrative identity, temporality, and imagination.

In Chapter II, the aforementioned categories are introduced and contextualized through a review of relevant literature. This review includes interdisciplinary theories and philosophies of text, time, and identity that explain and develop the critical hermeneutic lens through which the data itself was interpreted. In Chapter III, the process of participative hermeneutic inquiry is discussed in light of the topic at hand. This discussion includes a detailed explanation of the data collection process which relied primarily on research conversations with individuals from three different organizations. Loosely guided by the research questions, these conversations give rise to new understandings or approaches to texts, identity, and time in organizational space. From these categories, three questions guided my inquiry. In no particular order, they are: Can a text such as an employee call-to-action policy inspire individuals within an organization to move toward new possibilities in light of their pasts? How will an interpretive approach to the text within an organization change the worlds of its members? How might those within an organization create texts in more meaningful ways?

Background and Statement of the Issue

Most writers are trained to capture their audiences' attention and appropriately, a good story is one that sustains the readers' interest. A great story, however, is harder to come by because it takes the reader though an unforeseen process of recognition that changes the worlds of those exposed to it. Most often, these will, even in the act of describing the unfamiliar, invoke one's own experiences, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. Though meaning exists only in the event of interpretation, there is much consideration given to the act of fixating one's ideas in text. The writer carefully crafts each statement in an attempt to liberate meaning from obscurity and create a backdrop, in front of which a story can unfold. To many organizations, such texts exist in the form of policy manuals.

The purpose of an organizational policy is to inspire the actions of the people to whom it is written, but often, this is not the case. Policy manuals commonly exist as bureaucratic reference texts that are used in the event of a disagreement or of organizational uncertainty. However, a text has the capacity to create a world in which actors may engender the principles and promises of their organizations as they appropriate meaning and reconfigure their positions. Individuals within an organization must first identify their positions before they can imagine new directions, and this forward leap requires a careful look backward.

Every organization is rooted in its own shared history. For some, this includes a legacy of events and texts. For others, there may exist little or seemingly no shared historically embedded organizational experience. Still, each member contributes to the configuration of the collective as they act from their own historical circumstances.

Fixed in text, a policy may provide an occasion for storytelling, and these narratives offer the most meaningful conversations about the relationships that constitute an organization. People with an orientation toward understanding will work together in discourse and recognize the potential of a text as an event from which individuals may figure and refigure their relationships. Kikoski and Kikoski (2003: 51) posit that meaningful communication "begins with daily conversations that occur between individuals or among groups" and that they provide "the steadily unfolding conditions, practices, and techniques by which such a discourse can create new perspectives with new possibilities." A discourse, invited by interpretations of policies, will offer opportunities for shared understandings that may change those policies and the people that create them.

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<u>Significance</u>

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By analyzing organizational policies as texts, I explored the particulars and universals in fixation and interpretations of each. In doing so, I moved toward a better understanding of how these texts (employee policies) are appropriated by the people who read them. This process uncovered some evocative stories about how people identify themselves and each other in work communities and create meaningful spaces. Policies and their resulting discourses serve to influence much more than productivity. An appreciation for the language of policy will aid members of their organizations to work together toward a shared narrative of mutuality.

The unspoken but vital practices that yield the most profound interpersonal work relationships are often revealed through narratives. As such narratives are collected, they may inform policies that welcome individuals to inhabit their imagined organizations.

<u>Summary</u>

This study explores the organizational landscape through individual narratives and reveals the horizons of its members as they reflect upon their organization's policies regarding employee action. This practice creates events that reveal themes of identity, mimesis, language, meaning, and action, as they inspire those within their organizations to explore the worlds they inhabit together. In addition to encouraging a meaningful discourse, questions designed to address the significance of employee service policies as texts bring into view the possibilities for action and meaningful relationships. The categories of narrative identity, mimesis, and imagination guide the inquiry and are discussed, along with interpretations of text and organization, in the literature review. The following Chapters offer a review of relevant literature a narrative of the research process and findings that resulted from the inquiry.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE
Introduction

This study is based on a critical hermeneutic orientation and the review of literature introduces the areas of the interpretive theory related to the topic at hand. The first section addresses the organization as text. Next, a discussion of narrative identity, marked by themes of individual and collective stories is offered. Mimesis, which recognizes the centrality of one's historical position follows, as it will serve as a foundational medium for analysis. A review of relevant organizational policy theories follows and lastly, the matter of imagination is uncovered in its relation to mimesis, identity, and the movement toward real world action. Though intimately entwined, the research categories each bring to light very unique considerations in the movement toward understanding organizational policy.

The Text at Work

To view the organization as a text reveals its existence as an interpretive event rather than a pre-established entity. Ricoeur (1981: 145) explains that a text may be defined as "any discourse fixed by writing." This definition underscores the ubiquity of texts in daily life as much of the human experience is recorded in both formal and informal contexts. Books, letters, laws, journals and transcriptions are just some examples, as they preserve the statements, or the intended statements of their creators. However the text, in the world of critical hermeneutics is much more than a written record of discourse or thought, but it is "the level at which structural explanation and hermeneutic understanding confront one another" (Ricoeur 1981: 35). Texts provide reference points that can be revisited and reinterpreted as time passes. These records remind actors of past events which are then reconsidered through the lenses of their present positions.

A text imparts a record of fixed language that through the act of interpretation helps people make sense of their worlds. Interpretations, which are culturally bound, are also subject to one's historical situation. The text then represents a particular point in time, but the interpretation is reflective of one's current position. Therefore, new meanings emerge as a consequence of historical distance. Ricoeur (1981: 189; 1983: 67) regards the passing of time as an inevitable and in fact, invaluable circumstance of being in a world of texts. He explains that the distance between the worlds of fiction, history, reader, author, time, and text allow for the appropriation of meaning through interpretation.

The appropriation of a text is "the process by which the revelation of new modes of being…gives the subject new capacities for knowing himself" (Ricoeur 1981: 192). The interpretation of texts is a process of understanding one's self in relationship to written discourse, which is an event marked by personal reference and not the acceptance of a prescribed meaning.

An organization may be described as a collection of texts. Strip away the office, or campus site, the furniture that "creates" the departments, and the technology that connects them, and the organization is naked, existing as a group of people and the texts they use to document their work. There exists no singular state of stability organization, but a collective movement toward its next narrative. "Organization then is continuously emergent, constituting, produced and consumed by subjects who, like organizations, are themselves fields of the trace, sites of intertextuality" (Linstead 1993: 60). The matter of the text, therefore, cannot be reduced to a collection of documents because these writings constitute and configure the organization itself. "Once formalized, texts enable and constrain the material practices and lived experiences of organizational actors. When

organizations are viewed as entangled textualities, the analytic task shifts from the study of organizational culture to the study of cultural organization" (Taylor 2003: 60). It is not necessarily the texts that are of greatest importance, but the interpretations that they inspire. "What the text does not grasp are the left-outs and the left-overs as well as the texts in between the lines" (Harju 2003: 169). All these leftovers stand to represent perhaps the greatest organizational commodity: the refiguration and fulfillment of its promises. The complicated web of stories told and retold offer an ever-changing but earnest account as one explores the relationships that are often mistakenly reduced to a singular entity.

The text, although remarkable in its ability to provide records of reference, inspires an interpretation more powerful than the fixation itself, and it does so through a series of discursive events. "Organization, then is not the imposition on a text of some preconceived idea from outside, but a willingness to enter into the space of the text and be open to its metaphoric possibilities, so that in turn, it enters and organizes us" (Lennie 2004: 49). A shared space and willingness to exchange stories sparks the discourses that move members toward one another as they dwell in community. However, it is important to recognize the influence of language as it contributes and sometimes controls the discourses within the organization.

<div align="center">**<u>Language</u>**</div>

Heidegger (1962: 21) refers to language as the "house of being," and in doing so, demonstrates that language not only creates one's world, but also creates one's identity. Therefore, the language of policy is much more than a matter or style or clarity. "Particular discourses (and their combinations) are 'centripetal' in reproducing the hegemonic power-

relations and subjectivities mediating the organization and environment" (Taylor 2003:

60). Based on Linstead's position (1993: 58) the difference between a call to service or

action and an employee code of conduct can prove more influential than one may care to

believe:

> Organizations, as texts, are therefore partially constitutive of the subjectivity of
> those who are involved in their production. Similarly, they seek to constitute the
> subjectivity of this readership, their style, strategy, and context 'interpellating'
> them, inviting participation in a certain way.

The text, written as an event in the history of an organization, is more than a

collection of papers. In many cases, the text has the capacity to change the world of its

readers through interpretation and the resulting discourse. It seems then, that one must use

dialogue as a means of producing meaningful policy. Luks (1999: 706) asserts that "if we

want to contribute to the theory and practice of sustainable development, we must engage

in the embattled field of language. Theory, policy, and language are closely intertwined."

Policy, however, is most often presented to employees as a dogmatic set of guidelines

meant to explain their responsibilities.

It seems appropriate to discuss Ricoeur's position regarding the relationship

between explanation and understanding as the two are sometimes mistakenly confused by

policy makers. These concepts cover a great deal of territory, as they each may be applied

to discussions of text, unfixed narrative, structural, epistemological, personal or collective

orientations toward understanding. Understanding is not necessarily dependent upon or

even related to explanation. Ricoeur (1981: 152) notes that we can approach a text with

the assumption that it holds some sort of objective, or at least intended logical path through

which understanding may be achieved. Just as historical accounts often offer voiceless

assertions of particular events, policies share a similar structure, limiting the readers'

imagination and agency to configure the narrative. "[Emplotment] is what brings about the transition between narrating and explaining" (Ricoeur 1984: 168). Understanding is a much more personal and vigorous endeavor in which one considers a narrative through an experiential and often non-linear process of inquiry which may at some point integrate ideas into one's own language, and perspective. However, explanation emplots a world that is much more prescriptive than descriptive; it does not invite new narratives, or lend itself to reconfiguration. "Effacement of the author is one rhetorical technique among others; it belongs to the panoply of disguises and masks the real author uses to transform himself or herself into the implied author" (Ricoeur 1988: 161). This assumption is complimented by the reflexive author, but dwindles in the removed voice of a corporate entity. Ricoeur recognizes that poetic works contribute to a culture, making poetic voice an essential element of cultural creation (1983: 50-51). Voice, then may be regarded as an important aspect of policy creation and appropriation.

Voice is a metaphor for the challenge of narrative structure, which "…covers a larger terrain than what 'narrativist' authors usually allow to it, while the notion of a plot receives from its opposition to story and argument an uncommon precision" (Ricoeur 1983: 168). The emplotment of policy tells a story, however, it leaves little room for interpretation and understanding. Although, if taken for its ability to guide and inability to predict, a policy may be written in such a way that it frees its referents rather than confines them. However, policy is most often written using what Ricoeur (1983: 183) calls "singular causal imputation." "This kind of logic consists essentially of the constructing by our imagination of a different course of events, then of weighing the probable consequences of this unreal course of events, and, finally, in comparing these

consequences with real course of events" (Ricoeur 1983: 183). This practice often falls

short of an imaginative free-for-all and the result produces specific guides for behavior

based on mundane activities of everyday work.

It is through this dialogue that we allow for the process of policy-making and the

changing nature of social wisdom, or phronesis. The field of language is best recorded in

text as "writing preserves discourse and makes it an archive available for individual and

collective memory" (Ricoeur 1981: 147). Narratives, both individual and collective, bring

the organization from entity to identity.

Narrative Identity

As people tell stories about themselves, the accounts are often regarded as

descriptions of an identity that already exists. However, identity is a kind of conceptual

fallout resulting from the exchange and social recognition of one's narratives. Heidegger

(1971: 7) refers to this as "Dasein," or one's "Being-in-the-world." Dasein does not refer

to only one's physical existence, but a person's ability to engage with others and make

sense of their world. Being then, is the recognition of self as belonging to a community

and the understanding that self exists in relationship to others.

Habermas (1989: 98) acknowledges that "to the extent that the adult can take over

and be responsible for his own biography, he can come back to himself in the narratively

preserved traces of his own interactions." Language is the medium through which stories

are brought into being, and as such they are weaved into a tapestry of one's identity.

A story influential to one's identity, but there is a much larger narrative to which

one contributes. According to Barash (1999: 39):

> Since the practice of ancient historiography, we recognize the crucial importance of historical narratives and monuments, like the commemorations that accompany them, for the constitution and continuity of a collective identity.

Self, other, and community are not mutually exclusive; rather, they are one and the same. This sense of collective identity, constituted by countless narratives and relationships between actors is what many commonly refer to as "the organization." However, it must be noted that an entity such as an organization cannot engender a singular identity, make decisions, or demonstrate a level of understanding. Only people, as narrative beings in relationship with one another, can do these things. Therefore, a policy cannot capture the organization itself, because there is no such thing. Appropriately then, a policy statement must reflect a community's understanding of its own nature. Ricoeur (1965: 203) notes that:

> The interhuman relationship, born of the word, endows work with both a contrast and a component. A contrast: for influence in something other than this action of non-reciprocal transformation characteristic of production. A component: for the influence at the same time enriches work with the whole gamut of interhuman relations: all labor is collaboration, that is work which is not only shared but communicated to others. All these relations which order work (in all the senses of the word order) are found within the universe of the spoken word.

This view of the organization rescues work from the mechanistic model of inputs and outputs and recognizes the narrative participation of actors within a community. A mechanistic model aims to create a standard and then use it as a device to control or influence behavior. Rather than re-imagining infinite understandings and creating worlds where these possibilities are explored, we limit ourselves, instead of changing the rules. Narratives, differences, and histories are "…completely ignored in favor of a direct relationship between an individual event and the assertion of a universal hypothesis, therefore, some form of regularity" (Ricoeur 1984: 112). Policy is often written as a

universal guide – one that surpasses the influences of time, relationships, narratives, or situational positions. According to Ricoeur (1983: 116), then:

> The problem from here on, is to know what extension, and therefore what weakening, the covering law model is capable of, if we exclude any shameful return to an intuitionist or empathic conception of historical 'understanding,' or in a more general fashion, to the pure and simple substitution of understanding for explanation.

Conversely, an approach rooted in stories told may share a practical wisdom more meaningful than imposed principles. A collective identity offers opportunities for reflection about self and others as they dwell together in the making of shared history.

An individual may be viewed as history in the making, or perhaps stated more appropriately, history brings forth the individual. "We are members of the field of historicity as storytellers, as novelists, as historians. We belong to history before telling stories or writing history" (Ricoeur 1981: 294). Actors are intimately linked to history, and this furthers our responsibility to the present and future. According to Ricoeur (1981: 284):

> The game of telling is included in the reality told. That is undoubtedly why, as we have already said, the word 'history' preserves in many languages the rich ambiguity of designating both the course of recounted events and the narrative that actors construct. For they belong together.

As historical beings, community members create a larger narrative, one that tells the story of a people, not a person, and one that requires great care. As policies are created to guide this process, the dangers seem clear, but the possibilities are electrifying. The movement toward these possibilities will enlist the past as worlds are figured in the present to invite the future. The next section will explore this event through the discussion of mimesis.

<u>Mimesis</u>

The figuration of self, other, and collective is mediated in the relationship between time and narrative. These narrative events exist in temporal fluidity. Ricoeur (1984: 54) explains that one's present position is constituted by both the past and future. $Mimesis_1$ is characterized by one's pre-understandings or past experience. These prefigurations are brought into the present narrative in $Mimesis_2$, and through new interpretations, give way to new possibilities for the future in $Mimesis_3$.

History is not only an account of the past but an element of our present and future. "History, in this sense, explores the field of imaginative variations which surround the present and the real that we take for granted in everyday life" (Ricoeur 1981: 295). Actors belong to their past and their historicities thrust them into being as they encounter each moment. By recognizing this connection, one may realize the potential of the present and future. However, this requires a kind of action on one's part, a consciousness in the event of storytelling. Ricoeur (1981: 292) states that "there is mimesis only where there is 'doing' or 'activity;' and the poetic 'activity' consists precisely in the construction of plots." Through texts and discourse, the story of an organization may emerge from narratives told and retold. "*Mimesis* does not mean the duplication of reality; *mimesis* is not a copy: *mimesis* is *poiesis*, that is, construction, creation" (Ricoeur 1981: 180). Policy must speak to the identities of those within an organization, and in order to do so, stories must be shared as histories are revealed.

Narrative events disclose the worlds to which the organization's members belong, and house the configuration of that which *is,* in light of what *has been* and what *might be*. Each a feat of imagination, they collectively embody the organizational being situated in

the act of mimesis. The temporal game of recognition may carefully inform the stories told and stories lived. Without such reflection, the members cannot uphold their own promises. Arendt (1998: 245) maintains:

> In so far as morality is more than the sum of total mores, of customs and standards of behavior solidified through tradition and valid on the ground of agreements, both of which change with time, it has, at least politically, no more support itself than the good will to counter the enormous risks of action by readiness to forgive and be forgiven, to make promises and keep them.

Promises are only as good as the people who make them and this level of accountability relies on mutual understanding within and between organizational texts, narratives, and actions, all of which exist in language and rely on interpretation.

Historically bound and propelled, people within organizations must acknowledge the events of the past in order to move toward the future. In the configuration of a plot, all three stages of mimesis are brought together in the profound interpretation of meaning. The willingness to suspend concrete structures of positivistic language will give way to an implosive event of self reflection, and the organization will change, as will the people to whom it belongs.

Power, Promise and Policy

Aside from the temporal disfigurations of imposed law, the law itself is subject to evaluative inquiry, if it is an order from the management rather than a process revealed through discourse. "The micro-interests of individuals and the macro-decisions of power are in a state of constant tension" (Ricoeur 1965: 263). Policies, though often tucked away in manuals and handbooks, create the discursive climate in which people construct and redraft their organizations.

Fortunately, a growing discourse allows for an examination of organizational policy, but this is a fairly new conversation in the realm of work and labor. "During the Industrial Era, the company that was most effective in prescribing rules for behavior – the company with the most carefully thought-out 'rule book' – frequently had the most efficient organization" (Toffler 1985: 1). Clearly, this is no longer the case, and Toffler (1985:2) goes on to assert that:

> As the novelty ratio rises, however, the utility of the rulebook declines, and the companies that have poured the most energy and skill into creating it are frequently the ones least able to deal with the new reality whose essence is the break-up of old rules.

For years, people answered to the voice of authority and now they are looking for the speaker.

If governed by absolute policy, narratives reflect the stifling language of control. "A centralized mechanistic structure tends to reinforce past behaviors and discourage debate and tends to form barriers to learning and establishment of relationships" (Chae, Courtney, & Hayes 2005: 25). If a policy is designed to control behavior, it simultaneously forbids action. A new policy should have a new voice; one that talks back insofar as it allows for shared discourse.

Even if guided by the best intentions, a dispassionate language engenders a certain identity. The selection of one narrative in place of another, especially in the context of corporate management, places at the forefront a clear system of dominance. This system all together thwarts a discourse between "old schools" and "new schools," stealing the grounds of commonality between them.

In order to move in a new direction, one must identify and name the present system of oppression. A policy manual, printed as doctrine without an author, abstracts the

narrative identity rooted in relation. The policy is then both reduced and elevated to a nameless, faceless, objective mechanism for restoring order and establishing truth. In this inconspicuousness and unascertainability, the real dictatorship of the "they" unfolds (Heidegger 1962: 164). Habermas contributes to the conversation of an omnipresent but hidden sense of control by stating that, "in societies based on kinship, institutions protected by taboos form a site where cognitive normative expectations merge and harden into an unbroken complex of convictions linked with motives and value orientations" (Habermas 1972: 23). Again, the danger that exists in an implicitly policed system of beliefs is one's inability to discursively identify the system. The most prevalent structures are often so deeply embedded in the language of everyday action that they go unrecognized. Habermas (1971: 22-23) notes that,

> As background knowledge, it lacks the possibility of being challenged, that is, of being raised to the level of criticizable validity claims. One can do this only by converting it from a resource into a topic of discussion, at which point—just when it is thematized—it no longer functions as a lifeworld background but rather *disintegrates* in its background modality.

The tacit, or subterraneous expressions of power are often more formidable than the most provocative declarations, and these are housed in language; not only in terms of content, but also in terms of relation. The manner in which one is referenced by policy, as actor or subject, reveals the embedded power relations that contribute to a deficiency in the plot.

Beyond the interventions and applications of new knowledge structures, a shared, coherent plot must underscore the conversation or else the shift is forced, rather than embraced. Given the complexity of the organization and the nature of language, this is not an issue that can be easily discerned. The initial task then calls for an investigation of texts as well as its implications for care and solicitude within the organization.

The work of policy must be done through communication, which becomes an equalizing event between employer and employee, rather than a demonstration of power. "By taking part in communicative action, they accept in principle the same status as those whose utterances they are trying to understand" (Habermas 1990: 29). Rules are no longer expressions of immutable truth by which all actions are judged. Those actors accustomed to preordained authority must render themselves as speakers among equals. "...He also has to grapple with the problem of context dependency of his interpretation. He cannot be sure in advance that he and his experimental subjects operate on the basis of the same background assumptions and practices" (Habermas 1990: 29). An openness toward understanding and critical consideration of ideological norms invites meaningful discourses on work. If policies, outcomes, and belief systems are never called into question, then people cannot imagine new ideas about their work and improve their relationships as they create supportive communities.

The multitude of trendy management and policy theories demonstrate the crisis of mechanistic approaches to organizational relations, and the generic strategies used to "motivate" members are far removed from the world of action. Reflected even in our language, the *human being* is considered a noun and not a verb. Although referenced as such in most traditional policies, a growing awareness of narrative agency counters the scientific methodology used in organizational research.

The organizational tradition of upward and downward communication will do nothing but support existing power structures. However, a discourse-driven path to understanding should inform the policies that result from conversations based on an orientation toward understanding. "They must undertake certain idealizations—for

example, ascribe identical meanings to expressions, connect utterances with context-transcending validity claims, and assume that addressees are accountable, that is, autonomous and sincere with both themselves and others" (Habermas 1998: 4). The identity of an organization cannot be shaped from the top down; rather, it is a shared event through which individuals work collectively in good faith.

The Just Institution

Ideally, good organizational policy sustains a safe environment in which people can gain fulfillment in their work together. Individuals who avoid communication with others or attempt to separate themselves from the work community are often frustrated in the pursuit of independence from others. Marvin Brown (2005: 96) reminds organizations that "the fact is that people do exist in relationships at work. So, the question is not whether or not to have relationships, but rather, what kind of relationships to have." This brings into question the commonly held assumptions about the world of organization, and what employees might expect from their peers as members of the same community. No matter what kind of organization to which one belongs, work relationships influence a person's sense of self and efficacy.

Most people desire the reciprocity of care and respect as they strive to do go things. Ricoeur (1992: 172) refers to this as "aiming at the good life with and for others, in just institutions." From this position, an emphasis is placed on mutuality rather than the containment of roles, resources and rights. Ricoeur describes a just institution as one where people work together in the spirit of friendship to ensure that all people within the organization are treated fairly. When a friendship is recognized as an organizational value,

actors may collectively participate in refiguring the future and forgiving disappointments

of the past. French and Moore (2004: 113) believe that,

> the fragmented nature of postmodern organizations creates anxiety that feeds
> political activity as a way of coping, [which] produces further fragmentation.
> Friendship as an organizing principle, on the other hand, not only mobilizes or
> constructs necessary political connections, but also has the capacity to enable some
> repair to the fragmentation.

The harms of past events may fade as new directions are taken in the creation of new

policies. If these policies allow actors' voices to be heard, a new narrative might emerge

as orientations shift from self-preservation, to concerted imagination. Ricoeur (1992: 18)

believes that such a shift would more intimately bind members of the organization

together, and states that, "the *autonomy* of the self…will appear to be tightly bound up

with *solicitude* for one's neighbor, and with justice for each individual." Solicitude is care

based in a sincere regard for others, and a desire to belong with others in a community of

justice with others.

If read in passing, one might confuse Ricoeur's notion of "working with and for others"

with a rule of self-sacrifice in which individual identity is relinquished in favor of dutiful

service to others.

Servant leadership theory was developed by Robert Greenleaf in the 1970's, and

has since become a success in commercial leadership literature. Greenleaf (1977: 11), in

his explanation of servant leadership states that, "it begins with the natural feeling that one

wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The

difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant - to make sure that other people's

highest-priority needs are being served." Here, the needs of others are distinct from one's

own, and a deficit is created by the leader's decision to grant the satisfaction to others'

needs. The selfless actions characterized by servant leadership are still hegemonic in their

clear definition between leader and follower. The assumption that selfhood is granted to

others by a leader who has forgone their own identity creates a contingent and unequal

relationship. Habermas (1998: 101) asserts that, "no one can be free at the expense of

anybody else's freedom." The romantic construction of the leader as willing victim is

problematic in the proliferation of tacit hierarchy and failure to acknowledge mutuality as a

shared necessity.

Solicitude is the recognition that the needs of others are one's own. In caring each

other, one's own identity is not lost, but bound up with others, so that service to others is

also service to one's self. According to Ricoeur, care is not a consequence of charity or a

leader's benevolence; it is the necessity of any person who wishes to participate in a just

community. A community of care provides for itself an opportunity for its members to

identify themselves. Solicitude binds people together as equals, and in taking care of one

another, they allow for themselves a narrative identity free of indebtedness but rich in

autonomy.

Imagination

From Aristotle's notion of "poetic universals," Ricoeur offers an interpretation that

brings together the commonly isolated realms of history and what many often regard as

fiction. "…They are universals beyond a doubt since they can be characterized by the

double opposition of the possible to the actual and the general to the particular" (Ricoeur

1983: 40). This assumption of consistent inconsistency allows for the unpredictability and

changing nature of a workspace.

To accept the liminal space in which action is configured is to find one's self in front of infinite possibility. Liminality refers to the state of ambiguity imprecisely located "betwixt and between" two locations of perceived certainty or identity (Turner 1967: 13). It is in this tension that feats of beauty and imagination take shape. A quick dash from one pole to another in the name of uncertainty reduction surrenders the hope of something excitingly new.

Hannah Arendt expresses a bittersweet pull toward action which may result in triumph but is often viewed as a utopia, too grand in its design. "If, however, we understand politics to mean a global dominion in which people appear primarily as active agents who lend human affairs permanence they otherwise do not have, then this hope is not the least bit utopian" (Arendt 2005: 97). The common approach to policy, which limits instead of facilitates action, is counter-imaginative.

The individual and collective imagination offers tellers a sea of opportunities from which a narrative may be anchored, but the greater one's sense of play, the freer one becomes in the event of storytelling. "When we approach our work as play, we free ourselves to test new models and ways of thinking without regard for consequences. This kind of freedom can be scary because it means we are limited only by our own imaginative capacity" (Rushkoff 2005: 119). This fear often gives way to a "safe" set of structured norms that free the individual from their agency. In doing so, Rushkoff argues that one sacrifices the realization of possibility for a dependency on probability. When protocol is favored over practical wisdom, each event is reduced to a pattern of responses or predetermined outcomes.

Kearney (1998: 224) states that we must "chart a course leading beyond both the Idolatry of the New and the Tyranny of the Same." A starting point may be the utopian exercise, in which one is freed from the confines of prescribed roles and invited to play in the expressions of a more fulfilling actuality. He states that "it is the schematizing power of imagination which opens up the possibility of some kind of unified horizon for our diverse actions" (Kearney 1998: 226). It is through imagination that one can link the poetics to ethics, and imagine something more than what we have. However, one must be accompanied by the other in order to move toward understanding. "The poetic commitment to story-telling may well prove indispensable to the ethical commitment to history-making. Ethics without poetics leads to the censuring of imagination; poetics without ethics leads to dangerous play" (Kearney 1998: 236). Imagination is central in guiding our development, but it must be tempered with an ethical conscience.

Imagination cannot satisfy or benefit policy if used only for the purposes of advertisement. Sometimes, organizational ideals are promoted as branding strategies designed to benefit consumers rather than employees. Playing to public perception may temporarily increase business, but such strategies devalue employees. Policy consultants and writers sometimes work from the assumption that employees are easily sold on policies that are strategically worded and not necessarily practical. The numerous campaigns launched to grant workers a limited field of autonomy may enjoy a short lived success. Clichés like thinking outside of the box, empowerment, and servant leadership are often exposed as empty promises when applied in a practical setting. Arendt (1998: 100) refers to such work as that of the public relations specialist, and asserts that ""for his inventions it may indeed look as though the sky is the limit, but he lacks the politician's

power to act, to 'create facts,' and thus that simple everyday reality sets limits to power and brings the forces of imagination down to earth." The challenge of policy is not only to make a promise of agency, but to initiate a praxis-oriented discourse of imagination.

The collective imagination of an organization, grounded in a sincere concern for the other can bring into action a new narrative reflective of all its referents. Herda (1999: 2) explains that:

> The redescription or refiguration emerges with others through critique, genuine conversation, and imagination. All of these can ultimately result in confrontation, fragmentation, and fear unless there is an orientation to reach understanding and a willingness to assume responsibility to work with others to change current conditions.

Part of this responsibility involves the ability and willingness to engage in conversational play, as actors expose the consequences of a text. The act of fixation doesn't designate the text as an unchanging edifice; rather, it offers a new temporal position from which meaning may be interpreted. "The text presents a limited field of possible constructions. The logic of validation allows us to move between the two limits of dogmatism and skepticism. It is always possible to argue for or against an interpretation, to confront interpretations, to arbitrate between them and to seek agreement, even if this agreement remains beyond our reach" (Ricoeur 1976: 79). The process of arbitration requires a collective desire to find meaning rather than a competitive process of value assertions. "It is imagination that provides the milieu, the luminous clearing, in which we can compare and evaluate motives as diverse desires and ethical obligations, themselves as disparate professional rules, social customs, or intensely personal values" (Ricoeur 1991: 176). These conversations are marked by dialectical tension, contradiction, and sometimes irreconcilable conclusions. In short, they reflect the nature of any large system of

historical individuals living in the exchange of arbitrary and ambiguous symbols, or in other words, an organization.

The imaginative process must be informed by an understanding of language as the symbolic medium of life itself, laden with contextual value but marked by certain ambiguity. Wittgenstein (2001) proposed that this ambiguity is best explored as a site, rich with possibility. The imaginative play inspired by linguistic liminality engages the actors in language games; which, through a variety of rhetorical moves, unveils the fragility of certainty. Imaginative play, although boundless in its territory, is not a haphazardly construed event, but an expressive manifestation of communicative competence.

<u>**Summary**</u>

This section offered an initial review of literature and included themes of text, narrative identity, mimesis, organizational policy, and imagination. Rooted in critical hermeneutic theory, this study relies on textual analysis to provide an event in mimesis from which actors may refigure their narratives. These narratives reveal the nature of identity as they are emplotted, fragmented, private and public. Within this tension exists the promise of imagination and the capacity to reach new understandings of self in relation to others.

Chapter III is a discussion of the research protocol for this study. Based in critical hermeneutic participatory inquiry, it offers the conceptual background, research guidelines, manners of data collection and analysis, text creation, notes on the pilot study, research categories, and questions. Lastly, a brief narrative describes my background and impetus for this inquiry.

Chapter III: RESEARCH PROCESS

Introduction

This study is grounded in critical hermeneutic theory which may best be described as an ontological orientation, rooted in the process of interpretation. A critical hermeneutic orientation is not a scientific method, but an approach that seeks to understand how individuals make sense of their place in the world. As Gadamer (1987: 249) asserts, the methodical pursuit of an objective truth is fruitless because there exists no such thing. Humans in relationship with one another cannot be categorically defined or scientifically reduced to stimulus specific behavioral expectancies. Rather, the worlds of language, history, identity, and imaginative play must guide the researcher and participants as they find meaning together. According to Herda (1999: 41), "this process goes beyond the application of specific techniques for data collection and analysis and the naïve approach to language whereby one assumes that a new world can be named into being." Conversations, along with textual analysis, invite the researcher and participants to imagine sites for praxis, as they move from theory to action and stories told to stories lived.

I began my inquiry by reading the employee policy manuals provided by participating organizations. Later, participants in this study were asked to engage in research conversations, and these events were transcribed for analysis. I reflected my informal conversations and noted my observations made during my visits to the organizations. Taken together, these texts provided the data for analysis in this exploration and this process is explained in the sections that follow. Chapter III includes the conceptual background, research guidelines, the manners of data collection and analysis,

text creation, a pilot study reflection, research categories, and the questions that guided my conversations. Lastly, I offer a brief narrative regarding my background.

Conceptual Background

"Every inquiry is a seeking [Suchen]….Inquiry, as a kind of seeking, must be guided before hand by what is sought" (Heidegger 1967: 34).

The pursuit of knowledge is often propelled by one's orientation toward knowledge itself. This study is conducted in the tradition of critical hermeneutic analysis. In academic communities, orientations are distinguished by oversimplified assignments such as arts and sciences. Surely, a great deal of variation exists within each category, and knowledge cannot be so easily classified. The distinction does demonstrate a long enduring recognition of differences between certain ways of knowing. In *The Rhetoric,* Aristotle (2008) identified two realms of truth, or knowledge. The first, Theoria, describes those truths that are immutable, or scientific in nature. For instance, if salt is added to a bowl of water, objects that would otherwise sink to the bottom become buoyant. It doesn't matter who adds the salt, at what time of day, or where this event takes place because the results will remain consistent each time. There is a reason that this happens, and it's because the salt molecules expand, adding density to the water. This is Theoria, a scientific and relatively value-neutral way of knowing. Phronesis, on the other hand, is the social or practical wisdom that cannot be determined by a technical process or mathematical equation.

Questions of human rights or notions justice are culturally bound understandings that represent a field of limitless interpretations. Ostensibly, the finite measures and fixed objectives of scientific method can neither express nor address the meaning behind one's experience. Kearney (2002: 43) maintains that "there is no real way of establishing the

27

'historical truth' of someone's life; so all we have is some kind of 'narrative truth' which fits the particular bill of this particular person at this particular time." Further, these are the questions that are most central to the way we live, work, and understand one another. Only through narrative and imagination can these matters be explored, and only from an interpretive position can one hear the many voices through which truth is discerned. Truth then, becomes a matter of being in the world, and although some stories are more widely accepted, it is only at the intersections where narratives collide that a narrative landscape may be painted.

A critical hermeneutic orientation is rooted in interpretation. From an ontological position, reality is understood as a series of social constructions that are created and modified through collective and individual narratives, and meanings rely upon the agreement reached between actors. "I am alone in my dreams, but I know that the world of everyday life is as real to others as it is to myself. Indeed, I cannot exist without continually interacting with others" (Berger & Luckmann 1966: 3). Truth is not a location accessible by way of proven hypothesis, but a concept created by those who take it for granted. Therefore, the notion of objective certainty, most favored in the scientific tradition, does not reveal meaningful understandings regarding the ever stirring nature of beings in relationship with one another. This guiding principle serves as a point of reference from which epistemological considerations are imagined. Although Ricoeur (1990) and others hold that some interpretations are better than others, there exists no systematic measurement by which truth is ascertained. Herda (1999: 70) affirms that:

> The worlds we propose cannot be finally evaluated with intellectual technology such as the determination of a text's structure…rather, the ultimate evaluation comes in whether or not we live our lives in moral, economic, and political community—a community that is always on its way.

The desired outcome is not a single outcome at all, but a movement toward a collective understanding.

Given the belief that my inquiry cannot and should not attempt to reveal a single "answer," the path taken in the interest of understanding mustn't seek to reduce the data. Rather, it must realize the possibilities of multiple interpretations and value both the particulars and universals as beneficial revelations. Using critical hermeneutic analysis, therefore, does not entail an application of tools or algorithms; however, it does prescribe a rigorous consideration of text, language, and discourse in the process of interpretation.

In many cultures and certainly in the western tradition of academic research, a text is most often acknowledged as a written document that serves to record events and ideas for future reference. However, meaning cannot be fixed within a text, nor limited by the nature of the text itself. Ricoeur (in Kearney 1996: 153) explains that one must "…seek in the text itself…the internal dynamic that governs the structuring of the work, and…the power that the work possesses to project itself outside itself and give birth to a new world." Policy, as a text, seems most appropriately analyzed in the interpretive paradigm because the world of an organization is ever-changing.

To see one's self in front of a text should illuminate new worlds rather than prescribe old ones, and the ability to hold this relationship with policy may offer organizations' members to further appreciate the world of their workplace and their relationships to one another. McGaughey (1988: 63) explains that, "the hermeneutical situation is always a fresh event that generates new meaning as a consequence of the tensions among author, text, intervening tradition, reader, and the reader's life-world." This study seeks to reintroduce the creative capacities of those within organizations. The

first measure concerns the liberation of meaning; a reintroduction to policy as text, which until this point, has served as an encumbrance rather than a launching pad for discourse and meaning.

A text exists as an historical event and it is a consequence of the past, just as it is a possibility for the future. Rather than fixing a text in time as a means of gaining some kind of enduring or static meaning, critical hermeneutic analyses embrace the passing of time and its ability to create new and different interpretations. This dance between past and present is replayed each time the text is encountered or interpreted, therefore, understanding exists in a relationship between the text and the interpreter.

Temporal distance is not a negative barrier but is a positive and productive site for understanding. "By opening ourselves up to what Aristotle's text says to us, we bring new meanings to the text. And this understanding…becomes constitutive of what we are in the process of becoming" (Bernstein 1983: 149-150). Here, the text is not an object, but a discourse that may reveal new features of the past, present, and future. This stance is maintained by Ricoeur's (1981: 146) account of one's relationship to a text. "The text is a discourse fixed by writing. Fixation by writing takes the very place of speech occurring at the site where speech could have emerged." Ricoeur makes a meaningful distinction by demonstrating the nature of textual fixation. The discourse itself is preserved; however, the meaning is not. Therefore, a text is a starting point from which a new conversation may begin, not a reference to a conversation that has come to an end.

The interpretive orientation recognizes the importance of language as a medium and an expression of being in the world. Herda (1999: 86) explains:

> [I]n field-based hermeneutic research, the object is to create collaboratively a text
> that allows us to carry out the integrative act of reading, interpreting, and critiquing

our understandings. This act is a ground for our actions. The medium of this collaborative act is language.

Possibilities are lived out in language and as researcher and participant inhabit this world together, understandings may come about. Language is a not a living entity; it is the medium of life itself. We live in language and within this habitat, stories come together in all of their compliments and contradictions. When converted to texts, they take on a discursive meaning different from the one before, and as the researcher, my interpretation is a result of my relationship with the text, the participants, and the stories we tell to ourselves and one another.

This study reflects a call to explore the nature of employee-related policies within an organizational setting. Employee handbooks served as the primary sources of data for analysis. Research conversations with members of these organizations provided additional data for analysis and I kept a journal in which I noted informal conversations conducted during my time each work space. Critical hermeneutic participatory research invites participants to take part in the interpretation of conversation transcripts. As shared events, conversations contained the worlds of meaning which were best explored in a partnership of inquiry. Together, we created texts which disclosed many of the most meaningful moments in this study. Several research questions guided the exchanges and provided discursive themes from which narratives emerged.

The research questions posed in this study are: Can a text such as an employee call-to-action policy inspire individuals within an organization to imagine and move toward new possibilities? How will an interpretive approach to the text within an organization change the worlds of its members? How might those within an organization create texts in more meaningful ways? These questions are grouped into the three research categories of

narrative identity, mimesis, and imagination. These research categories also reflect three cornerstones of the critical hermeneutic orientation.

In the section that follows, I explain my entrée to the research sites, the process of identifying participants and the introductory letters of invitation.

<u>**Research Guidelines**</u>

This section describes the process through which the sites for research were identified and the manner in which participants were invited to take part in the study. This process was carefully considered and approached. Herda (1999: 93) asserts that:

> One's charge is not to merely represent or symbolize human affairs by creating contrived correspondence between propositions and what they denote. Rather, the charge is more inclusive—to disclose a world of our participants and ourselves.

The entrée into these worlds marked the beginning of my relationships with participants, and the narratives that followed joined the texts of space and policy, all which guided my interpretation. Employee manuals provided voices which joined in conversation with one another, and soon revealed the discursive tension between meaningful work and the policies that guide them.

Entrée to the Research Sites

Three growing, privately held, service-oriented organizations participated in this study. Conversation partners emerged from each of the organizational communities. With three from each, there were a total of nine participants with whom I collaborated. Having each agreed to take part in this work, I visited their work sites to learn more about their communities.

Fit-n-Furry is a pet daycare and boarding facility located in Petaluma, California. Fit-n-Furry is a relatively new venture, and opened the doors of their 17,000 square foot

facility to the public in April, 2007. Approximately thirty employees provide clients with pet sitting, grooming, boarding, and training services.

As a client, I quickly took notice of their highly visible mission statements, guarantees, and code of ethics. The language of these texts are recognizably present as employees communicate with clients. The service-oriented vocabulary echoes the company's mission, and I often wondered if the discourse of the organization reflected their relationships, or if the scripts were simply requirements of employment. Through my interactions with the employees and owners, I learned more about the organization and my growing curiosity led to an informal conversation, during which the owners, Marci and Grant Garl agreed to partake in this study.

Ciarra Construction is a family-owned organization and although they have over seventy full-time employees (over two hundred and fifty including seasonal staff), owner Walt Oxley likes to treat it as a small operation. Now one of California's largest privately-held building firms, they've remained in the same modest office space for almost twenty years. In addition to supporting Ciarra Construction, this twenty-person team manages a second and more recently developed business called The Constructive Investment Group. Between the two, there is rarely a quiet moment in the office.

Senior Lifestyle Corporation is one of the country's largest providers of housing for elders. I met the founder, Bill Kaplan, at a holiday gathering last winter and I took an immediate interest in his work. Having strong convictions regarding our culture's treatment of the aged, I enthusiastically asked him to tell me more about his organization. I was delighted and surprised to learn that Bill's son, Adam, who works for his father as a project manager, was sitting across the table from us and he joined in the conversation. By

the end of the evening, I had asked them to participate in this study, and saw them again

six months later in Chicago, Illinois, at their corporate headquarters. After spending two

days in their office, I visited some of their residences, where I had the opportunity to meet

with employees and residents.

These organizations provided rich and meaningful texts, the interpretation of which

was informed by the narratives shared by members. The chart (Figure 3.1) below lists

participants with whom I shared research conversations, followed by a brief biography

each.

Figure 3.1: Research Conversation Participants

ORGANIZATION	SERVICE	LOCATION	INFORMAL CONVERSATION PARTICIPANTS	FORMAL CONVERSATION PARTICIPANTS
Fit-n-Furry	Pet Care, Training, & Boarding	Petaluma, CA	1. **Kelly,** Reception	1. **Grant**, Owner 2. **Nicole**, General Manager 3. **Ben**, Assistant General Manager
Ciarra Construction	Architectural Framing & Contracting	San Jose, CA	1. **Lynn,** Bookkeeper	1. **Walter**, Owner 2. **Katie**, Office Manager
Senior Lifestyle Corporation	Senior Residence Building and Management	Chicago, IL	1. **Clarence,** Residence Maintenance Manager 2. **Anne,** Resident	1. **Bill**, Owner 2. **Adam**, Project Manager 3. **William**, VP of Human Resources 4. **Roth**, Regional Director of Operations 5. **Stephen**, Senior VP & General Council

Fit-n-Furry

Grant Garl worked as a heating and air conditioning specialist for thirty years

before he retired in 2006. He and his wife Marci decided to fulfill their dream of starting

34

their own company and they each contributed to the development of Fit-n-Furry. Grant's background in ventilation inspired the environmentally friendly building design, and Marci's experience in child care informed the daycare design, which was adapted for pets. The Garls are natives of Sonoma County and Grant prefers to keep the business community-centered and highly involved. I met with Grant many times over the course of the year, and we recorded a conversation on August 10, 2008 at the Fit-n-Furry Facility in Petaluma, California.

Nicole is Fit-n-Furry's General Manager and she was one of their first employees. Hired three months before the grand opening, she contributed to the writing of procedures, hiring of employees, and development of their public space. I met with Nicole for a research conversation in July 2008 and we spent an hour sitting in the break room, which had now become a familiar meeting place.

Ben joined Fit-n-Furry as a pet handler before the facility opened. He worked with Nicole and others to finalize the details of daily business before they opened. His love of animals and energetic work ethic impressed the owners, and he earned the title of Assistant General Manager by the time the doors opened for business. Ben's experience with veterinary technology informed the processes of pet assessment and care, and he assumed the responsibility of new client intake. Much of my time at Fit-n-Furry was spent following Ben in his daily duties, which allowed me to learn a great deal about the roles and relationships between those in the organization.

Kelly is a friendly face and greets each client as they walk in the door. I often speak with Kelly as I wait for a research conversation, visit, or drop my dog off for daycare. She is a young woman who manages a lot of the clerical tasks associated with

appointments, client requests and inquiries. I often spoke with Kelly to learn about her position in the company and her general impressions of the operation.

Ciarra Construction

Walter occupies the office closest to the reception desk, and since his door is always open, he is privy to employee/client relations and readily available for either. Though he is six feet and six inches tall, his gentle demeanor reveals his friendly and welcoming character. He is one of the most focused people I've ever met. Walter meditates daily and maintains a quiet calm amidst the often frenetic office environment, which has evolved into a multiple project command post.

Katie Thomas is Ciarra Construction's Office Manager, a title that may not aptly describe her role. Aside from managing the office on a daily basis, she also handles a variety of responsibilities related to marketing, project management, and public relations. She is a shrewd business person, and her warm, yet direct, personality compliments Walt's easy-going approach to business. As the contact for most of the employees, Katie finds the "less is more" approach to policy freeing, but challenging to manage in the daily negotiation of employees' requests, needs, and responsibilities. Katie has a great deal of emotion and energy invested in the company, as well she should. Katie is Walt's oldest child, she plans to carry on the family business when her father retires.

Lynn has been working for Ciarra Construction for over twenty years. She has seen the production move from a modest one-job-at-a-time contracting firm, to a multi-million dollar building and sales organization. As the head bookkeeper, she is entrusted with extremely sensitive information and has aided Walt in each of his projects. Lynn is considered a family member in many ways and her opinion is highly valued by others.

Senior Lifestyle Corporation

Bill Kaplan is an energetic individual who truly enjoys his work. Named Chicago's "Man of the Year: 2007," he is well known and respected by community members. He insists that his success is based on his approach to business, which places satisfaction before profit; with the assumption that people will inevitably thrive in their work if they're treated with respect and support. Bill keeps his focus on the service-orientation of the business, and believes that if he treats employees with care, they will, in turn, treat clients with the same consideration.

Adam, Bill's son, is an extremely detailed oriented person, who values precision in his work. His personality is a bit more reserved than his father's, and he is still learning about the business after having recently joined Senior Lifestyle Corporation. Currently, Adam oversees construction of their newest residence and monitors everything from building code compliance to interior decoration.

William is a relative newcomer, having been with Senior Lifestyle Corporation for only five years. He is a very direct individual, who admittedly doesn't embody the gregarious stereotype of the quintessential human resources specialist. Though uninterested in idle conversation, his words are thoughtful and concise. William knows the organization's policies inside and out and his thoughts helped my understanding of policy as both freedom and restriction.

I met Roth onsite at The Breakers, one of Senior Lifestyle's first residences. He is an animated person who obviously enjoys his work. Roth was more than happy to give me a tour of the residence, and introduced me to many of his team members. He has worked in the hospitality industry for many years, and left Senior Lifestyle to work for one of their competitors. After two years, he called Bill personally because he missed the corporation

and his former job. Although Roth is a Regional Director of Operations and travels most of the time, he has asked to stay at The Breakers and act as their interim General Manager. Having been there for several months, he is working hard to cultivate a more satisfactory and productive environment for staff and residents.

Stephen has worked with Senior Lifestyle for over ten years, and he serves as Senior Vice President and General Council. For years, Stephen has dealt with many difficult decisions regarding employee and client rights. As the General Council, Stephen guides the organization as they create and amend policies relating to everything from employee benefits to client rights. A thoughtful individual, he is often torn between the company's mission and the legal standards that often limit their freedom to accommodate the needs of others.

Clarence heads the maintenance team at The Breakers, and having spent an hour with him, it is clear that he is in high demand. He is greeted by almost every resident and our conversations were steadily interrupted by requests, some of which came from residents and others from staff. He believes that his career requires compassion, but admits that he is sometimes exhausted by his own commitment to excellence.

Anne is a resident at The Breakers, and along with several others, she shared a bit throughout my visit. Rendezvousing at lunch or in the activity center, we'd share stories and impressions of the residence. An honest and straightforward woman, she offered narratives from a client's position and I was grateful for contributions.

The research participants represented narratives from different levels of each organization. Since all three organizations operate as discernibly hierarchical systems, I sought out individuals with varied positions in order to view the policies from assorted

vantage points. Although I was unable to collect recorded data from Senior Lifestyle Corporation's residence employees, I did engage in many informal conversations, which were logged in my journal. The collection of employee handbook materials required the approval from those with legal rights to the documents, and proprietors were asked to provide them before the formal research conversations took place. In each case, several informal relations preceded recorded conversations as we established a sense of familiarity and discussed our roles in the project.

As my only out-of-state participant, Senior Lifestyle Corporation inspired two separate visits during which I shared research conversations with as many members as possible. Although I have more conversational data from Senior Lifestyle, I felt it was a necessary as means of establishing the same kind of relationship I have with my local participants with whom I was able to have many more informal conversations. Confident that I had gained a fair collection from each company, I don't feel that the difference in number positively or negatively influenced this study.

Most participants were sought in the process of my onsite research and I had the opportunity to introduce myself to incipient contributors prior to requesting their time. Welcome letters requested participation, if not yet secured, and described the process through which we would explore policy and meaningful work. These guidelines received approval from the University of San Francisco Internal Review Board on April 18, 2008 (see Appendix D), and this study abided by the Human Subjects regulations of the University of San Francisco.

Participant Letters

Participants received letters that introduced my purpose and style of inquiry (Appendices A, B, & C). Each letter explained the nature of participatory inquiry and outlined their rights and responsibilities as partners in this study. Consent forms accompanied the research overview and signatures were collected at the first scheduled meeting. These arrangements were made either in person or over the phone and these brief exchanges created a sense familiarity that inspired more playful conversations.

<u>Data Collection</u>

Each organization submitted their most current employee manual, and conversation partners were asked to review their own policies before our scheduled meeting. Transcribed research conversations were open to collaborative interpretation and retellings and these stories invoked a presence of often competing narratives that guided my analysis of the organizational texts. All of the data collected were analyzed in the critical hermeneutic tradition of interpretive inquiry.

Conversations

Research conversations were arranged in person or over the phone and confirmed in writing. Most meetings took place onsite in private offices and the correspondence leading up to the research conversations provided an opportunity to initiate a genuine relationship based in sincere inquiry. Formal conversations were recorded as data and the resulting transcripts were submitted to participants for their interpretations before my analysis, and all permitted the use of transcribed data for this study.

Participants were sent thank-you letters shortly after each research conversation and received occasional correspondence regarding the interpretation and analysis of data in light of their contributions.

Research Timeline

Data was collected between May 2008 and September 2008. During this time, an ongoing analysis of employee action policies disclosed the historical worlds of each organization. All data was analyzed and interpreted as it was collected, and again as the narratives were brought into collective conversations from September 2008 until January 2009.

<u>Text Creation</u>

Texts were collected as transcribed conversations and written policies. Herda (1999: 97) urges the researcher to work in relationship with participants to seek new understandings. Research conversations were transcribed and provided texts for shared analysis as we configured the conversation. "This is an act of distanciation, a distancing ourselves from our conversations" (Herda 1999: 97). The fixation of each conversation marked a point at which the present simultaneously becomes that of the past. The passing of time between the research conversations and the collaborative reviews that followed set into motion the temporal condition of distanciation; an interpretive event in which one approached the text differently than before. With each conversation, new opportunities for understanding emerged and conversational play invited one new discourse in the wake of another. Although none of my participants wished to offer formal commentary on transcribed conversations, each reflected on our time together and in passing, enriched my understanding of their our texts.

Aside from research conversations, policies themselves served as primary texts for analysis. These guided many of the initial research conversations and served the secondary analyses and the appropriation of new meanings. The data were interpreted with three research categories in mind: narrative identity, mimesis, and imagination. These were general guides that unfolded into many more areas of analysis, all of which are presented in Chapters V and VI.

Data Analysis

The traditional scientific approach to research most often entails the pursuit of predictability and mechanistic production, which exists in direct opposition to the character of an organization. The assumption that an organization exists separately from its members is a false representation, most likely founded in the search for an objective reality. However, the collective identity of any group is a process that exists in the discourse of that organization. Herda (1999:78) states that:

> The researcher or organizational consultant mediates the theory of time and narrative with organizational texts and narratives. This mediating function allows the transformative power of retelling a story to be used to draw out meaning from a diversity of people, events, histories, and ideas of our futures and, further, from our work to draw out a new quality of time.

The meaning within a narrative is self-evident in its retelling, but it may lack recognition on an organizational level, unless one is able to "reconnect the objective world of technology, which the sciences place at our disposal and discretion, with those fundamental orders of our being which are neither arbitrary or manipulatable by is, but rather simple demand our respect" (Ricoeur 1981: 77). The text created in the event of transcribing research conversations invited participants and me to reside together in a

discourse of interpretation. "This is the case because often the researcher teaches and learns in the course of the research interview conversation. Further, researcher and participants learn from each other" (Herda 1999: 99). Each conversation was revisited with others as they viewed themselves in front of a text: first, the text of one's organizational policy, then discourse resulting from the research conversation. Ricoeur (1981:144) believes that we must:

> Place at the very heart of self-understanding that dialectic of objectification and understanding which we first perceived at the level of the text, its structures, its sense and its reference. At all these levels of analysis, distanciation is the condition of understanding.

This event profoundly influenced my understanding of meaningful work, and challenged researcher and participants in a praxis-oriented exercise in the analysis of text appropriation in one's organization.

Texts were analyzed using Herda's (1999: 98) sequence for analysis, which guides the researcher in the steadfast movement toward understanding. She states that the "implications of such research are two-fold: the researcher sees the world differently than before the research, and the implications are manifest for looking at the everyday problems differently" (Herda 1999: 98-99). Herda's (1999: 98-100) process for data analysis is as follows:

1. Fix the discourse by transcribing taped conversations
2. Pull out significant statements and develop themes
3. Substantiate themes or important ideas with quotes from conversations
4. Examine the themes to determine what they mean in light of the theoretical framework of critical hermeneutics.
5. Provide opportunity for continued discussion and conversations with participants using the developing text when appropriate
6. In developing the text, discuss groupings of themes and sub-themes within each category in light of the theory and the problem at hand.
7. Discuss the research problem at a theoretical level, thus implementing a further practical critical hermeneutics.

8. Ferret out implications from the written discussions that provide insight and new direction for the issue or problem under investigation.
9. Bring out those aspects of the study that merit further study.
10. Give examples of learning experiences and fusion of horizons…

In the spirit and rigor of critical hermeneutic inquiry, a collection of voices and interpretations are present in the data analysis. The boundaries of this research were created by the people who agreed to participate within the selected categories for data collection and analysis. How the data were understood and interpreted by each reader depended on what each reader brought to this text. The questions posed at the beginning of the research process acted as general guides for inquiry and served as points of departure for categories and conversations. The creation of these texts for analysis is discussed in the next section.

Research Categories and Conversation Questions

Narrative identity, mimesis, and imagination were chosen as categories to guide the research conversations. These served as preliminary groupings and unfolded as the project developed. According to Herda (1999: 97) "categories serve as general parameters for the research inquiry and data collection process as well as themes for the analysis."

The data were analyzed using Herda's process of inquiry and categories were applied and reconsidered throughout the research process. Once interpreted, additional analyses revealed several themes relating to each of the categories and these created meaningful particulars for consideration.

Category I: Narrative Identity

Can a text such as an employee call-to-action policy inspire individuals within an organization to imagine and move toward new possibilities?

Narrative is the medium through which one imbues self and other. The event of storytelling involves more than teller and hearer and through narrative, one stands at the intersections of text, history, and interpretation. These stories, sheltered in language may reveal or influence the discourse to which they belong. Therefore, the questions invited the stories of the individual and collective identity as they were figured through text, discourse, language, and meaning.

- In your own words, what do these policies mean?

- In whose voice are these policies written?

- Do the employee-oriented call-to-service policies reflect your "actual" call to service?

- Can you think of a time when you referred to this kind of policy?

- How did these policies influence your impression of your organization before you started working here?

- Do these policies reflect the world you've found as a member of the organization?

Category II: Mimesis

Can a text such as an employee call-to-action policy inspire individuals within an organization to move toward new possibilities in light of their pasts?

The inevitable passing of time is often overlooked as the continuum through which one may envisage the future. However, action is born of the history that many disregard as an unalterable sequence of events, far removed from one's present position. Collective and individual identities are historically located in between what has been and what will be. Those within organizations may have, through the process of distanciation, re-

appropriate meanings and come to new understandings of the relationships that taken together over time, configure the organization itself.

- When were these policies written? Updated?

- When is the last time you read through these?

- How long have you been a member of this organization?

- What's changed in terms of policy or your understandings of these policies?

- What do you know about the organization before you started working here?

- How do you imagine the future of this organization? Will the policies need to be revisited? Rewritten?

Category III: Imagination

How might those within an organization create texts in more meaningful ways?

The configuration of one's position creates a point of recognition, but once identified, time makes short work replacing the present with the past. Perpetual feelings of loss would plague the historical being if not for the staggering persistence of hope. Imagination is the embodiment of all that could be. To invite narratives of imagination, the following questions were crafted:

- If you wrote an employee policy guide for this organization, what would it be like?

- What are your possibilities here? What are you moving toward in your work?

- What would employee relationships be like in a perfect world?

- Could you tell the story of your organization in a different way that is presented in the policies? What would you add or omit?

Pilot Study

The pilot study provided an opportunity to identify my interests as a researcher and perhaps more importantly, the context in which I can make a substantive contribution to the discourse of organization. In the pilot, I explored organizational narratives of change as sites of voice, silence, promise and peril in the movement from authority to authorship. Most importantly, I investigated the tension between mechanistic management and innovative imagination to uncover the ways in which organizations may refigure the future in light of their past. Together, with participants, I found opportunities for action in the critique of ideologically prescribed behaviors.

Two participants contributed to the pilot. Betsy Jacobson, an organizational change consultant, and Richard Cuadra, director of a community-based psychological support co-op, were kind enough to share their stories with me. Betsy is a successful consultant and operates her own firm in San Diego, California. Her approach is rooted in positivist theory, and she creates training modules and provides on-site instruction to help organizations negotiate changes in structure or policy. Richard is a psychologist and as director of The Center for Attitudinal Healing in Sausalito, California, he organizes and hosts support groups for people who are grieving the loss of their loved ones. He described his role as both teacher and student and spoke with me about the organization's incipient shift from a non-profit organization to a hierarchically governed, profit-driven company.

The conversations were meaningful and I learned a great deal from both of my conversation partners. The process of collection, transcription, and analysis challenged my understandings of theory, protocol, and my role as researcher. Most importantly, it

provided me with a text that holds new meanings for me today. Herda reminds the researcher that the pilot study "can determine how well they ask questions or how well they can engage people in conversation. This experience also creates a practical opportunity to see whether the categories provide the right emphases for the research" (1999: 97). The data analysis from the pilot study is located in Appendix E, and the section below offers a summary of the learning process disclosed through the initial exploration. Finally, excerpts from the pilot are also found in Appendix E.

From Pilot to Proposal: Refiguration

Purpose

Although the research categories changed, my desire to explore and inspire imagination in organizations remained an unrelenting fascination. Excited by the prospect of doing so, the pilot design was of critical importance. Although fearful of reducing the expanse of possibilities, or limiting the discourse, I found the purpose was much too broad. As a result of the pilot, I was able to identify the topic at hand and design more fitting research categories to aid in my exploration.

Participants

I am very grateful to my conversation partners, who both knowingly and unknowingly helped to uncover the path leading to this dissertation. The differing narratives of my partners revealed a need for commonality among the participating organizations. Coming from dissimilar organizations, they faced different concerns and challenges. Therefore, they did not "fit" in terms of a shared inquiry. In this study, I identified three service-oriented organizations that are privately held. This allowed for

analysis of texts and policies and limited the amount of time spent accounting for differences in the organizations' purposes.

Conversation Questions

   The research conversations I shared with Richard and Betsy inspired me to reflect upon my purpose and the way that I approached the research. Fearful of conducting an interview, I approached our conversations informally and created a relationship with each partner. These have developed into friendships and I enjoy speaking with them occasionally, even though they will not be participating in the proposed study.

   In review of the transcribed conversations, I realized that I didn't adhere to the questions I had intended to ask. Although the relationship and rapport is of great importance, I learned that I must remain mindful of the talking points in order to collect data about the topic at hand.

Research Conversation Sample

Excerpt: Research Conversation with Richard Cuadra
November 16, 2007
Center for Attitudinal Healing
Sausalito, CA

MM: So thank you so much for meeting with me today.
RC: You're welcome.
MM: And your willingness to talk with me. So, just to refresh you on what I'm doing—
RC: Okay.
MM: I'm looking at instances of, of imagination in organization. And what interested me in the Center for Attitudinal Healing was that you're, you're dealing with, with people and souls that are in transition. And so I'm wondering how that's reflected in your workplace. And as you were on the phone, I saw on your, uh, filing cabinet posted the what ifs--
RC: Uh-huh.
MM: Of organization.
RC: Uh-huh.
MM: Do you mind if I read those out loud?
RC: Sure.

MM: Okay. Would you mind then reflecting on them?

RC: Sure.

MM: Excellent. Okay. What if awakening was the context at our workplace? What if management meant being accountable for spiritual emergence of staff as well as the wellbeing of the company? What if conflicts in our work community were acknowledged as a chance to heal collective wounds? What if the mission of our business was to usher in a sustainable spiritually fulfilling society? That says it all.

RC: It does. Yeah. And um, oh, let's see, what could I, um, first of all, the Center for Attitudinal Healing is a spiritually-based nonprofit.

MM: Uh-huh.

RC: And the 12 principles of attitudinal healing are really basic truths that have been taken out of almost every basic religion and spiritual practice in history. And this center, what was unique about this center at one time, for the first 30 years, is that approaching it in a spiritual place was under the principle of a, as we work together that we're all students and teachers to each other. So we were trying to level the playing field from a nonhierarchical—

MM: Uh-huh.

RC: Position, and to try to get the board, staff, employees, participants, more on an equal footing, where everybody's voice is heard. That in itself for management is very difficult, because it is not the model. So we were going very much against the stream to make that model work. However, in order for that to work, you have to follow the model that you cannot be result-oriented. You have to be able to hear each other's position and acknowledge each other's authority and still move in the direction that has to be moved towards without your ego getting in the way. So, it's not an easy proposition to be a spiritually-based group—

MM: Uh-huh.

RC: And have management acknowledge that we're students and teachers to each other. Am I making sense with this?

MM: Absolutely.

RC: Okay. So, from that position, uh, we also noticed that in order to do spiritual work, healing work, death and dying work, caregiving work, dealing with people's issues, and children, dealing with catastrophic illness and terminal illness, the amounts of, you can't fit that into a 9-to-5 job.

MM: Right.

RC: You need to go visit people. You need to go to memorials. You need to talk to the children late at night. You need to talk to people at all different times sometimes. So if that's not acknowledged by management, the 9-to-5 job becomes impossible, you know.

MM: I would imagine for there to be that, that kind of communication in an organization, where you recognize one another and have the orientation toward understanding rather than competition—

RC: Right.

MM: That there has to be a good deal of trust.

RC: There has to be an enormous amount of trust, and trust is earned over a period of time. And when you take a job like this, you're not taking a job where you're in it for the money, because you're not being paid that much. You're in it for the work. So that sets up the possibility for trust. Because we know most people here are in it because of the work, and so you have to trust people that in their own lives, in order for them to stay healthy, you know, one of the things that we, in our support group for caregivers, what's unique about our center is we have two support groups, one for persons who are terminally ill and one who are caregiving those ill people. And those issues are so different. What happens is the terminally ill people feel so guilty and so terrible that their illness is not just hurting them and their lives, but hurting their partners' lives. That's what they feel terrible about. And the caregivers are feeling like they're just not doing enough, and there's nothing they can do to save their partner.

MM: Right.

RC: So it's, and, so we know here as employees, as volunteers, that if we don't take care of ourselves, then there'll be two people, the persons that we're helping and ourselves that will need support and help, and all of the sudden you have a facility that is burning out all the time.

MM: Right.

RC: Which a lot of nonprofits, that's a very common thing. You know, as people, social workers, teachers, hospice workers, they do burn out if the spiritual piece isn't acknowledged, that taking care of yourself is as important as the work that you do.

MM: Now, when you meet with people, either over a period of time or for the first time, they're at a place in their lives where generally speaking, I'm not sure of this, but my assumption would be that they are at a loss in terms of their identity and what's going to happen in the future and what they should be doing presently, and can you talk a little bit about the nature of transition, being in transition or being in, uh, liminality?

RC: Well, that's a good question. The nature of transition to our, from our identity as our roles, our jobs, our labels of who we think we want to be.

MM: Uh-huh.

RC: You know, I want to be a success in a career, I want to be a good father, a good mother, I want to do my job really well. The transition is, is that when you're dealing with long-term illness, all of that melts away because you simply can't do it. So what's left? The transition is, is to what kind of a human being are you. And are you a loving human being? And are you loved? And that's not an easy transition. It sounds like it would be, but it's not. There's a lot of letting go. There's a lot of sense of loss. When your body fails you, you have to deal with that loss. When you're facing death, you have to deal with the loss of your whole future, the loss of what your kids are going to do, what your husband's going to do, or your wife is going to do. You're losing all of that perspective, all of that hopefulness, and now you're transitioning to consciousness that is breath by breath, day by day, whether you're open or not right now.

MM: Right.

RC: And that's a tough, a touch transition, because you're dealing with so much loss, and at the same time you're dealing with really a heart opening of finding out what's important. And it's a process, you know. My role at the job right off the priority list, and now my role as a human being, is slowly working up to wipe everything out. And all of the sudden the transition, when it occurs, has to do with a human being's experience with how much they, how they deal with fear, because fear is the toughest. Pain is one thing, uh, death happening is one thing, loss is one thing, but the fear of the unknown, that's the scariest piece in the transition, you know. But in order to accomplish the transition, you just need a lot of support. A lot of people don't know that that is a transition. A lot of people don't know that there is something that might be more enlightening. When Jerry started this center 33 years ago, it was for life, terminally ill children. And the one thing that he wanted terminally ill children to get was that love was the most important thing and the most powerful force in the world, and your expression of it, and your ability to see it, is the most important thing. So he wanted to remind children and remind parents that this is the most important thing. Nothing else is that important. And he found that children could make the transition effortlessly.

MM: Wow.

RC: That they wanted to. And this was the lesson that actually blossomed in the center, was because wow, when I saw Jerry's kids in 1977 on a TV show, I'd been a meditator for about 15 or 20 years, 1982, '81 I saw the show, and you know, be here now is, you know, the mantra—

MM: Uh-huh.

RC: Be present, and these children could talk about life and death and life, and the priorities of life, like right here, right now, and they're eight, nine, and ten years old. It was obvious they had made the transition to being present and knowing what that was, and really telling their parents the truth, and their parents getting used to it, and the parents telling their children I'm afraid, I'm afraid of losing you, I'm afraid of you dying, I'm afraid of this illness, and being here right now is the most important thing. And kids can handle it.

MM: Wow.

RC: Once that started happening, you know, that became how the principles unfolded, how the center unfolded. That was the inspiration. That kids can make the transition. If kids can do it, we can do it.

MM: Why do you think that is?

RC: I think they're not as invested into their egos.

MM: Hmmm.

RC: They haven't buried as much material as adults have, you know.

MM: Uh-huh.

RC: Their coping skills are not super-developed. They can cope with anything, children can. Sometimes, this piece, you asked the first question is about identity. You know, identity. We, we get distracted from what identity is. We think identity is our role.

MM: Uh-huh.

RC: We think identity is our job, our career. Uh, and when we're life-threatened
         what we find is our identity is our heart and how we relate and how connected
         we feel. That becomes paramount.

MM: But that's not necessarily how things are valued in society, so it must be
         difficult. I mean, at the end of the day yes, but on a superficial level, on the
         day-to-day, your role in your job and the kind of superficial layers of identity
         are what's valued.

RC: Yes. And, you know, it's not saying that, that there's anything wrong with that.

MM: Right.

RC: It's sort of noticing that, you know, survival happens at all kinds of levels.

MM: Yeah.

RC: We need to feed ourselves, you need to feed your children and protect
         everybody, and you need to have things, certain things. The spiritual part is
         just that sometimes we get so distracted we forget the value of why we're
         doing all of that. And sometimes illness, challenges in life, can bring us back to
         that home base.

MM: Right.

RC: The reason that we have a nice home and a family is because love is important.
         But sometimes, you know, people can get caught up in trying to make that
         extra dollar, trying to stay busy, trying to get our kids to be the smartest kids in
         the world, trying to, you know, be success. That becomes paramount. And we
         don't bring this heart place along with us often. We squeeze it out, little by
         little, without even realizing. Because everybody around us is doing the same
         thing. Where, you go to other cultures where spirituality is paramount, like the
         Indian culture, tribal cultures—

MM: Uh-huh.

RC: You know, all of the sudden you see more of a balance. I think that's why we
         have such a romantic view of American Indians and the indigenous tribes is
         because we see that balance, you know. They don't have any less problems
         than we do, but they seem to have this balance of valuing loyalty, their
         connection to their tribe, their connection to nature, and that somehow, that
         balances what we are attracted to. And we recognize it as valuable.

MM: Right.

RC: Yeah. And so, here we have to be very flexible and it's changing here. Right
         now, the corporate mindset of a new board is now wanting to get this center to
         be successful. So this center has been going through tremendous turmoil, after
         30 years of this nonhierarchal—

MM: Uh-huh.

RC: Platform, and this flexible management style has now changed. It's not
         spiritually-based anymore in management. The board is coming with this really
         strong, let's be a success, let's be a world entity rather than a community
         entity—

MM: Uh-huh.

RC: And now the values have changed. So the upheaval is, is that the people who
         have helped create this for 30 years, you know, two-thirds of them are gone,
         and now people are being hired with this kind of mindset. You know, we're

punching in on the clock, you know, all of our time is now being watched, and the identity of this place is changing completely. So people having a voice is changing, because a success model rather than a spiritually-based reality model that actually responds to the community and can teach that, and I think that's why we've been popular, is now changing. So we'll see what happens.

MM: So it's obviously their definition of success--

RC: Is the bottom line. More money and more advertising and more grants, and it's not necessarily serving the community here, it's really how can I take our brand name—

MM: Right.

RC: And get another grant in New York to do something, and get another grant in Brazil to do something, and, you know, how can I do that? That's becoming more important. And I think that's going to be difficult. I think that's going to be difficult. I think the community base will suffer, because you, I think, we'll see, and I think that spreading out that model, um, will be success and money-oriented rather than spiritually-based, we're students and teachers to each other, and our piece is of value. It's going to, we need to, everything we do needs to be, have a profit margin.

MM: Right.

RC: And most of what we do does not. So how are you going to make that shift? That's a big transition.

MM: Right.

RC: Uh-huh. And like this staff, we don't know what that means. We don't know we can, how the board, and how this new way of doing it, which is going to start in the next month or so, how are you going to transition to everything is a profit margin from everything is a value judgment around loving each other and relating to each other and taking care of each other. How are we going to do that? How are we going to balance those two things? So far there aren't very many models in the world...

Summary

The pilot study introduced me to the topic at hand, and without the tension between my interests, conversational data, and research categories, this study would have failed to address the texts from which the stories are told. The questions and suggestions that came forward in the process of the pilot informed me as I delved into the process of inquiry used in this study. To better understand my process and position as researcher, the next section describes my background, experience, and education.

<u>Background of the Researcher</u>

Twenty-something and disoriented by my inability to identify the universal truth from which I could determine my own path. I, like many others, sought refuge in the inviting embrace of a graduate studies program. It was then that I reluctantly bid farewell to objective certainty, one tightly gripped finger at a time. No longer could I cling to the ideological structures that promised to explain, predict, and control behaviors. And thus, I found myself in the very state I'd hoped to avoid–uncertainty. It was disconcerting yet strangely intoxicating. I'd realized that the "jump over a candlestick" (which, according to folklore, may represent a glimpse into one's future) is less about the landing than it is about flying through the air. A critical hermeneutic perspective allows for the consideration of this flight in light of one's already performed ascent, as well as the desired landing.

My introduction to interpretive inquiry began in the latter half of my M.A. program in Speech and Communication Studies at San Francisco State University. During this time, I was offered an opportunity to teach at the undergraduate level in my department. The experience profoundly influenced my thinking and revealed the compelling call to responsibility in language, relationships, teaching, and learning. I continued to teach throughout the two-year program and once I graduated, I was hired as an Adjunct Professor of Communication Studies at the University of San Francisco.

I currently teach communication theory at the University of San Francisco, San Francisco State University, and Santa Rosa Junior College. Shifting from a paradigm of behavior to the orientation toward action has influenced my approach to theory and the classroom community, and these interests extend beyond my work in the academic realm.

Last year, I began consulting for two small organizations, both of whom sought to improve communication between their members. Having never read any of the texts to which the colorful motivational posters refer, I began with the one thing I knew for sure—the relationship between self and other that inspires the narratives that disclose the worlds they've created. These narratives house the organization, and in many cases, the plot is missing someone or something of importance. The work of emplotment usually makes for better stories as the organizations' members become better storytellers.

This study is both the influence and product of my work in classrooms and organizations. Despite popular discourse about the differences between educational institutions and professional communities, I believe that the only "real world" is one created in language.

Summary

This study explored employee call-to-service policies as organizational texts. These texts provided cultural artifacts for analyses, but perhaps more importantly, they told the stories of organizations in different ways. Written in particular voices, the languages of policy influence the discursive events that constitute the organizations themselves. As the medium through which members identify and relate, policy is of critical importance because its language contributes the construction of a plot, which has the capacity to influence enduring narratives of an organization.

Critical hermeneutic participatory inquiry reflects the ontological orientation toward the topic at hand, as well as the epistemological concerns in the collection and analysis of data. Three privately held, service-oriented companies participated in the study, and a minimum of two members from each organization contributed to the

collection of conversational data and analysis. Organizational policy texts provided

additional data for interpretation and discussion, and themes of narrative identity, mimesis,

and imagination guided this movement toward understanding. Together, participants and I

explored their organizations through kaleidoscopic turns, rather than microscopic

examination, and the results yielded both answers to my inquiries and new questions for

consideration.

CHAPTER IV: PRESENTATION OF DATA

Introduction

In Chapter IV, I present the data collected for this study. The data consists of research conversations shared with members of the three participating organizations, reflections from my journal entries, as well as excerpts from each of their employee handbooks. Woven together, these data represent narratives of people who work in various levels of different of organizations. When their narratives are considered in conversation with one another, their common threads are revealed. Though each account is contextualized by a particular workspace, the consideration of policies, as well as the personal and professional challenges related to enforcing them allowed me to emplot a story of policy that is lived and told by many.

My purpose in this chapter is to offer the data in a manner that best presents the depth and breadth of the conversations and handbook contents, which have come together in themes.

Policy as an Organizational Artifact

Though clearly stated in the participant letters and disclosure forms, I gently approached the process of obtaining employee handbooks when it was time to collect them from each organization. I felt as though this was a sizable request as manuals are often regarded as intellectual property, and I figured that they most likely contained private or intimate information that would reveal some the of inner workings of each company's public façade. The shift from public to private spectator caused me to feel a bit apprehensive, however, each organization willingly offered their manuals in full. It was

my first sense of policy's place in daily work. Though they are a staple and indeed a necessity of organization, their influence is rarely recognized.

As part of the hiring process at most organizations, new employees are given a handbook designed to introduce the employee to the company, outline important legal information, and explain the expectations of daily interaction. Ben, the Assistant Manager at Fit-n-Furry, explained that their manual covers these details, but doesn't play a great role in how employees have coordinated their actions. "I took over the policies and then kind of, you know, went by those at first, but then, you know, slowly adapted because especially working with animals, it's changing every day." A policy manual is viewed as a symbol or right of entry, but it is often difficult to place their meaning in the ongoing discourse of action. Ben added, "It is something that, you know, our boss does, he does like people to read and, you know, they did spend a lot of time putting that together, but it's something that, kind of, I don't know, is just kind of pushed aside a lot of times, I think." Several months before meeting with Ben, I spoke with Grant, Fit-n-Furry's owner. His approach to the handbook was directed toward creating a particular kind of work environment inspired by his interest in servant leadership. Grant explained that he gives each new employee a book about servant leadership in addition to the manual. "And so when I'm interviewing somebody I say I really want you to read through this book. I don't want you to read it quickly. Read four or five pages at a time." The book, along with the conduct manual, which was inspired by the notion of servant leadership, reflects the ideological perspective through which employee action was imagined and valued. Grant and his wife and business partner, Marci, created the manual with intentions to provide employees with an organizational narrative.

Katie Thomas, Office Manager at Ciarra Construction, described their employee handbook as a non-artifact. Although the text is distributed to everyone in the organization, it was designed to outline the safety and legal stipulations demanded by law. The manual is not symbolically profound and was written from a template belonging to the company's lawyer. Katie reflected on the policy writing process and, with her eyes gazing upward she retrieved the thought. "I believe it was written by our attorney, so I think it's a standard template – that he put together." Katie seemed detached from the policy manual – it didn't represent something larger than itself, nor did it set forth specific ideological maxims. It was clear that neither Katie nor Walt viewed the Ciarra Construction policy book as a realistic documentation of daily actions. In fact, they both expressed the desire to keep as little as possible in writing concerning responsibilities and hierarchical protocol. Aside from the mention of an open-door policy, the employee handbook does not contain moral or philosophical codes meant to inspire the actions of employees.

William Blouin, Vice-President of Human Resources of Senior Lifestyle Corporation explains policy as a rather unromantic record of accountability for employees. "The policy, in my opinion , is to make sure we are consistent and fair. That's the purpose of policy – you can't really create a policy on how to be a leader. It's more, you know, intuitive." Clearly, organizations view their policies differently and Senior Lifestyle Corporation's leaders do not rely on policy for action orientation. Once again, the handbook takes a backseat to the experiences that play out each day between community members. The policy is preserved for an instance of necessity, but the text does not represent the ideal embodiment of an organizational member.

Although employee calls to action are long, and often interspersed with formal legality, some employees take their organization's mission statement as a sound bite, meant to guide their actions. Ben, of Fit-n-Furry, came back to the mission statement each time we discussed his attitude toward his work. He repeatedly reminded me of their mission statement by saying, "the motto is serving people and pets with excellence and add value to their lives, and that's really what I think Grant and Marci set out to do and I think that's what we're doing" Later in the same conversation, I asked Ben to tell me the story of Fit-n-Furry from his perspective. He said, "Just like the statement says, you know, serving people and pets with excellence and adding value to their lives." This is a mission statement that has been reinforced by management, and to varying degrees, appropriated by those within the organization.

Senior Lifestyle Corporation's employee handbook states that "our goal is to foster the individual dignity of the residents in our communities and enhance the quality of their lifestyle with quality services, care, and hospitality." The mission statement was designed to "keep the organization focused to achieve that goal," and it reads, "To create opportunities to nurture the spirit of America's elders and celebrate the rhythm of each life through open communication, innovative leadership, personal growth and a commitment to excel." Bill Kaplan, owner and President of Senior Lifestyle Corporation, takes great pride in this mission. He stood with me as I read it from the plaque hanging in the waiting room of the company's headquarters. Bill explained that he had purposely used "elders," not "elderly," because he wanted to remind people that a sense of wisdom comes with age. He also shared that the mission statement represents his approach to business. Bill is closely involved with many aspects of the business and tries to keep a certain approach to business

at the forefront of employees' minds. He warned, "but what happens when you become too profitable, you start changing. I don't allow that. I'm so involved with that. If I see that happening, I'm all over that person. They know it's not my philosophy and I won't have it." Bill's personality is a driving force in Senior Lifestyle's approach to work. So, the mission statement may hold no meaning without a real sense of what it is meant to represent. However, if a certain spirit is captured and shared in discourse, then a representation of that shared understanding becomes more meaningful to actors. Roth, a District Manager at Senior Lifestyle Corporation notes,

> I really think that comes from Mr. Kaplan, encouraging people to have the entrepreneurial – you know....and I think that Mr. Kaplan has always given us that. And even my immediate, my boss and his boss, they all have the same type of personality, that this may or may not work – you know, what I'm trying to – it's that, not having fear of failure. I know that I can start a program and that it may not work and there won't be any repercussions from trying it.

This example demonstrated to me the influence of personality and shared meaning. Although this was true at Senior Lifestyle Corporation, I found that at Ciarra Construction, Walt had a very different view of mission statements. "I have paid people a lot of money to help us write our mission statement. It was a waste because the statement is a marketing piece. It isn't for us, it is for the public. And, no matter how well one is written, it's only as good as the people behind it." Walt explained that the organization is filled with people who believe in the company, and who do great work. However, he credited none of that to the mission itself.

Policy takes on forms that range from written to verbal, symbolic to legal, and there is no guarantee that they will inhabit the minds of actors. Beyond the desire to express the organization's story, the work of policy must present a set of standards for which all members are accountable. These standards are thought to establish a sense of fairness and

consistency among people in organizations. However, it seems that the tension between law and actuality challenge conceptions of justice.

Policy and Politics: Law and the Organization

In theory, policies serve to protect both employees and employers by establishing standardized practices to which all members are held accountable. However, in the practice of work, it more often than not becomes apparent that consistency does not always ensure justice. This appeared early in my research process and continued as a theme throughout my conversations. In regard to policies, Bill Kaplan of Senior Lifestyle Corporation acknowledged that "we have them because we have to have them, but they're not as stringent as a lot of companies." Bill's approach is not uncommon, but like any viable business, legal considerations must be taken seriously. This is where Stephen Levy, Senior Lifestyle Corporation's Vice-President and General Counsel comes in. I asked for Stephen's thoughts regarding unwritten rules and he responded,

> If you have the policy and you don't follow it, there's actually – I think you really are changing the presumption. The presumption, you know, if you're an employer and you say, oh, I have a policy on that. Did you follow it? No. The presumption is that you've done something wrong or that you've disadvantaged somebody, somehow. If you don't have a policy and then someone say well, when that occurred to me you treated me like A, and when it occurred to them like B. You can't defend yourself by saying well, we've never really had a policy, but you still have to answer the question as to why you treated two similarly situated individuals in different manners.

Every organization has one or more people designated to consider the legalities of policy, and these individuals have the unenviable task of creating the impression of consistency in the all but consistent and seemingly paradoxical world of bureaucracy. In my conversations, my partners and I often vacillated between viewing policies as protection for employees and employers, and protection from one another; the unfortunate reality

being that there will most likely be one or more people that will take advantage of

exceptions to a rule. In a discussion of Senior Lifestyle's policy, Stephen asserted:

> …you're setting yourself up for failure when you start making exceptions and looking at things differently. The fact of the matter is, we're all human and we all do it every day. But I think we walk a fine line with respect to limiting liability when we do that, because when you deviate from your policies, what you're doing is you're opening the door just a little bit and someone's going to try to drive a truck though it.

This statement immediately reminded me of something that Bill Kaplan said in an earlier

conversation. Though Stephen is mindful of every nuance relating to Senior Lifestyle

Corporation's policy, Bill had a very different take on it. In his words:

> You can set policies and rules and regulations and if you change them, there's no impact legally because we're a private company, we can do whatever we want. There are standards that people follow. Are there deviations to those standards? As long as we don't play favorites, and there's exceptions to the rule…if someone is having a difficult time and needs additional time off, then we'll make an exception and don't worry, about work. Because in the long run it pays off. And the other employees who maybe see this, appreciate it. They say, gee, I could be in that position and they're not putting me out in the cold…there's certain gray areas and you deal with them as they come up.

Perhaps policy manuals remain out of sight for a reason. The distance between the reader

and the text allows for a more romantic interpretation of what is written in black and white

and in retrospect, they blur into the grays we more commonly regard as reality. Even those

who publish policies often feel conflicted about the lack flexibility that has come to

represent fairness in the eyes of the law.

The adherence to a consistent rule-set may protect a company from discrimination

charges, but that kind of inflexibility has its own drawbacks. There will always be

extenuating circumstances for which exceptions to a rule would seem appropriate. This

may be the greatest challenge of pre-structured rule-sets. Walt Oxley, owner of Ciarra

Construction, explained to me that on more than one occasion, state and federal laws

forbade him from doing what he felt was right for his employees. "You know, the law may set a standard and look like it's fair from the outside, but why shouldn't I be able to give an employee with fourteen years of service a break when I know that they have a sick family member?" It didn't seem fair to me, which led me to ask how some of my conversation partners reconcile the dialectical nature of corporate liability and human compassion. I learned that room for the latter was most reliant on unwritten rules.

Policy in Text and Context

Aside from the tension between legality and practice, there exists a pull between what is written in the policy, and what happens in the actions and circumstances of work. Though job titles and responsibilities establish formal networks of relationships, the real interaction happens outside of the structured or rule-governed expectations. Understanding, respect, and solicitude are most recognizable in the actions for which there are no written directives. Further, these connections may be most critical to the survival of an organization. Almost anyone can act in accordance with a set of rules. However, when individuals choose actions that benefit their institutions, and do so without precedence or planning, they're regarded as having great intuition or leadership skills. One may argue that such actions reflect a tacit understanding necessary to perform in a just institution. Katie, when elaborating on Ciarra Construction's approach to policy said "…and that's why we don't write a lot down. For one of our employees who has like a lot of travel to support her daughter, we actually gave her half her bonus and half in days off. I mean, we didn't tell HR, we didn't tell anybody. It's between me, her, and my dad and that's it." This approach is not unique, and it seems that many interpretations are figured as function of maintaining justice, and not circumventing it.

Nicole Sutton, the General Manager at Fit-n-Furry, described her lack of interest in prescriptive governance as a management style. "I'm not fond of the management style where basically everything is – you are reprimanded, you are in trouble, and you kind of try to keep people on their toes. And so rather, as far as conduct goes, it's kind of I'll bend over backwards for you if you'll bend over backwards for me, you know." Nicole related a story about a former employee who refused to stay late on an exceptionally busy night. She claimed that Nicole was breaking the law by asking her to miss class and stay at work late. Startled back into the world of policy, she recognized the limitations of the golden rule approach to business. That may be an easy thing to overlook, especially if one considers Grant's approach. He said, "But what is fair? And what is your gut telling you? You know, what's in your heart – you know, what's in your heart you trust and what's in your heart, you believe. And in your mind you analyze and rationalize and so forth." Though it sounded to me much like a glittering generality, Grant's comment makes perfect sense to Ben and Nicole.

Having spent a good deal of time in their workspace, I have watched the part-time staff members in their stories of work. What I found was that many seemed far less concerned with particular policies and much more occupied by the chaos of supervising forty or more dogs. Working in a small company seems to allow for a more discourse driven orientation toward policy. It seems, as in my experience at Senior Lifestyle Corporation, that text alone cannot imbue the character of an organization at its greatest. The text, the story, and the relationships create the context for interpretation by members. All of these interpretations, many of which are played out in the public realm, contribute to the understanding of their collective identity. To a certain extent, leaders of organizations

know this – which may be why smaller companies seem to have fewer bureaucratic formalities. Despite the size of the organization, or the length of the conduct policies, interpretation stands as the only event which brings policy into the discourse of a workspace. In front of the text, employers and employees must makes sense of their worlds, and in the process, the meaning of polices are either appropriated, or left within the covers of a manual. In speaking with participants, I wondered how and why certain ideas were more commonly appropriated, hoping to uncover a theme in structure, plot, or language. I did learn something about these elements of meaning, and on the way, observed a surreal portrait of landscapes thrown together on a single canvas. Individuals understand in relationship to the text, long before they reach, or even attempt to understand one another.

Appropriation of Policy

From the data I have collected, it seems that most policies are written to establish guidelines, moral minimums, and standards for people of an organization. As a new member of an organization, we read policies not knowing which ones may be formalities, strictly enforced, or even long forgotten. However, the words of the text have the capacity to create worlds in which employees figure and refigure together.

The reading of a policy tells a story of a static organization—one where consistency prevails and predictability follows. However, the notion of mechanistic precision has become outdated, and even undesirable in most organizational settings. So, those who write policies often do so with the assumption that the ideas contained within the texts are mediated by interpretation. Stephen Levy of Senior Lifestyle Corporation states that:

You can't have a sentence in an employee handbook about every possible thing that could ever happen to a human being, we can't say from our operations department here's how to address any possible concern that a resident family member, vendor, state regulator, policeman, et cetera has when they come to the building. I mean, something will happen in every one of our buildings today that's never happened in any other building. And so we expect that people will use common sense.

Common sense, though often regarded as a universal collection of truths, is a personal and contextually bound way of knowing. The distance placed between the reader and policy allows for interpretation and understanding. So, the knowledge gained from daily work contributes to the field of experience through which one refigures their actions.

Adam Kaplan, who recently joined his father, Bill, at Senior Lifestyle Corporation, had a different orientation toward polices. He believed that, "…conduct, policies and procedures are pretty tied in together. When you overlook policies and procedures, that's when you get into the conflict part of it." He added that "The employee handbook was not so much a legal document, it was more of a management tool." However, this is contrasted by Roth Weaver's philosophy of "see everything, overlook a lot, and correct a little." The difference seems to be that Adam works in the corporate office while Roth works in the field. What may seem black and white from afar, becomes much more variable in practice.

Walt Oxley and Katie Thomas of Ciarra Construction both mentioned the importance of individual perception and a general understanding of what kinds of rules were up for interpretive work. Walt said,

There are some rules that are non-negotiable. In Reno, one of the guys wasn't wearing his hard hat, which is a huge safety risk. We can't stand for that. I told him if he did it one more time, I'd let him go. And sure enough, when I showed up unannounced, no hard hat – and I fired him on the spot.

Some policies are more flexible than are others, and most employees are expected to either know, or learn the difference between them.

Sometimes though, people are encouraged to make their own rules, based on the company's vision. For Fit-n-Furry, this meant an employee's interpretation of servant leadership. Ben related that, " with the day-to-day, it's more just going with the flow and making sure the place as a whole runs, not necessarily, you know, maybe each person has to be doing their job, but it's more important as a whole that all the dogs can be handled and taken care of and everything's going forward." The appropriation of policy is arguably one of the most important aspects of working in a community with others. There are certain rules that must be enacted, but the most successful expressions of these guidelines are most often performed with a spirit of autonomy. Together, people can work toward the best possible organization and do so by bringing their own interpretations into their daily actions.

Roth Weaver explained that he told the staff at the Breakers Community that they could use the company account at the nearby florist when they felt it necessary. He remembered that many of the team members were apprehensive at first, and unsure of their own authority to order flowers based on their own assessments. However, soon after that meeting, a resident, Mrs. Barnes, lost her husband. Erin, the receptionist at the Breakers, went to the florist, purchased a bouquet, and delivered it to Mrs. Barnes' room. This was the first of many bouquets that staff members gifted to residents. Policies are often presented as limitations rather than opportunities, and the manner in which the story is emplotted seems to have a great deal of influence on the members of an organization.

The ability to share knowledge with others in an organization sets the stage for more candid conversation and the presentation of new ideas. Senior Lifestyle Corporation's Vice President of Human Resources, William Blouin shared his experience

of meeting with the night-shift nurses at one of their communities. "They're kind of the forgotten children of the organization. No one ever talks to the third shift…They had great ideas and we were able to implement almost everything that they recommended." During my visits to Senior Lifestyle Corporation's residences, I noticed that some employees seemed a bit more enthusiastic than did others. And I spoke off the record with several of them. Clarence, the head of facilities, explained that the job required compassion. "You have to be a compassionate person, or else you won't last a day here." I remember Roth being disappointed at Clarence's response to a comment about fixing a resident's sink. We were in a meeting, which Roth appropriately called the "Standing Tuesday Meeting." Not only was it a weekly event, but the attendees actually stood for the entire thing. Clarence rolled his eyes at the fact that the resident had forgotten that the sink was repaired the day before. After the meeting was adjourned, I asked Roth how people could possible maintain his level of cheer, every day. He granted me that, and acknowledged that working in the field was much different than working in the office. It seems that people need some space at work to be human, and policy doesn't always account for that space. If policy does account for life circumstances, it does so with the expectation that unforeseen events will only occur two days out of the year. I learned from each of the participating organizations that care for the other, policy or not, is essential to the health of the work community.

Solicitude

A demonstrative and genuine care for the other can do so much to create a community of trust, without which, people feel as though they need to monitor their every action. In an unrecorded conversation with Ciarra Construction's owner, Walt Oxley, he

described his approach to business as a system of trust. Although people have let him down in the past, he believes in the importance of first and second chances. This theme continued in my conversations with Grant and Bill. All three are business owners, and all three have brought their families into the business. Walt started Ciarra Construction by employing a few of his friends, and some of them are still working there. About six years ago, he employed three of his four children and his son-in-law. Grant and his wife Marci co-own Fit-n-Furry, and employ a group of people who share, or are willing to embrace, the canons of servant leadership. In December 2008, their daughter, Stephanie joined the business as the head groomer. When requesting these organizations' participation in my study, I didn't realize that each was, to some extent, a family business. I didn't learn about this commonality until I had begun the research process. Fit-n-Furry is the only organization that was founded as a family venture, so although it seems appropriate to recognize the familiar theme, I don't believe that it's a prevalent narrative in all three histories. When I first realized that my participants shared the experience of having family in the workplace, I thought that perhaps it would explain some of their policy similarities. However, one theme is much more prevalent than relation alone; the expression of genuine care. Solicitude invites a freer workplace where others feel safe in their autonomy, yet tied together in their commitment to one another and their work.

Nicole, General Manager of Fit-n-Furry, insisted that sincere mutuality is the foundation of a fair workplace. This entails the willingness to both give and receive care. "But let's do it in a good way, you know? In a way that we all feel good about it and it makes us just want to continue to like to be here, and like each other." The relationships between people create an organization. Without the collection of individual actions and

shared experiences, the organization is reduced to some tangible evidence, proving only that it once existed. The people in a just institution is alive in language, and justice is produced, maintained and restored when we take care of one another.

Roth Weaver, in an unrecorded conversation, told me a story about Dorothy, a housekeeper at the Breakers Residence. He said that she had come to him crying, explaining that she needed an extra day off to deal with a loss in her family. Her immediate supervisor, Leticia had refused her permission to take the additional leave. What he said resonated with me, and I don't think he realized how poignant it was. He asked Leticia why she said no, and she responded by pointing out that Dorothy had already used her additional leave time. Roth asked "Leticia, have I ever said no to you? Have you ever asked me for something and been refused?" The answer was no, and she began to see her role as a manager quite differently—as a supporting figure, rather than as a rule enforcer. Bill Kaplan offered his fundamental belief regarding organizational care:

> The residents come first. They're like family. Then our employees come second, because those employees have to be taken care of and treated with dignity and respect, just like our residents, because if they are treated with dignity and respect, they're going to treat the residents and their families the same way. And then if that happens, everything as a business, the business aspect of what we do takes care of itself.

Roth Weaver explained that caring for the other is rewarding, but challenging at the same time. He handed me a letter of thanks, which was written by one of the resident's children, and it so happened that this resident was very well-liked by the staff. Some people, however, are not so easy to love. Roth says, "He was one of the eighty percent that it's easy for the staff to be nice to him because he was sweet to them, and it's the other twenty percent – the ones that are difficult to love – that need our love the most." An acknowledgment that care can be challenging, and seemingly thankless at times, speaks to

the beauty of the act itself. Solicitude is a genuine care for the other, but that doesn't mean that it's effortless. In fact, this is something that requires not only conversation, but practice as well. Roth added that, "the training we've done lately is winning over that twenty percent, because as I said, the staff does really well with the Joyces of the world, but they don't – you know, when someone's yelling at them, they don't do well. So, we're practicing." Learning initiatives, though connoting a rather mechanistic and unidirectional exchange, may offer opportunities for members of an organization to join together, share stories, and refigure the narrative of their workplace.

Though nestled in a strict ideological belief system, Grant also communicated the importance of care at Fit-n-Furry. "And I have a belief and faith in Christ and the Bible and what the Bible says about to be the greatest in God's kingdom is to be the servant of all." Grant's expression of approach focuses less on particular relationships, and more on constructs of leadership theory. He explains that, "Sometimes servers serve within the pack…sometimes they're in head of the group and sometimes they're at the back. There are just different leadership styles." The notion of care is highly structured, and although care for others is the foundation of the company, care for each other is framed by definitive assumptions about leadership. This seems to limit the ubiquity of their belief system because those who do not subscribe to the particular conventions of servant leadership run the risk appearing to be without leadership skills. When referring to the Fit-n-Furry company identity, Ben mentioned Grant's approach to servant leadership. "That's his main thing, like when we first started, he really pushed it on us and said that's the kind of company he wanted to be was on servant leadership." As a guiding principle, it may be best expressed by individual interpretations and the resulting discourse. The language of

this discourse is a world in which members of the organization configure together, and perhaps appropriate more actively.

The conversations shared with participants were inspired by my questions about the text of policy. Though they thoroughly and splendidly exceeded my expectations, the texts themselves were rich with content. Though sometimes regarded as unreferenced archives of bureaucracy, they disclose the original narrative on which present practices are interpreted and performed.

In Front of the Text: Employee Handbooks

In this section, I present data collected from each organization's employee handbook. All three serve as reference guides that welcome new employees, and offer overviews of employee-related benefits and policies. Though relatively standard, there are some notable themes that emerged from my reading in response to the conversations I shared with participants. After my initial readings of each manual, I reread them, keeping themes of voice, and promises in mind as guides for analysis. Table 5.1 offers a general overview each company's employee manual, and a presentation of handbook data follows.

Table 5.1: Handbook Characteristics

Participant	Length	Look	Authorship	Updated
Ciarra Construction	16 pages	Black and White, Stapled	Corporate Attorney	Fall 2007
Fit-n-Furry	58 pages	Color, Spiral Bound	HR Coach	Spring 2008
Senior Lifestyle Corporation	32 pages	Black and White, Spiral Bound	Bill, Stephen, HR Team	Summer 2006

Voice

The tone of an introductory text is presumably crucial in creating a first impression. Each employee manual offered a warm welcome in the opening paragraphs. For example, Ciarra Construction's (2007: 1) opening reads:

Welcome to the Ciarra Construction Team! We are looking forward to a great working experience with you. We feel that clear and open communication is the best way to support individual success, and the success of our business. The information, policies, and materials provided in this manual are designed to benefit you, your co-workers, our clients, and the company. Employees are required to read and know the points introduced in this handbook. Verbal communication, however, is of utmost importance whenever you have a problem. We hope that you will feel free to discuss any aspects of your employment with us at any time.

Shortly thereafter, the language changes to a third person account and a less conversational tone is used. Following the introduction, a section labeled "authority" reads, "Management reserves the right to alter, amend, or discontinue in whole or part, the Employee Handbook. No one other than a managing member may alter or amend this AUTHORITY and reservation of rights, except in writing, signed by the managing member" (Ciarra Construction 2007: 1). The shift in voice created a less coherent narrative as I tried to figure out the relationship between the writer and reader. In our conversations, both Katie and Walt mentioned that the handbook includes only that which is required by law, and that it was written by the company's attorney. In accordance with the statement above, they also expressed a preference for verbal communication. This has worked well in the smaller office setting, but the manual is distributed to all employees, many of whom work only in the field. The written manual may be an opportunity to share some of the company's history and personality with those less likely to share in consistent communication between the field and office. For this reason, voice may play a role in members' view of their roles and relationships.

Walt and Katie view policy as both a help and a hindrance. As a result of the small size of the organization and their preference to make decisions on a case-by-case basis, little consideration goes into the employee handbook aside from the routine updates required by law. The handbook does not serve as a branding tool, nor does it prescribe a

particular attitudinal position. In this sense, it serves its purpose of introducing a new employee to the policies and benefits related to the job.

The Fit-n-Furry employee handbook takes a more personal approach in introducing new employees to the corporate ethos. Following the standard introductory paragraph, the reader is briefed on the mission statement, which is broken down into annotated parts. The mission statement, "At Fit-n-Furry, we serve people and their pets with excellence adding value to their lives," is explained in terms of Grant, Marci, and their human resources coach's interpretations of excellence and value. They explain that, "We believe a person who serves people and pets humbly at high levels of excellence is a leader. We believe that great leadership is an unavoidable by-product of effectively implementing our mission." The expectations around employee attitude are clearly communicated, and business philosophy which, "provides the basis for all company policies and procedures," is presented in sections labeled, "Service to others," "Transparency," "Excellence," "Perception is Reality," "Clients and Pets are Our Guests," and "Service by Chart, Not by Chance (Fit-n-Furry 2008: 3-5). The eager tone, matched by a timbre of exemplification, addresses the reader with an assumption that the ideas contained within the manual require an elementary style introduction.

The Fit-n-Furry manual is full of rhetorical questions like, "what do we mean by humility?" (2008: 5), or "how do people…respond to an encouraging person who always goes the extra mile?" (2008: 7). The relationship between author and reader demonstrates an assumed deficit in the employees' knowledge. Many statements are prefaced with the phrase, "this means" or "that means," again communicating an assumptive hegemony. Even statements meant to demonstrate a degree of trust somehow fall short of action

orientation. The manual (Fit-n-Furry 2008: 7) states that, "we wish to empower you to become someone who consistently performs your job in accordance with company policy and procedure – to look for ways to improve your performance." The prescriptive language used in this manual does not invite a great deal of elaboration or individual interpretation. As a starting point from which conversations arise, this sets a rather restricted tone for employee interaction.

Senior Lifestyle Corporation's employee handbook is the intermediate in page length, and the degree to which they prescribe the attitudes and interactions of their employees. In four paragraphs, Senior Lifestyle Corporation welcomes new hires and explains the purpose of the text. It states:

> SLC and its management affiliates have been established to provide the highest level of service and care to our residents in a pleasant and efficient manner. This is a very important job requiring dedication and effort, and you, as a member of our staff, play a key role. We hope that you, too, will take satisfaction in your work here" (Senior Lifestyle Corporation 2006: 1).

This brief introduction serves to explain the company's vision and the purpose of the manual. The guidelines and policies around equal opportunity employment, harassment, vacation time and related information are detailed, but do not offer a particular philosophy or preferred employee mentality. Programs like education assistance and employee referral prizes are explained in a detailed yet concise manner, and all sections are written in second person. Phrases such as "The Company is interested in the well-being of both you and your family" (Senior Lifestyle Corporation 2006: 16), communicate a sense of familiarity and connection. The writing was done in a straightforward and friendly fashion.

Though dependent upon individual interpretation, my reading of these manuals left lasting impressions on me, as I read and reread these texts from the imagined perspective of a new employee. Aside from gaining a information about each company and its handbook personality, I realized that whatever the style, each company was making promises to employees and their clients. These promises must be kept in order for a relationship of trust to emerge, and these promises are essential for work communities if they are to be bound with their members.

Promises

Employment is a binding agreement between an organization and its members. If promises are made and kept, a mutual trust will provide members of an organization with a sense of safety and commitment. As a symbol of good will, employers may offer benefits which serve as tangible symbols of care and security. In many cases, employers also pledge to provide open, creative spaces in which people can do their work with ample support from those around them. Brand identities or constructs of a corporate culture are often woven into the story of new membership. Though the idea of a consistent corporate personality may be pleasing to some, employers must be careful when issuing assurances, because broken promises threaten the relationships of trust that support just institutions. The participants' employee handbooks are records of the first promises made to new members as they join a new community. In theory, these texts are designed to provide the legal and logistical information related to employment, but even in the most succinct, welcoming texts tend to contain promises of a more personal nature.

Walt, of Ciarra Construction, stated that he prefers to write only that which is absolutely necessary, and the pithy handbook is proof of his position. Still, he and

management make several promises in addition to those required by law. The Ciarra

Construction handbook (2007: 1) states the following in a section labeled, "Open Door

Policy":

> It is the policy of Ciarra Construction to communicate and treat each employee as
> an individual. We'll always try to quickly resolve any problem that you have
> related to your job. Effective and constructive employee-employer relationships
> are developed though mutual trust and communication. The management of Ciarra
> Construction is committed to maintaining a direct relationship with our
> employees…In short, our door is always open whenever you wish to speak to us.

This is a powerful statement that could pose more of a challenge in a larger company. In

our conversations, Katie often noted that promises were more easily kept in a small

business, but she also spoke of the challenges related to working in an intimate

environment of candor and accountability. The checks and balances of working in a small

office would manifest into vigilant score-keeping of rightly-timed lunch breaks and

personal phone calls. The discourse shared between those who gather together in a

workspace is often more compelling that what may or may not be written in policy, but the

text is the first encounter that marks a point from which horizons are compared.

Trust between employees and employers is built on promises kept, but like any

other relationship, when there are instances in which that trust is threatened, both must

work together in order to restore it. An underlying connection between people as well as a

comprehension of a shared language creates a context in which individuals can work

toward understanding. Fit-n-Furry's employee manual thoroughly explains how

employees will be assessed, and offers a fair but perhaps tacitly deficit-oriented statement

on the importance of perception. In the event that a misunderstanding occurs, a hierarchy

of narratives ensues. In the section (2008: 4) labeled "Perception is Reality," it's asserted

that:

> What a person perceives to be reality is what is real, at least to that person. You may feel that you are doing everything "right" or "by-the-book." However, if your client, your fellow team member or your manager perceives that you have not completed something with excellence or with complete integrity, then it's the same as not doing it at all. In fact, it may be worse than not doing it because your honesty and reliability have been compromised…we must recognize however, that perception is never a substitute for truth and humility. Please be aware that even one negative occurrence with a client reduces their overall perception of you and the Fit-n-Furry experience.

The tacit values and assumptions regarding truth and perception will be discussed in the following chapter. Having identified the meaning of promise as a theme in the world of policy, this section caught my attention because for the first time, I noticed that very little was offered in the way of care for the employee. Solicitude, as a shared narrative, must also take into consideration the trust and protection of those designated to perform care as a part of their work.

Senior Lifestyle Corporation communicates concern for employees, and the first page of the handbook contains an acknowledgement of interdependence between the corporation and the employee. "We value your service and are interested in your progress and general welfare. We realize how well you like your job will depend, to a great extent, upon how well you understand what we expect from you and what you may expect from us" (Senior Lifestyle Corporation 2006: 1). The simple recognition of mutual accountability constitutes a plot, or a sense of how future stories might unfold. The remainder of the handbook explains the rights, benefits, and responsibilities of residents, employees, and the corporation. In fair detail, aspects of employment are clearly stated and the relationship-oriented tone remains consistent.

All three texts, analyzed in conversation with one another, seem to represent the intentions of the presumed authors. Walt of Ciarra Construction favors a lighter manual;

one that complies with state and federal laws, but leaves him enough room to make some decisions on a case-by-case basis. He is actively engaged in almost every decision, and given the size of the California office, he much prefers it that way. Bill, of the Senior Lifestyle Corporation, aims to run a big business as if it's a small one. This doesn't allow him a hand in every affair, but he wants to extend the same feelings of care and community that employees provide for residents and their families. Grant, an enthusiastic new business owner, had a vision for Fit-n-Furry based on the tenets of servant leadership. Through a thorough and lesson-oriented story, he hopes that employees will adopt the values of servant leadership and behave according to the standards of excellence outlined in the handbook.

Summary

In Chapter IV, I present the data collected from conversations with members of all three participating organizations, as well as excerpts from each company's employee handbook. Some initial themes were identified and presented in the process of primary analysis, but participants' voices were the predominant force as they entered into conversation with each other. In Chapter V, the data are interpreted through critical hermeneutic analysis, and the research categories of narrative identity, mimesis and imagination.

CHAPTER V: ANALYSIS OF DATA

<u>Introduction</u>

In Chapter IV, I presented the narratives of my participants and how their voices contributed to a story about organizational policy. In this Chapter, I revisit these narratives and explore them using critical hermeneutic analysis. It is here that the voices of the data will at once express the presence of narrative, care, imagination, and history, but also reveal a profound need to refigure concepts of organization through a critical hermeneutic lens. Curious participants often asked what I had found; as if the process would uncover a single conclusion in which was housed solutions to every organizational problem. Though it took only minutes for me to explain, their understandings of a critical hermeneutic paradigm evolved over time, through shared stories, questions, and responses. To ask what I had found, and in turn, to believe that I had located a kind of solution, was to assume that problems are simple, identifiable, consistently perceived as problems. Though many claimed that hermeneutics seemed much too complicated to understand; most, if not all of the participants soon found that organizational theory from critical hermeneutic position is not rocket science, and that, in fact, it is anything but.

Interpretation may be complicated, but not because it calls for scientific reduction of being in the world or a series of arduous mathematical maneuvers. Rather, it is the capacity to view the world as it is, and the potential to embrace, with others, the many standpoints from which a single event can take on infinite meanings. Herda (1999: 132) explains that, "once we have found a new truth, spoken to us through our tradition of which we risked part, we cannot say that now we are alone in this discovery. We are not." Interpretive inquiry seeks to gain understanding for and with others, and narratives provide

linguistic sketches that come together to on a single canvas. Like a work of art, each is a representation of what the artist sees, and more importantly, what's awakened in the imaginations of its viewers. The tension between and within all of these retellings provides the greatest space for understanding.

Having recorded, transcribed and read the research conversations and the policy manuals of each participating organization, I found myself in front of these texts for the first time. The data collection process marked a series of events in which my relationships with participants developed, and new understandings of each organization emerged. However, it wasn't until I encountered the data in their entirety, that a new narrative emerged, and I was faced with a text much more profound than any one conversation or manual. Having benefited from the participants' contributions along the way, it is my responsibility to bring the voices of theory into those of the data, so that together, they may imagine the promises of a desired future.

Herda (1999: 128) believes that, "the researcher as narrator – the researcher is more of a narrator than an analyst – calls upon productive imagination in the invention and discovery of plots grounded in quotes from conversation and theory." The analysis of data is guided by three research categories, the exploration of which disclose possibilities for new interpretations of the past and present in their connection to future actions. These categories are narrative identity, mimesis, and imagination, and serve to illustrate the many worlds from which organizations are configured.

Narrative Identity

As individuals and members of organizations, actors tell stories about their worlds. These stories are not reports, in that they do not simply recount the details of events.

Instead, the act of bringing life into language constitutes one's identity, as stories of self are emplotted and shared. Ricoeur (1988: 247) reminds us that, "individual and community are constituted in their identity by taking up narratives that become for them their actual history." Narratives are not by-products of identity. They don't summarize an already figured self, but they allow for the self to exist in language, and therefore recognize one's own being. The narrative identity is so fundamental that it concerns both the individual and the collective.

To varying extents, actors within organizations recognize how important collective narratives are, but the attempt to lead or emplot the narratives of employees oppressively contains the discourse on which all members rely to make sense of their community. In light of my analysis of the data, I propose that just organization should reconsider the taken-for-granted roles of ideology, language, and discourse.

Ideology

Ideology is most appropriately characterized as an absence of critique. When a system of beliefs stands, either by choice or by force, without question, the field of narrative invention is usurped by an often unforgiving archetype. To prescribe a moral or philosophical dogma is to immediately place the actor behind the text. In other words, the application of a model held without critique is to discount, perhaps completely, one's narrative identity. Grant, owner of Fit-n-Furry, insists that servant leadership must be the model from which all employees work. The terms expressed in the manual provide very little room for an actor to critique anything but one's own work. Take for instance, the statement, "we believe the business processes, policies, and philosophies at Fit-n-Furry are truly admirable" (Fit-n-Furry Employee Handbook 2007: 2). In the context of an

employee handbook, this might go without saying. However, the consistent reinforcement

of this specific value system implicitly objects to critical discourse. "However, we are

always for that higher level of excellence. This is achieved by our continuous service to

clients and to each other – by being helpful, courteous and enthusiastically gracious to one

another" (2007: 2). Again, it is suggested that a unique or monumental level of quality can

only be reached if one continues to demonstrate a particular set of behaviors. Behaviors do

not invent, or create—they duplicate. If the employee is not invited to question what it

means to imbue excellence, or imagine how things might be different, then their greatest

asset to the company—their imagination—is ignored.

A reliance on ideology creates a false pretense of stability, in which all things are

explained or contained by a single dogmatic view. Standing in opposition to a pluralistic

view, ideology is threatened by the unavoidable newness of being in the world. Ricoeur

(1989: 227) asserts that,

> the intolerable begins when novelty threatens the possibility for a group to
> recognize and rediscover itself. This feature appears to contradict the first function
> of ideology, which is to prolong the shock wave of the founding act. But the initial
> energy has limited capacity; it obeys the law of attrition.

No matter how compelling or well-intentioned, the attempt to infuse each employee's

consciousness with the tenets of servant leadership is futile, unless employees, from a

position of choice and curiosity, consider themselves in front of the text. Even then, one

cannot assume a hierarchy of interpretation in which the "right" meaning can be

prescribed. An illusion of choice will surely fall away, even if successfully established by

the promises of a founding event. The handbook (2007: 3) claims that, "learning to do

your job with an open heart is what creates leadership at Fit-n-Furry." Though seemingly

open-ended, comments like this specify a particular doctrine that implicitly—if not

explicitly—enforces behavior instead of inviting action. Ricoeur (1981: 228) warns that "what ideology interprets and justifies is, above all, the relation to the system of authority." The strong influence of ideological reason in the context of organizational policy risks the notion of risk itself. It thwarts the otherwise active imaginary in which individuals may refigure the world of their workplace to create possibilities that perhaps exceed even those considered most incredible.

Fit-n-Furry is an organization that truly delivers on their promise to clients. As a patron, I have always appreciated the quality of their services. In this section, I chose to focus on their employee manual because it clearly demonstrates the influence of ideology in organizational policy. The constructs expressed in the handbook, and in the accompanying servant leadership literature may establish an invisible authority, which in addition to the explicit hierarchy, sets the stage for disengaged behavior. More importantly, it denies the narrative identity one needs to uphold a sense of self, and therefore relationships with others in the workspace.

The Language of Narrative

In conversation with many of the participants, I learned that considerable care was taken in the selection of information included in employee manuals. This far outweighed the time spent critiquing or playing in language: It is not just what you say, but how you say it. When taken together, all three organizations' handbooks have more in common than they have differences. Nevertheless, the value-laden worlds created in language silently disclose something about relationships; in language, there are implicit relations that engage others as meaningful contributors or liabilities, as community members, or subjects of discipline. Heidegger (1977: 199) informs us that, "when an assertion is made,

some fore-conception is always implied; but it remains for the most part inconspicuous because the language already hides in itself a developed way of conceiving." The manner in which information is disclosed creates the context for the relationship. Language cannot be taken for granted or regarded as a tool for transmission.

In the text of manuals, as static representations of the relationships that constitute the organization, there exists the opportunity to make promises, the first of which may be immediately fulfilled in the expression of the text; a discourse marked by linguistic play and one that engages the reader and demonstrates a sincere respect for the other. In many contexts, the purpose of policy is in fact, to create a basis for action; however, an objective historical approach may construct a world to which others must conform, rather than extend an invitation to create a world as one works in their community. Language is the medium in which members of an organization live and work together. Liability and protection influence the creation of organizational polices which are often authored or co-authored by attorneys. Therefore, the tone is rarely one of conversation, and the importance of relationships is often lost in the precise language favored by policy writers.

Senior Lifestyle Corporation, although thorough in explaining legalities, writes from the perspective of employee protection. Organizational policies must by law include information regarding legal rights, such as sexual harassment rules, wage scales, and eligibility guidelines for certain services. However, the technical language used in verbatim repetition of governmental regulation does not have to reflect the nature of the handbook itself. The language of Senior Lifestyle's handbook assumes that all employees are honest and worthy of trust. Statements such as "employees are encouraged to report conduct by anyone, whether an employee, a resident, co-worker, supervisor, or non-

employee that may constitute harassment" make no assumptions about the reader in terms of right or wrongdoing. (Senior Lifestyle Corporation 2006: 5). Though it appears subtle, this is a language of mutual trust, and does not assume the worst of employees. Consider this in relationship to the language of Fit-n-Furry's approach. The perspective from which Fit-n-Furry's manual is written places the employee in the position of constant danger of wrongdoing. "You must recognize that comments or conduct related to the personal characteristics of others may be considered harassment and you must not act in a way that unreasonably interferes with other team members' work or creates a hostile environment" (Fit-n-Furry 2007: 46). The plot here places the employee in the role of antagonist, preemptively chastising their imagined behavior. This language creates a world of dominance and control, which can be more stifling than a text that gives the employee no recognition at all.

The Ciarra Construction employee manual is an example of a text written solely for the purpose of government compliance. Walter prefers to place the value of actions in the context of individual circumstance, and rely most heavily on face-to-face communication with employees. However, it seems that an opportunity was missed in the creation of the manual; one that could have put forth an expression of a mutual understanding, and convey a sense of trust through a narrative of the organization's aim, or how it came to be.

Ciarra Construction's policy manual cites the expectations of daily work and standards according to which work must be performed. Very plainly, employees are informed of policies relating to job assignments, designated start times, and so forth. What follows is the overview of laws relevant to the employee and employer relationship. Language is never neutral, and an attempt to create a text free of value systems is a futile

one. Take for instance, Habermas' (1990: 25) discussion of the threefold nexus between utterance and the world. In language is housed not only the world to which a speaker refers, but also "…something in the social world (as the sum total of legitimately ordered interpersonal relations), and to something in the speaker's own world." The linguistic structure of a policy includes the capacity to invite or discourage employee action, and the perspective through which policy is written paints the discursive backdrop in front of which members create their relationships and spaces for meaningful work. An attempt to detach these things from one another, or ignore them completely, will communicate something nonetheless, and perhaps place more distance than necessary between employees and the employer.

Language represents an integral facet of the employee and employer relationship, and serves to extend invitations, alienate others, or in many cases, provide a juxtaposition that imbues a culture of friendly control. Language must be considered not as a means to gain compliance, but as the medium in which the relationships that constitute an organization will emerge.

Mimesis

The "stretching-along" of time (Ricoeur 1983: 74) serves as a powerful metaphor for the fluidity of one's being in the world. As a compound is stretched, it creates a movement in which the present moment is almost indistinguishable from the past or future. As beings in motion, a unique interconnectedness between past and future configures a point at which the present can be conceived. Doing one's best to make this moment meaningful, it becomes the past just as it's enacted. Therefore, the urgency for meaningful action underscores the inextricable link between what has been and what will be. Policy,

in many cases, has the capacity to constitute a historical narrative. Ricoeur (in Kearney 1999: 6-7) asserts that a responsibility to re-remember the past informs a future in which individuals may work in commitment to one another. A policy is a text that remains static as temporal distance separates the individual from their first interpretation.

Mimesis$_1$, or preconfiguration, embodies the individual and collective histories that come together in a historical narrative. A relatively young organization like Fit-n-Furry does not rest on a shared heritage that helps create a collective identity. So, the employee handbook is written at a time of great opportunity. The first day of business, or employment is the beginning of a story and marks a point of ambiguity and hope. The desire to clearly explain and control the daily operations of this new enterprise may, in fact, be an important means of survival for any organization. The safety and health precautions needed for technical work are, without a doubt, noteworthy, and necessitate a level of definition that is less dependent on interpretation and more reliant on physical consistency. However, the story of the organization, from its founding moments, is told through the actions of those who join together in work.

Ciarra Construction could make an effort to recognize the stories of organizational members as events capable of contributing to a new discourse on work relationships. An organization must communicate an appreciation for one's identity in the process of creating a collective one. The historical nature of one's identity should be embraced, rather than rejected, for a homogeneous ideal.

A historical account is, at its best, an inclusive co-authorship that invites members to imagine what may have been and what might be, instead of using the employee handbook to explain what is; for example, Fit-n-Furry could offer employees a narrative of

the organization's "kingdom of as if" (Ricoeur 1984: 64). Rather than presenting only

rules and responsibilities, they might use this opportunity to inspire a discourse of the

future. Such a discourse would invite the many voices of the organization to participate in

the configuration of a just institution.

The world of daily action becomes a location lacking innovation when actors are

not engaged in the process of telling. When immersed in the world of "it is," rather than

"as if," imagination seems like an exercise of diversion instead of an essential element of

meaningful work. The present, mimesis$_2$ cannot be told or plotted in any kind of certainty,

but it calls for action as a prelude to the future. Configuration is made of hundreds,

perhaps thousands of independent actions, split-second decisions and individual

differences. The best policy cannot control this process, and doesn't seek to do so. The

configuration of organizational identity is a shared event that exists within the relationships

of members and one that accepts necessary ambiguity that creates the space for people to

do their work. Only when possibilities are left undefined can members imagine their

relationships in Mimesis$_3$, the future. In most policy manuals, there are few promises

made to the employee, yet a very detailed explanation of their responsibilities to the

company and its clients dominate the content of the text. Again, limiting one's agency in

his or her work, this approach has many dangerous implications.

Policy is a written narrative and as a text, it allows for the process of distanciation,

which as Ricoeur (1981: 145) explains, provides the reader with a new clearing from

which another interpretation may arise. New understandings take shape with the passing

of time, and it is the responsibility of every organizational member to critically reconsider

static accounts of history in light of new experiences. The inextricable bond between past

and future can be best honored by fostering a mutual trust between organizational

members.

The Promise of Organization

Hannah Arendt (1972: 92) maintains that, "every organization of men, be it social

or political, ultimately relies on man's ability to make promises and keep them." If taken

as the responsibility of each organizational member, time may be regarded as the valuable

distance offered to actors as they realize their commitments to one another. Rather than

clinging to static rule-sets, a community of active mutuality will support great feats of

imagination in a context of trust. William from Senior Lifestyle Corporation recounted to

me the following story:

> In our community down in Florida, in Jupiter, Florida, Mangrove Bay, they had a
> meeting with their staff. At his session they were talking about first impressions,
> one of the caregivers, a CNA, made the recommendation of etching MB, Mangrove
> Bay, in the glass entry doors. And they did that and this caregiver actually brought
> her entire family back to show her mom and her husband and her kids what a great
> place to work this is – not only did they listen to what I had to say, but they actually
> acted on it, and here is the result of one of my ideas. So that's really neat.

At first, this story didn't impress me as a great success. In fact, I wondered why

the caregiver was so enthusiastic about the entryway. It wasn't until later that I realized

the significance of the event itself. It wasn't a matter of recognition or reward, but the

fulfillment of a promise. To say that employee comments are valued is a common

inclusion in many organizational policies, but to follow through is often another matter.

This exchange had nothing to do with monetary compensation, or a condition of

employment. It was simply a promise kept and this signified a sense of care and

mutuality—something that you can't demand through policy. However, a policy can invite

a discourse which may contribute the shared experiences that give occasion to events of

great promise. It remains the responsibility of everyone within the organization to keep their words.

Walter and Katie of Ciarra Construction both expressed in conversation the importance of trust and care in the relationships between management and employees. However, they spent little or no time writing about it in their employee handbook. Instead of waiting for issues to arise, they might use the manual as an opportunity to begin a discourse of care. As a symbolic text, the writers in this case, Walter and Katie, should consider the contents as a meaningful contribution to the collective identity of the organization.

The enforcement of ideological ideals does not serve to build trusting relationships. If anything, hegemony creates an environment dictated by a binary of compliance or non-compliance. This kind of policy works against an attempt to create a community of mutuality. When caught up in the ideological game of hierarchical value systems, an organization fails to recognize its greatest possibilities. Hannah Arendt (1961: 263) warns that in losing sight of mutual care:

> We remain unaware of the actual content of political life – of the joy and gratification that arise out of being in the company of our peers, out of acting together and appearing in public, out of inserting ourselves into the world by word and deed.

An organization is itself a promise, or more appropriately, a series of promises made and kept by members in relationships with one another. Though mutual commitment is imperative to any community, few seem to openly discuss the interdependence upon which their successes rely.

What is policy if not a promise? When considered as such, the orientation shifts and calls back into importance the agency of members as they interpret and respond to

their relationships with others in the always unfolding story of their organization. This may also influence the importance placed on individual characteristics in the hiring process. To find a person who can follow the rules is often an easy and therefore successful endeavor. However, to find a person with whom a relationship of trust supersedes a set of guidelines is a much more challenging, but likely rewarding event in the creation of a meaningful work community.

Solicitude

Ricoeur's (1992: 172) notion of the "good life" avows that one "work with and for others, in just institutions." Though imagined and perhaps based in utopian ideals, this is by no means an impossible feat. However, justice, and the protection thereof, can only be supported in context of care. In order to build meaningful relationships, the reciprocity of compassion must be placed at the forefront of policy aims.

Senior Lifestyle Corporation works in a paradigm of compassion, as they are literally in the care business. There is something great to be taken from this model, no matter the purpose of an organization. There is a general recognition that employees must care for others, and be cared for by others. Fit-n-Furry's owners, Grant and Marci, aim to create a nurturing environment for employees by promoting the tenets of servant leadership. Here, the focus is on service to others, sometimes at the expense of one's own needs. The seemingly selfless acts of service contribute to a system of acquiescence, there is no promise that the employees themselves will be cared for by others. The policy explains only what employees should provide for clients, but offers no assurances that care will be given in return.

Solicitude does not entail a complete disregard for one's own needs; rather, it is a mutual regard for oneself and the other as one in the same. The hegemonic ordering of needs cannot create a community of care because it ignores the aspect most critical to solicitude—intention. Again, the distinction between behavior and action must be made. You can demand that a person defer to the needs of others; however, aside from the fact that it may not be the best action in every situation, it offers no choice to the actor. It is a behavior, a trained response. It is constructed by management to appear as a choice. Perhaps the employee is awarded with recognition or a prize of some sort, but this does not make it their choice; nor does it mean that an environment of care has been created. It means that behaviors have been regulated.

In order to truly care for another, one's own needs must be met. An employee should feel that they are viewed as worthy of the same treatment they offer to others. Senior Lifestyle Corporation clearly states that their employees are entitled to respectful treatment by management, clients, and vendors. Fit-n-Furry makes no mention of care for the employee in their lengthy manual. Though their leadership model appears to be centered on solicitude, it falls short in the exclusion of the employee's needs. In this case, solicitude is replaced by servitude, which cannot provide employees with an environment of care, trust, or efficiency.

To care for one another is the most fundamental element of a relationship. Without shared respect, members of an organization are not given the safety they need in order to develop their desired identities at work. Aside from their freedom to work in an institution of fair treatment, they must also feel free to express their ideas and imagine new possibilities for the ways in which they work together.

Imagination

Imagination is often regarded as a personal or private endeavor. On the contrary, however, it is a way of being that can be shared in organization and encouraged as a means of personal and professional growth. Attempts to limit uncertainty do not always produce consistent organizational ends, but the mechanistic approach to work will surely limit the conversations and ideas that lead to innovative collaboration. Senior Lifestyle Corporation calls this an "entrepreneurial attitude." It is an appreciation for trying new things without fear of failure. As Roth related in our conversations, he knows that he can try new policies or procedures without consequence and this freedom has led to several new programs at The Breakers facility. This kind of liberty does not come without risk, but risk represents a tension that is often more productive than consistency. Imagination then, is essential to the process of becoming, and if understood as a natural element of being, organizational members would be called to action, rather than limited to behaviors. In order to work with each other in a thoroughly complex network of icons, we must "…chart a course leading beyond both the Idolatry of the New and the Tyranny of the Same" (Kearney 1998: 224). A starting point may be the utopian potential of imagination, where we may free ourselves from the confines of prescribed roles and conceive of a more fulfilling actuality. Kearney (1998: 226) insists that "it is the schematizing power of imagination which opens up the possibility of some kind of unified horizon for our diverse actions." It is through imagination that we can link the poetics to ethics, work to play, and imagine something more than what we have.

Imagination is too often regarded as threat to the organization by those caught in bureaucratic systems of control. Through the lens of scientific reductionism, organization

looks to be a controllable system of causality. However, it doesn't take much observation to find that no system is so simple, even when complex measurements and unnecessarily stringent protocols seek to standardize it. The energy spent fighting the inherent tension in organization should instead be spent in the enjoyment of uncertainty, because this is the space where imagination is champion. In my analysis of the data, I found that imagination requires, rather than discourages, the time spent in liminal space, and that this calls for a shared sense of play within the organization.

Liminality

The participating organizations represent very different orientations toward policy, though, in speaking with participants, it seems that they all want very similar things. If asked whether or not they'd like to live in an organization where members enjoy a sense of autonomy, where new ideas flow freely, and often are incorporated into their work, they would surely say "yes." However, the risk involved with such an approach seems to make some in management uncomfortable. Some of the reservations regarding ambiguity are the fear of sharing power, a concern for the bottom line, anxiety about consequences, and the inertia of mechanistic management styles. Turner (1967: 99) writes, "Undoing, dissolution, decomposition are accompanied by processes of growth, transformation, and the reformulation of old elements in new patterns."

All three organizations state that they welcome new ideas. For instance, the Ciarra Construction manual talks about an open door policy, and Fit-n-Furry assures employees that their input is valuable. Senior Lifestyle Corporation's handbook also states that they are always open to new ideas. However, the text of the manual does not ensure the appropriation of such policies. The discourse of the organization and the daily work of

actors must reflect these ideals in order for employees to engage in imaginative work. Senior Lifestyle Corporation provides an example of how policy comes into being only when performed and discussed by members. Their message is one that's iterated by managers and, in some cases, coached through meetings and training sessions. Roth recounted the employees' reservations around their own authority to purchase flowers for residents, or to take immediate actions in response to resident requests. However, after a trust was developed, and members performed their right to take license, it became part of their individual and collective identities.

The ability to act without direct approval demonstrates an agency to make decisions, and in a sense, to act in a manner that may bridge that which was and that which will be. In order for this to happen, managers must accept that they are not governing bodies in the minute-to-minute activities of employees. The organizational discourse must reflect a sense of being "on the way," which readily accepts the fluidity of time, narrative, and identity as a forgone circumstance of being in the world. Therefore, a façade of the organization as a static, detached, thinking entity is replaced with the recognition of that organization as a series of complex and inconsistent relationships that hold within them the capacities to create more valuable ideas than any single policy had hoped to inspire. Sometimes these ideas fail, and that is when many retreat back to the old way of doing things—a scientific application of behaviors that reduce risk restore a status quo. However, the reinstatement of these ideals precludes the hope for something greater, and instead settles for a predictable product at the expense of the organization's possibilities, and the identities of its members.

The Ciarra Construction management team views themselves as a precision business. The slightest degree of ambiguity or guess work could translate into a multi-million dollar mistake. There is no room for interpretation in matters of safety or measurement, but this strict mathematical orientation does not have to apply to all aspects of working together. Walt knows this, but admits that he has a difficult time moving from the personal of the exacting project leader to a relationship-centered individual. Even though much of the daily work is mathematical, the relationships between those who do the work are not. In fact, these complicated relationships have led to fewer written policies, and an awareness of context as a mediating factor in the way management makes meaning. Ciarra Construction is neither a small nor a large company. They are in many ways betwixt and between, always moving back and forth, rather than moving in a linear fashion from one place to another.

As a relatively new company, Fit-n-Furry must embrace the unknowns of daily work and allow employees to author their own actions. The policies are so confining that employees are not included in a discourse of a collective identity. Behaviors and belief systems are prescribed and even though the policy handbook states that the contribution of ideas are welcomed, however there is little room for them to express themselves when parameters are set for their actions and as well as their values.

An attempt to assume a singular identity, or ignore the inherent space between points of certainty will alienate employees or create a silent dissension between policy and the employees by its imposing language. The cost of forceful insistence in policy far outweighs the benefit of short-term compliance and feigned group membership. A sense of play however, allows for imaginative work with and for others.

Work and Play

The limitations of organizational policy cannot be addressed by the passing of another policy. There must be a reinterpretation of the challenges and prospects rather than an assignment of an arbitrary solution. The discourse on employee action often moves in circles, adopting a right or wrong orientation. Managers, at least those who write policy, focus on the policies themselves, not the assumptions, rights, and narratives behind them. "Unlike the classical form of practical reason, communicative reason is not an immediate source of prescriptions. It has a normative content only insofar as the communicatively acting individuals must commit themselves to pragmatic presuppositions of a counterfactual sort" (Habermas 1998: 4). Habermas' description of communicative reason recognizes that dogmatic norms do not constitute the argument, but can be touched upon in a survey of the current discursive terrain. "Normativity in the sense of obligatory orientation of action does not coincide with communicative rationality. Normativity and communicative rationality *intersect* with one another where the justification of moral insights is concerned" (Habermas 1998: 5). Communicators must abandon axiomatic claims and explore the truths that hold them up, or else shatter them to pieces. This kind of communicative play requires an ability to entertain all possibilities as if the conversation is a high-stakes game marked by good sportsmanship.

The concept of play is too often regarded as a nonproductive exercise. However play is not a retreat from reality, it is the ability to view the same situation from a variety of positions. "Once one recognizes that political language is basically a rhetoric of persuasion and opinion, one can tolerate free discussion" (Ricoeur 1984: 133). The conversational play associated with political debate supports the position that finite

100

markers cannot be categorically applied to issues of work, service, or leadership. Organization is a consistently inconsistent system of interaction; it is a crowded and infinite intersection, and as such it allows the individual the context for being human—the human being. All three organizations considered in this study attempt on some level to address the people that compose the organization, but not all recognize the need for play in the workplace. Due to the strict legalities related to policy writing, linguistic play is not always an option in terms of creating a text. However, the organization's calls to action do not need to reflect the same legal tone as the mandatory inclusions of state and federal laws.

Aside from the language of policy, the concept of play at work is often overlooked or forbidden, even though some of the greatest successes are products of irreverent imagination. Again, I will use Senior Lifestyle Corporation as an example of inclusive play. Not only are new ideas widely encouraged, the employees often engage in play together. For instance, the staff at the Breakers was enjoying a staff appreciation event which lasted all day long. The last day of my visit to corporate headquarters was cut short because the entire office was going to a Cubs game, compliments of Bill Kaplan. This kind of environment fosters the relationships on which successes rely. Walter also takes the staff to sporting events and makes himself available to employees by working in the front of the office. These kinds of efforts could be even more meaningful if a discourse of inclusion and play was shared in the organization. The management at Fit-n-Furry allows very little room for play, even though play is one of their most important services. The same care and engagement offered to clients could also be given to employees.

When one governs culture, then one controls identity, a consequence that requires a great deal of consideration. It is not until this relationship is appreciated that laws might serve those to whom they apply. The spirit of understanding has the ability to free discourse from its oppressive structures and provide a space for exploration, understanding, and community.

Summary

In this Chapter, I offered a secondary analysis of the data in light of the research categories selected to guide this study. I have related the data to theories of critical hermeneutics and reflected on the themes that have emerged in the process of analysis. These themes reflected a need for an agreement between policy and the stories of real work, as it is done by members of the organization. Though policy is often intentionally written to be void of personhood, promise or ambiguity, participants expressed a need to have their identities and relationships recognized in organizational texts. In Chapter VI, I will present my final thoughts regarding the research process and a discussion of implications and opportunities for further research.

CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY, FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Summary

This study is the product of many conversations, theories, analyses, and reflections. After completing my pilot study in 2007, I realized that a substantive contribution could be made to the discourse on organizational policy; namely, the policies written for employees as they're called to action in their work. It seems that all too often, policies are viewed as behavioral standards, rather than guiding philosophies of how employees might emplot their own narratives, and work in relationship with one another in meaningful work.

A just institution is one where together, actors may work toward understanding instead of making decisions based on static rules based on unrealistic assumptions. I found that policy presents many opportunities for employers to begin discourses of trust with employees. Further, it became clear that policy lives in the day-to-day actions of organizational members. As symbolic texts, policies provided the discursive backdrops for organizational action, but they are meaningless unless they are brought into language by members as they work in relationship to one another.

The initial analysis paved the way for my secondary analysis in Chapter V, in which I presented the data in relationship to critical hermeneutic theory. This analysis reveals that policies are often written from a scientific perspective, and therefore reduce employee action to systems of behavior which are prescribed by a faceless authoritative voice. Sometimes written from an ideological standpoint, it became clear that hegemonic policy does little to inspire imaginative work, even though it may ensure an appearance of behavioral consistency. More than direction, policy should disclose the aims of the organization, and extend to employees the trust and freedom to imagine their work in new

ways. Though this involves a level of risk, it binds members of the organization to their future together. The language of policy must implicitly and explicitly include employees in world of their work, and serve to communicate a narrative of care.

In a review of my research conversations, I found solicitude to be a common concern of people in work communities. Whether they felt mutually bound to others, or somewhat alone, actors think about their relationships, and desire to share a sense of care and intimacy. These relationships are often brought into being by people as they work together. Attempts to prescribe these acts of genuine regard by way of ideological demands rarely allow actors to disclose their own narratives, and throw them into a world of compliance. The study of organization calls for an awareness and appreciation of relationships between actors. Though they may be characterized by size, purpose, and general structure, all claims to certainty are challenged by the inherent movement of people as they construct their organization each day.

The process of critical hermeneutic inquiry allows the researcher an opportunity to work in relationship with participants, so the findings are not simply deductions taken from anonymous data. I am called to offer my interpretation of the data in terms of organizational policy, and I am also trusted by participants to emplot a story as I retell their narratives. If told by someone else, the story might be very different, and as a researcher, I can't help but wonder how another researcher may have interpreted these findings. I often returned to the data to look for what was said, and sometimes for what was not said. I'd replay my conversations in my head, then on tape, to see what time had added or omitted. The practice led me through my analyses and into my findings, which were gifted to me by

the many participants whose narratives housed questions much better than the ones I had asked them while situated on either side of a recorder.

In the next section, I offer my findings which are the broad strokes of this finished work. The findings begin or at least contribute to a much needed discourse on organization that tears back the pages of policy and reminds us about the people in front of them.

Findings

1. Employee Action Policy Lives in Discourse

Written policy is a symbolic force in an organization, and a policy manual offers its writers a sense of legitimacy or permanence. Though ceremoniously bound and widely distributed, the policy exists only when it is appropriated by actors and brought into their work through discourse. Policies live in interactions, not the books in which they're recorded. Therefore, when creating policy, one must not only account for, but welcome the plurality of interpretations and applications that allow actors to do meaningful work together. If weaved into the narrative of organizational members, their experiences, tacit knowledge, and imaginations will transcend the finite world proposed by covering law and create a community of action, rather than a culture of impassive behavior.

To assume that policy stands as law is rather naïve, and to write one knowing that it will most likely be discarded or ignored seems like a fruitless practice. Part of good policy exists in the trust that people will, in fact, appropriately refigure their work and the ability to relinquish the imaginary power that comes with regulatory enforcement.

2. Policy is a Promise

Policy binds members of an organization to one another, and the binding of these members is what we consider to be the organization itself. If not for the committed and interdependent efforts of many people working together, a company is nothing but a collection of papers and office furniture. Promises are narratives created by people who are personally committed to a future of meaningful work, and they demonstrate a sense of authorship and accountability, which many policies lack. Promises, such as a pledge to work in mutuality, give members of the organization something to imbue in their own ways. It also holds managers to a call beyond simple regulation, and invites actors to approach their work together in different ways. Because promises are so rarely made in business, this shift will awaken an organization's greatest asset—the people behind reciprocal exchanges that bind them all together. Policy should set the stage for actors to imagine the future of their organizations, and dwell on together as they watch it unfold.

3. Policy is a Narrative

Employees are heirs to the *kingdom of as if*. It stands to reason that a good policy should have many of the same features as a good narrative. However, policies do not seem to emplot a story. Instead, a record of rules, rights, and regulations are strung together by headings, and softened by a friendly paragraph of welcome on the first page. However, the teller disappears when the page is turned, and the reader reduced in rank from "you," to "the employee." If taken as a story, policy may be assessed for the world it discloses, and what it implies about the relationships between people in the organization. The cold and emotionless language of policy is commonly accepted as standard, but what if policy

recognized the human nature of its writers? The façade of legitimacy borrowed from Cartesian policy design proves its own limitations when piles of policy manuals sit in the back room of an organization, rarely remembered or consulted. The world disclosed in policy should refer to the world in which actors inhabit.

4. Bureaucracy and Broken Promises

The first three findings call for some new ways of understanding and communicating policy. There are so many ways in which we might reimagine employee action—linguistically, structurally, and relationally. However, there are certain aspects of a text that rightfully call for behavioral consistency. The practices on which some policies are based are necessarily systematic and recorded. A viable organization must keep track of many issues relating to daily operations, but a post-modern policy should critically address bureaucratic formality and seek to maintain a meaningful orientation toward procedure. By openly identifying and making sense of necessary official procedure, people can more freely imagine their space outside of regulation. The Cartesian desire to control every outcome in a given day results in the kind of bureaucracy that postpones action to such a degree that the organizational imagination is beaten down into a sense of utter defeat. If there is to be action, the hope, care, and energy behind it should be enacted, not usurped by a complicated process of approval.

Implications

These findings suggest the need for ongoing critical discourse regarding organizational policy. In order to engage in this discourse, new interpretations of leadership theory should address the commonly held assumptions about the meaning of

policy and its role in a just institution. Implications exist for both leadership curriculum pertaining to policy and the call for praxis in an organizational setting.

Implications for Leadership Curriculum

Leadership education in the United States is changing, but it still reflects a clear system of privilege and hegemony. Schools and organizations sometimes place leadership curriculum as a specialized program, only available to a select few. Even if a course is made readily available, we are often taught from a deficit perspective. In this view, the student is taught to think in terms of leaders and followers; a black and white approach that inspires a sense of competition. In this confusion is the faulty conflation of power and leadership, which from the start, encourages a self-oriented and control-driven narrative of management. Leadership curriculum must challenge the myth of hierarchy and explore the infinite sites of imagination, vision, and innovation that are often overlooked, but demonstrated by all members of a group.

William, from Senior Lifestyle Corporation, explained that he had recently introduced an employee recognition program in which people were rewarded for showing leadership initiative. Grant, from Fit-n-Furry, told me that he makes it a point at each meeting to share his observation of one person's leadership potential. Organization seems to carry on this tradition of individualistic concern, which promotes a culture of people who expect recognition for every effort, and often resent leading when no one is there to witness it. There is much to be learned from a discourse on action instead of a focus on behavior. The implications for curriculum are innumerable; however, I offer the following three as potential starting points as well as suggestions for future research:

1. Leadership curriculum must be more critically explored in educational settings so that people act out of desire and duty instead of reward or punishment.

2. A shift in both pedagogy and course content should challenge conceptions of leadership and call for praxis in organization.

3. Courses taught from an interpretative tradition will encourage the work of imagination and communicative action as people embrace sites of tension in favor of uncertainty reduction.

Implications for Organizational Policy

This research process began with several questions relating to policy and the organization. I sought to better understand the worlds of text and action in work, knowing that my questions were interpretive events, just as their answers would be. The excitement of new understanding is met by a sense of longing. Having come this all this way, I now have much better questions and more of them to ask. If I wrote Chapter I today, I would do so from a position of my greater understanding, and perhaps that narrative would challenge me to explore the data differently, or more actively engage participants in the interpretation process.

Distanciation is a process necessary for critique and there is so much to be gained from ongoing interpretation of a text. This is especially true for policy, as it only holds meaning in so far as it is brought into the discourse of how people do their work. Policy is often written with the expectation that it will remain untouched, and that if it is done well, there will be little need for argument or reconsideration. However, I think that the challenge of great policy is to create a text for ongoing critical analysis that is flexible enough to allow for reconfiguration. The fair recognition of how a text is read can make

the difference between policy in discourse and policy forgotten. Authorship is to recognize one's place in front of a text, instead of attempts to place readers behind it. Implications for policy and future research call actors to play in the worlds of mimeses$_{1,2}$ and $_3$ as they move toward the future together in work. A responsibility and commitment to the ongoing narratives of work can construct a language and orientation of mutual care.

Policy is a work in progress, and is best informed by the narratives of those working in the organization. A critical discourse on company policy should live in conversation with the text itself. If actors have an opportunity to share their own narratives of work, the resulting policies will be grounded in their world, rather than a prescribed one. The implications related to policy are far reaching, as they will challenge some hegemonic presuppositions, which are often embedded in language. A policy written from a critical position, however, will bring forth a new language and the discourse of organization will become the practical wisdom of the workplace. Implications for organizational policy call for people to share and document their narratives of action.

1. A critical organizational policy analysis should address differences in action and behavior. The latter should be limited to necessary procedure, and a discussion of action should endorse employees' efforts to make their own meaningful contributions to their organizations.

2. The language of policy too often places the employee at the bottom of a hierarchical system of discipline. If written in terms of what actors can do, rather than what they cannot, one prepares the imagination for play.

3. Policy should implore members of the organization to care for one another, and do so first with a promise to care for employees and attend to their needs.

Suggestions for Future Research

Praxis, or critically informed practical application, should result from a hermeneutic inquiry. Therefore, future research regarding employee action policy will be most meaningful if performed by members within their organizations. This study proposes several considerations that may guide individuals in the process of critiquing policy. However, concerns of hegemonic language, narrative identity, promise and solicitude are not standardized tools that can be developed in one context and then applied in every instance. This study proposes that organizational members revisit their policies in light of their own histories, narratives and purposes.

Future research will be most valuable if people within their organizations commit to a shared endeavor in which they participate in a discourse marked by critical analysis and a willingness to take the perceived risk of shifting from notions of enforcement to solicitude. Most important will be the narratives of community members as they move toward a policy based in action rather than behavior. These stories will begin to disclose the relationships between individuals within their organizational setting, and offer actors the opportunity to see how personal narratives may change as larger collective identities are refigured. The next step remains the responsibility of actors and policy-makers who desire to provide for one another a just workplace, in which individuals succeed together.

Personal Reflection

My interest in policy has always stemmed from its inherent flaws. I understand that we need certain guidelines to negotiate through the complicated systems existent in western culture. No matter how well it is written, a policy cannot ensure justice in every circumstance, nor can it forecast its own shortcomings. Over the years, I have become

111

more and more aware of policy limitations that result from our constructions of fairness; the most prevalent of which assumes that justice results from the consistency, regardless of individual circumstance. This is the common practice of most organizations as a safeguard against preferential treatment. Though it is necessary to protect the rights of all people within the organization, an inflexible policy becomes a corporate ethos in which individuals lose the authority and sometimes the desire to challenge assumptions of justice. We seem to protect policy, and few are willing to discuss the limitations of a covering law system in which no exceptions are made. However, such a system requires that we ignore difficult and most likely detrimental implications of policy and by doing so, become blind to one another's needs. Rather than engaging in discourse and addressing the faults of static policy for pluralistic culture, many opt for the standard response: "I'm sorry, I wish there was something I could do, but it is the company's policy." What if we had the agency to advocate for justice in our organizations? It would not only improve the organization, but offer those within to tell their own stories, and imbue shared values, rather than prescribed behaviors.

This study has taught me a great deal about the implications of policy in an organization. Most importantly, I've been reminded that policy is not a matter of productivity or legal compliance. It is a text that discloses assumptions about relationships, equity, and respect in the organization. The features are tacit but telling, and I have both the responsibility and desire to continue a critical discourse of policy in organization. Though my participants were business oriented, I think that these implications must be considered by political, medical, and educational institutions, as they are most influential in shaping discourses on identity, justice and community. I feel as

though this is more of the beginning than the conclusion of this project because I want to

continue this work in policy and learn more about the ways in which we can dwell together

in meaningful work and caring environments.

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APPENDICES

<u>Appendix A: Letter to Participants</u>

415-215-2223
marisabm@aol.com

March 2, 2008
Fit-n-Furry
Marci Garl
860 Lindberg Ln.
Petaluma, CA 94952

Dear Ms. Garl,

I appreciate your taking the time to speak with me on the phone last week. Again, my name is Marisa Michaels, and I am a Doctoral candidate at the University of San Francisco's School of Education in the department of Leadership Studies.

Thank you for taking interest in my study, and for your consideration concerning Fit-n-Furry's participation. My study involves the analysis of organizational policy regarding employee call to service and interaction. In addition to the analysis of your policy, I would like to share research conversations with you and three of your employees. With your permission, these conversations will be recorded and transcribed, and you will each receive a copy of the conversation, as I would like to include you in the process of interpretation and obtain your approval for analysis.

Your participation is contingent on your signing a consent form, and you will be asked to provide a copy of your employee-related policies. These will not be shared with any other organization, nor will these policies be published in their entirety. However, I will make reference to some of your policies and perhaps quote excerpts from them.

Please let me know if you would like to take part in my study. I am excited by the prospect of working with Fit-n-Furry, as I have a great respect for you and your organization. I will give you a call next week to follow up, and begin our conversation. Please let me know if you need any more information.

Sincerely,

Marisa Michaels, MA
Doctoral Candidate
University of San Francisco

Appendix B: Email of Introduction, Nugget Market (Declined to Participate)

(This organization limits their use paper materials and requested that I send the following invitation electronically.)
Marisa Michaels, MA
836 Chardonnay Circle
Petaluma, CA 94954
415-215-2223
marisabm@aol.com

Dear Ms. Stille,

My name is Marisa Michaels, and I am a Doctoral candidate at the University of San Francisco's School of Education in the department of Leadership Studies. Last week, I visited my parents in El Dorado Hills, and together we visited the new Nugget Market, which my parents now call "their kitchen." We enjoyed shopping and eating several meals on the upper level, and while there, I came across your mission statement. I noticed that the Nugget community has a unique way of doing business, and was immediately impressed with your staff members' warmth and positive attitudes. I am working on my dissertation and seeking participants that have cultivated innovative working communities in which people find meaning for themselves and others.   My focus is on privately held, growing service-oriented organizations of different kinds. So far, my participants include a contracting firm located in San Jose and a pet-care facility in Petaluma, California.

My study involves the analysis of organizational policy regarding employee call to service and interaction. In addition to the analysis of employee related policies, I will conduct research conversations with members of each organization. These conversations will be recorded and transcribed, and each participant will receive a copy of the conversation, as I will seek their interpretations and obtain approvals for analysis. These will not be shared with any other organization, nor will policies be published in their entirety. However, I will make reference to some policies and perhaps quote excerpts from them.

I am more than happy to provide you with my proposal materials and more information about me and my study, but I wanted to send an initial email to see if by chance, the Nugget Market will join me in my exploration. I am excited by the prospect of working with the Nugget Market, and hope that you will consider sharing your story with me. Please feel free to contact me with any questions, comments, or concerns. Thank you so much!

Sincerely,

Marisa Michaels, MA
Adjunct Professor of Communication Studies
Doctoral Candidate
University of San Francisco
mbmichaels@usfca.edu

Appendix C: Letter of Introduction

June 18, 2008

Nicole Sutton
General Manager
Fit 'n' Furry
860 Lindberg Ln.
Petaluma, CA 94952

Dear Nicole,

Hello and welcome back! As you know, I am collecting data for my dissertation and Fit 'n' Furry is one of three organizations that will take part the study. My research topic explores the role of employee relations policies and meaningful work. Conversations will provide the bulk of my data, and the rest will include the analysis of the written policies themselves. I'm excited and grateful to have Fit 'n' Furry's contribution, and I would like to explain what your participation entails.

I would like to share one to two digitally recorded conversations with four Fit 'n' Furry employees/contributors. If possible, this would include you, Grant and/or Marci, and two others. In total, each participant's time commitment will be approximately two hours, which takes into account our meetings and your thoughts and approval of the conversation transcriptions. I am humbly requesting your time, and wonder of you can direct me toward two others that might be interested participating. I can accommodate your schedules, and am happy provide you with additional information. In addition to scheduling conversation times, I also request a copy of your employee conduct policy, and ask if I may attach a copy to each consent form the participants' review.

Please contact me with any questions or concerns regarding the study or your role as a participant, and let me know if I can make this more convenient for you in any way. Again, I thank you so much and look forward to speaking with you!

Sincerely,

Marisa Michaels
Doctoral Candidate
University of San Francisco
Leadership Studies

Appendix D: Approval from University of San Francisco IRB

From: irbphs <irbphs@usfca.edu>
To: marisabm@aol.com <marisabm@aol.com>
Cc: Joshua Gamson <gamson@usfca.edu>
Subject: IRB Application # 08-033 - Approved
Date: Tue, 15 Apr 2008 9:22 am

April 15, 2008

Dear Ms. Michaels:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS)
at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human
subjects approval regarding your study.

Your application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #08-033).
Please note the following:

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that
time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file
a renewal application.

2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation
(including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS.
Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.

3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must
be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your
research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
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IRBPHS University of San Francisco
Counseling Psychology Department
Education Building - 017
2130 Fulton Street
San Francisco, CA 94117-1080
(415) 422-6091 (Message)
(415) 422-5528 (Fax)

Complete pilot and transcripts available upon request.
Completed December 8, 2007

Section VII: Data Analysis

Betsy

My first conversation with Organizational Change Consultant, Betsy Jacobson
offered an insight into the positivistic perspective of change. Almost immediately, it was
clear that her job is to implement change, whether or not it makes sense to the members of
an organization. Our conversation centered around her work, as I wanted to explore her
approach. I first asked her if organizations were resistant to imposed change and her
responses were very revealing. *It's not that people are resisting change, it's that from their
particular perspective they don't see that the change that's being imposed on them is
necessary. Now, you could call it resistance or you could say, depending on where you are
in the organization, maybe the change as it's come down to you doesn't make sense. So,
when we think about change from a learning perspective, what we say is that you have to
stop using, we stopped using labels like is, are people resistant to change.* She
demonstrates a keen awareness of language in her response to the term 'resistance,' and
instantly reframes the term. *Because it's not that, it's not that they want to push back on it,
it's that they haven't been invited to take a look at why that change is going to make a
difference. So, change is typically good for the people who are instituting the change, but it
may not be that good for the people who are at the effect of the change.* This reflects a
fundamental problem that for Betsy represents a great deal of work. *Well, when you start
to involve people in a change, depending on how big it is, then it requires multiple
interventions to make that happen. So that's expensive.* As we continued I began to catch

glimpses of possibilities for interpretive movements, but the more she explained, the more I understood her position as an interventionist, one who limits the effects of liminality, and masks the uncertainty of transition by leading the organization in a particular direction. I didn't ask why, if change did not benefit those at its level of practice, would an organization seek to employ it, but when viewed from a hierarchical approach, it makes perfect sense. It also, then hints at the avoidance of liminal states and the need for a story weaver; this is Betsy's work. However, it seems that she has a seemingly insurmountable task – to tell a story void of historical reference. She mentions that *there are all different kinds of interventions that people like I do and people internal to the organization try to do, to begin to make that shift. But the first thing to realize is that from a learning perspective, you're going to have to get the organization and people to begin to ask themselves about original assumptions that we had.* I thought that this act was at its core an attempt to emplot an emerging change route in their historicity, so I asked Betsy if she considered narrative identity as a part of her work. *But I haven't really done a whole lot of work in storytelling. Although I know there's a whole body of work that's being done on how you make change through storytelling, but this is not something I'm really very knowledgeable about, so I'd have to say I can't comment on it very much. The article that I'd like for you to read, it's about leadership and storytelling and how you pass along the legacy for sustainability for an organization through stories. But as an intervention to help make change, that's not, I haven't had any experience with that.* The stories never told may hold the most valuable accounts of change.

Later in our discussion, Betsy explained that she helps organizations create 'learning cultures,' in which individuals take initiative in determining their career paths. *So*

for the individual, it's having them begin to see that they need to understand their, we tell them they need to answer five questions. Who am I? How am I seen by others? What place am I working in? What are my goals? And what is my plan of action? So for employees, you educate them on that, all right? These fundamental questions are reflective of narrative identity, but it seems that here, they are expressed as isolated entities.

In our discussion of policy, I asked Betsy to differentiate between behavior and action. From this question, we moved to observations of documented and undocumented policies. *These are things that are not usually written down. Do you believe that the organization really cares about your career, or is there a belief system that this is just kind of a ruthless place, they'll use us up and spit us out. None of these things are written down, but they're drivers of behavior. So when we ask the question does policy, is it, um, rigid for everyone or is it flexible, the truth of the matter is it is only one factor in the driving of behavior. My belief.* The relationship between texts and action are based on a perspective of rules and behavior. I wonder if a shift from the latter to a world of action could better inform the policies of an organization. I shared my associations with action and Betsy shared hers: *My definition of action would be that you got results. Something occurred. Some defined outcome was achieved. It's different than behavior that might be on the road to that result.* And so I left the conversation a bit confused, but intrigued. Had what I'd heard contain portals, initiations or even cries for narrative identity, or had it been so far removed that it didn't recognize the possibilities of its own language?

Richard

"*What if awakening was the context at our workplace? What if management meant being accountable for spiritual emergence of staff as well as the wellbeing of the*

company? What if conflicts in our work community were acknowledged as a chance to heal collective wounds? What if the mission of our business was to usher in a sustainable spiritually fulfilling society?" Before either of us said a word, I noticed these questions typed and hanging from Richard's cabinet. This was our second meeting and I anxiously waited as he spoke to one of his participants on the phone. I tried to see him as others must, and wondered if he would be my source of comfort if a different twist of fate had brought us together. His phone call came to an end, and I asked him to reflect on the 'what ifs" I had just recorded. We looked at each other and realized that the poster aptly said it all. I began to ask Richard about imagination, to see where we could go. He almost immediately shared with me the changes taking place in the center. *…The 12 principles of attitudinal healing are really basic truths that have been taken out of almost every basic religion and spiritual practice in history. And this center, what was unique about this center at one time, for the first 30 years, is that approaching it in a spiritual place was under the principle of a, as we work together that we're all students and teachers to each other. So we were trying to level the playing field from a non-hierarchal — Position, and to try to get the board, staff, employees, participants, more on an equal footing, where everybody's voice is heard. That in itself for management is very difficult, because it is not the model. So we were going very much against the stream to make that model work. However, in order for that to work, you have to follow the model that you cannot be result-oriented. You have to be able to hear each other's position and acknowledge each other's authority and still move in the direction that has to be moved towards without your ego getting in the way. So, it's not an easy proposition to be a spiritually-based group - And have management acknowledge that we're students and teachers to each other. Am I*

making sense with this? And I quickly assured him that he was. In fact, this made a lot of sense to me. However, as we continued, Richard disclosed that change is taking place within the organization, and it endangers the narratives that constitute its identity. *Yeah. And so, here we have to be very flexible and it's changing here. Right now, the corporate mindset of a new board is now wanting to get this center to be successful. So this center has been going through tremendous turmoil, after 30 years of this nonhierarchal - Platform, and this flexible management style has now changed. It's not spiritually-based anymore in management. The board is coming with this really strong, let's be a success, let's be a world entity rather than a community entity - And now the values have changed. So the upheaval is, is that the people who have helped create this for 30 years, you know, two-thirds of them are gone, and now people are being hired with this kind of mindset. You know, we're punching in on the clock, you know, all of our time is now being watched, and the identity of this place is changing completely. So people having a voice is changing, because a success model rather than a spiritually-based reality model that actually responds to the community and can teach that, and I think that's why we've been popular, is now changing. So we'll see what happens.* Richard and I looked at each other and I wanted so badly to offer a means though which he could preserve the narratively based community, but at the same knew that the allure of a profit margin would prove to be a tenacious contender in the battle between ethics and economics. …*And get another grant in New York to do something, and get another grant in Brazil to do something, and, you know, how can I do that? That's becoming more important. And I think that's going to be difficult. I think that's going to be difficult. I think the community base will suffer, because you, I think, we'll see, and I think that spreading out that model, um, will be success and*

127

money-oriented rather than spiritually-based, we're students and teachers to each other,

and our piece is of value. It's going to, we need to, everything we do needs to be, have a

profit margin. Uh-huh. And like this staff, we don't know what that means. We don't know

we can, how the board, and how this new way of doing it, which is going to start in the

next month or so, how are you going to transition to everything is a profit margin from

everything is a value judgment around loving each other and relating to each other and

taking care of each other. How are we going to do that? How are we going to balance

those two things? So far there aren't very many models in the world. This statement

stayed with me and still dances in the back of my mind as I read and write. This is the

liminal state, albeit an unfortunate one, but even still it puts before us an occasion for

conversation that moves, in Ricoeur's words, "from text to action."

Section VIII: Data Analysis

Betsy

Organizational change is inevitable; however, its success greatly depends

on the agreement of its members. The authenticity of a collective identity exists within a

language of trust and solicitude, and this language is easily recognizable. "*It's getting*

people to understand what it's about, it's getting them to understand the new direction of

the new policy or the new vision of what we want to be, or what the culture's supposed to

be like that it's getting you ready for." The appropriation of a new identity is only possible

if it's grounded in mimeses$_{1\&2}$; only then will the "Kingdom of As If" (Ricoeur: 1994)

appear inhabitable by those thrown toward it. The constructs and representations of a new

direction cannot, by themselves inspire a series of fusions. The break in time may

contribute to the confusion based in organizational change. "To the first maxim,

experience to understand, understand in order to transcend, I therefore add the following: understand one's time not by starting from it, but by gradually advancing toward modernity…" (Ricoeur (1965: 289). Aside from the temporal disfigurations of imposed change, the change itself is subject to evaluative inquiry if it is an order from the management rather than a product of discourse. "The micro-interests of individuals and the macro-decisions of power are in a state of constant tension…" (Ricoeur 1965: 263).

Even if guided by the best intentions, a new language engenders a new identity. The selection of one narrative in place of another, especially in the context corporate management, places at the forefront a clear system of dominance. This system all together thwarts a discourse between 'old schools' and 'new schools,' stealing the grounds of commonality between them. "*So this notion, I mean, it's an unfortunate notion for leadership, is the belief that in fact I'll get into a leadership position then I'll call down and tell them to move left, and people will do it. Or that our policy will force it or frame it. But in effect sometimes the culture of the organization resists, the culture resists...*" In order to move toward a new direction, one must identify and name the present system of oppression. "One belongs to the Others oneself and enhances their power…This Being-with-one-another dissolves one's own Dasein completely into the kind of Being with the Others, in such a way, indeed, that the Others, as distinguishable and explicit, vanish more and more. In this inconspicuousness and unascertainability, the real dictatorship of the 'they' is unfolded (Heidegger 1962: 164). Habermas (1972: 23) contributes to the conversation of an omnipresent but hidden sense of control by stating that "in societies based on kinship, institutions protected by taboos form a site where cognitive normative expectations merge and harden into an unbroken complex of conviction s linked with

129

motives and value orientations." Again, the danger that exists in an implicitly policed

system of beliefs remains one's inability to discursively identify the system itself. "As

background knowledge, it lacks the possibility of being challenged, that is, of being raided

to the level of criticizable validity claims. One can do this only by converting it from a

resource into a topic of discussion, at which point- just when it is thematized- it no longer

functions as a lifeworld background but rather *disintegrates* in its background modality"

(Habermas 1971: 22-23). The tacit, or subterraneous expressions of power are often more

formidable than the most provocative declarations.

Beyond the interventions and applications of new knowledge structures, a shared,

coherent plot must underscore the conversation or else the shift is forced rather than

embraced. Given the complexity of the organization and the nature of language, this is not

issue that can be easily discerned. However, McMahon (1994: 45) offers a basis for

consideration: a relation of subordination may involve domination of it serves only the

interests of the person in the superior position." The initial task then calls for an

investigation of texts as well as its implications for care and solicitude within the

organization.

Richard

Marvin Brown (2005: 214) asserts that "in terms of organizational integrity,

making money is a consequence of pursuing a worthwhile purpose, not a worthwhile

purpose itself." As the Center for Attitudinal Healing shifts in its core purpose, it is met

with resistance by the unique nature of its already established narrative. Ricoeur (Kearney

1994: 136) states that,

> A society where narrative is dead is one where men are no longer capable of
> exchanging their experiences, of sharing a common experience. The contemporary

search for some narrative continuity with the past is not just nostalgic escapism but a contestation of the legislative and plantificatory discourse which tends to predominate in bureaucratic societies. To give people back a memory is also to them back a future, to put them back in time and thus release them from the 'instantaneous mind' (*mens instans*), to borrow a term from Leibniz.

The shared governance of a system of care is threatened by a call to conform. *"And I think in the long run, when you look at a big picture, like 30 years at a time, you know, when you, if you're not, if you don't have a way in business or in relationships to track how, when we talk, how we're being intuitive with each other, flexible with each other, paying attention to each other, rather than here's this model, you have to follow this model and I have to follow this model, that's counterintuitive for us."* The Center's approach to the present moment will now be replaced by an overshadowing emphasis on the future; the dichotomy between their philosophy and their immediate lifeworld will surely confuse if not stifle the organization's imagination. The consequence that follows is detrimental to those served by the organization as well as those within it. "Justice, as envisaged by a post-modern imagination, is never simply a matter of conforming to a given law. It involves a responsibility to listen to other narratives (in the sense of alternative narratives and narratives of others). The justice of narrative imagination is, in short, a justice of multiplicity" (Kearney 1998: 210). This might only be achieved if the "subversive force of the imaginary" (Ricoeur 1981: 93) is brought forth in the spirit of textual play as it opens the worlds from which actors reclaim their positions in the world. These conversations must take place within a context of care and each actor in the exchange must be regarded indispensable in the exchange of ideas. "To be authentic, the transaction also requires democratic consent instead of top-down command by a powerful patron. To be truly effective, it helps if everyone brings an ownership stake to the table, something of value

they invest in the common purpose, something to withhold if the terms do not seem equitable" (Greider 2003: 183). The unfortunate eventuality of the shift to a corporate perspective is most apparent in the absence of solicitude. "The decline in trust is the consequence of the general recognition that the acts of experts and institutions – indeed those of all actors in contemporary society – are guided by a diminishing sense of responsibility toward those whose welfare depends on their expert performance" (Forman 2002: 79). If The Center is to move forward with care, they must first re-remember the trust that brought them together in the beginning.

Section IX: Implications

This exploration has revealed some starting points at which one may encounter organizational identity and in doing so recognize one's position and responsibility as an actor. This narrative event will disclose the worlds to which the organization's members belong, and house the configuration of that which is in light of what has been and what might be. Each a feat of imagination, they collectively embody the organizational being as situated in the act of mimesis. The temporal game of recognition may carefully inform the stories told and stories lived. Without such reflection, the organization cannot uphold its own promises. Arendt (1958: 245) maintains:

> In so far as morality is more than the sum of total mores, of customs and standards of behavior solidified through tradition and valid on the ground of agreements, both of which change with time, it has, at least politically, no more support itself than the good will to counter the enormous risks of action by readiness to forgive and be forgiven, to make promises and keep them.

Promises are only as good as the people who make them and this level of accountability relies on mutual understanding within and between organizational texts, narratives, and actions, all of which exist in language and rely on imagination. Decisions, policies and

actions should be put beside these dimensions of organization before they are enacted.

Further, a stronger communicative foundation between community members will give rise

to new meanings, which will likely surpass the formulaic systems of finite constructs that

are often applied in times of infinite possibility. The willingness to suspend concrete

structures of positivistic language will give way to an implosive event of self reflection,

and the organization will change as do the people to whom it belongs.

Section X: Summary

This pilot study served as an opportunity to explore the emergent concerns related to the

organizational imagination. The contrast in philosophies between two participants brought

to the forefront the intimate interconnectedness between work and being. Categories of

liminality, imagination, and communicative competence are used as points of departure

from which this abounding topic may be addressed. Language, as the constitution of the

organization itself, develops imbues meaning through interpretation. An appreciation for

interpretation, as well one' willingness to play the game is paramount to a shared

understanding and through this understanding, actors may realize the very real possibilities

of the imaginary.