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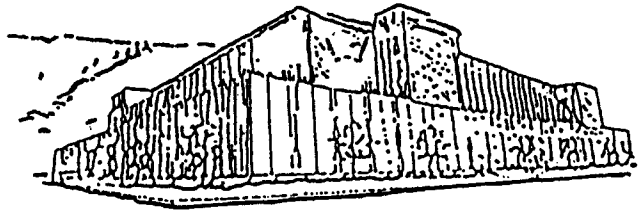
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Organizational Culture: A Perspective That Yields Dividends

by

M. Jane Redeau Ogle

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

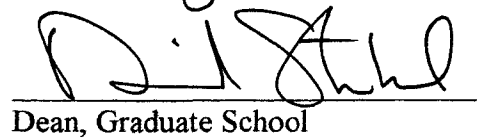
Master of Arts

The University of Montana

1998

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Historically, organizational communication problems have been examined through the structural, human relations, and political perspectives. Until recently, these views were the only ones available. Edgar Schein has introduced the cultural perspective that takes communication analysis to the actual products of the members, including two deeper levels, values and assumptions. In this paper, the author examines several culture elements within organizations and analyzes them in light of the conflict potential they may generate, offering three types of organizations in her analysis. She argues that the culture perspective is a highly useful management perspective, focusing on the main communication activity of meaning making. She selects several key cultural elements, explores typical problems these elements pose in modern organizations and proposes some methods for managing organizations.

Introduction

In today's complex world, the study of communication is becoming increasingly important. Parents spend time and money going to family therapists and marriage counselors attempting to find solutions to problems. Similarly, leaders and managers spend time and money attempting to identify and correct problems within their organizational units. Everywhere people gather and interact, the potential for communication problems exist.

Headlines routinely report mergers and downsizing, with layoffs rampant. A recent Associated Press article reported that Sears, IBM, AT&T, Boeing and Xerox together laid off nearly 250,000 workers from 1993 to 1996 (Independent Record, Helena, MT, May 29, 1996). This adds up to enormous sums of dollars and hours in helping both employees and managers make transitions from one form to another.

After years of working in bureaucracies and holding membership in a variety of organizations, I have watched what systems can do to people. They can stifle creativity, constrain efforts for workers to develop themselves both personally and professionally, and prohibit those conditions from developing that might help people gain satisfaction in being productive for their employers and develop satisfying working relationships. I have watched ineffective supervisors make the workplace a living hell, convinced that the problems lie in those under their supervision, rather than with the management. These unfortunate conditions make organizational relationships strained and burdensome, resulting in lower productivity.

Moreover, I have seen key work employees attend seminars and workshops on everything from communication strategies for managers to time management. Upon returning to the organizational environment, they never seem to be able to use what they've learned. They return to the office, behaving the same way they always had. Some of these events are purely ceremonial, as Bolman and Deal (1984) put it, producing little visible improvement in manager's skills, but they do socialize those attending into the management culture (p.162).

With changes in the modern work force, leaders and managers are seeking new, more creative ways to manage their work force (Bolman and Deal, 1984). But how can organizations take on the challenge of better managing their workforce?

Typically, managers and leaders in businesses and organizations tend to fall into a "fix-it" mentality. Managers think they can train their work force into the desired attitudes. They send their employees to training seminars, sure that the desired attitude will return to work the next day. Often, when resources and conditions allow, they relocate troublesome employees. If internal problems don't go away, they hire interior decorators to rearrange the furniture or apply the latest color schemes in order to change the outlook and freshen the viewpoints. While these measures sometimes improve outlooks, the underlying problems are left untouched. While there may not be one ideal approach that is best, the cultural perspective affords leaders and diagnosticians a deeper look into organizational behavior in order to discern communication patterns that may be troublesome.

In this paper, I take a broader cultural perspective on organizational

communication, drawing on resources in communication, sociology, anthropology, and business. Chapter I will define organization culture, noting important elements that characterize culture within an organization. Chapter 2 will discuss problem areas in organizations using the culture perspective and present the characteristics, elements, and attributes of conflict. Chapter 3 will explore techniques and tools for discovering an organization's culture and finally, Chapter 4 will suggest a range of techniques and solutions for managers to apply in their organizations.

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Chapter 1. A Cultural Perspective on Organizational Communication

A church organization recently changed ministers and organizational structure, after the former minister resigned, complaining about an overworked schedule and outdated programs. In short time, there were grumblings from the congregation about lack of effective leadership, confusion about who performs what task and a resulting reduction in Sunday service attendance. Most of the congregation cast blame on the new minister's lack of effective leadership and his perceived hidden agendas, saying he was getting ready to retire and had every intent to stay on through his "high three," despite requests from key board members to resign. People stopped volunteering to fill crucial positions on the board. Social activities came to a halt. Pledges for financial support declined. In time, people expressed a longing for the "good old days" and a desire to hear the "old hymns."

A small folk dancing club found diminishing numbers at their Friday evening dances. When polled, the members commented about the new couple from out of state who had taken over instruction in new dance steps and demonstration on the dance floor. Numbers continued to decline, despite attempts to pull people together through outside-performing activities in the community. The club eventually disbanded.

A large federal agency with small local offices recently went through a downsizing, resulting in a change of management and a restructuring of the organizational plan. In the process, new management displayed a tunnel-vision approach in redesigning programs and job assignments, causing tensions and resignations. Longtime employees resisted new employees coming in and taking management positions over them. As a result, the work force spent more time complaining about the state of things than plunging into work efforts.

These three organizations highlight different problems. The church organization illustrates how disruptive things can get with a turnover of leaders and a change of organizing structure. The dancing club illustrates how people respond when there is no mission statement, no guiding principle, and no participative decision making. The federal agency illustrates an outcome with modern downsizing and restructuring. Obviously, there are rich, dramatic differences between and among organizations. These three groups

illustrate how varied organizations can be, and, as Bolman and Deal (1984) suggest, “complex, surprising, deceptive, and ambiguous” they are (p.12).

There are currently several views of organization, each emphasizing different aspects. The view I want to focus on in this paper is the cultural view. While the other views deal with important aspects of organizing, culture deals with the very artifacts created by the people themselves, including their values and their assumptions about how the world works to them. Culture gets to the heart of how people really function at their work sites and during their time together.

The Cultural Perspective

The cultural perspective of organizations most fully deals with what I consider to be the most important aspects of an organization--those aspects of organizational life that are unseen, such as the values and assumptions that form the backdrop for decision making. While the personalities, organizing structure and use of power are all important considerations for managers to weigh, the elements of the culture perspective most clearly and thoroughly pull out the deeper causes that drive the day-to-day decision making in any organization, regardless of size and purpose. Moreover, the cultural frame, which draws from resources in sociology and anthropology, introduces new concepts to the study of organizations and offers alternative ways of interpreting old concepts (Bolman & Deal, 1984).

When we talk about an organization’s culture, we talk about those aspects that are the backdrop behind an organization’s decisions and ways of going about their business.

As in the field of biology, we can look at the culture of an organism as what holds it together, gives it life and substance. As a biologist explores the properties of an organism under the microscope, the culture metaphor helps us enlarge our understanding about what organizations are, look like and can do; how they function, how they change, what introduces change, etc. A simple analogy is to explain organization culture in light of American culture. People coming from a foreign country arrive in America and see several things. They see our cities, how we lay out our public eating places, dwelling places, entertainment places, and road systems for the members to get around on. They see our stadiums where our favorite sports are played, churches and synagogues where we practice our local religions, skyscrapers where our business and dealings with other cultures take place, and schools where our members are socialized into our culture. Upon seeing the layout of the land, a foreigner could tell a lot about our culture, just by seeing our artifacts, or the surface manifestations of our culture. All of these artifacts represent our history, our value choices, our preferred way of living, our sensibilities about how civilization is best set up and carried out in order to ensure our continuation into the future, and our definitions of a good life. All this is true even though the social actors operating within a culture may not be aware of how their society represents an accumulation of choices or how the existing social framework constrains and enables the individual. Essentially, a culture indicates to outsiders what the members value and believe. So too, an organization has a culture that tells an outsider what they are all about.

Further, the culture metaphor is most readily palpable to outsiders. As Schein(1985) says, cultures have “potency” Anyone who has ever traveled knows how

potent the impact of different cultures can be. We encounter a new language, strange customs, unfamiliar sights, sounds, and smells. The “locals” behave in ways that make it hard for us to relax. Typically, all our senses are involved when we enter a new culture. Schein says that “what we are encountering are the culture’s ‘artifacts,’ its visible and palpable manifestations, and these have powerful impacts” (p.25). Because of this “potency” image, Schein offers the most practical and insightful views of organization culture for my purposes here.

In an age when change is the norm because of economic swings and social upheavals, it is important that we understand an organization’s culture in order to manage it. When we can manage it, we can shape it toward something we consider effective, thus enhancing its chances of survival. Moreover, the managed organization has a better chance of being a place where people can function better. Certainly, during tough economic times, when resources are stretched, there is a felt need to manage an organization’s culture is paramount. Valuable assets, primarily the human assets, can be managed in ways that keep the organization afloat, thus ensuring its survival.

In order to understand organizations in terms of how they communicate to their own membership and to those of the host culture, it is important to know more about their cultures, what makes them function well, what happens when the cultures are vaguely-defined, and how the cultures create and maintain their rituals and patterns to carry out their purposes for existence. Additionally, it is important to understand what factors alter an organization’s culture and what, if any, steps can be taken to manage an organization’s culture to help ensure its success and survival.

Organization Culture Defined

Organizational culture has been conceptualized/defined in a number of ways.

Organizational culture is defined as the vision of the leaders, the mission statement that guides decisions, and a set of values that shapes choices (Pepper, 1995; Schein, 1984, 1985, 1987; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Ott, 1989; Bolman & Deal, 1984).

Organizations are united by a cultural vision, mission and set of values. For example, a retail clothing store will often advertise that its goal is to provide quality products with a friendly sales staff. Consequently, its image and organizational presentation is thus defined in terms of that vision, mission and set of values. In other words, the culture in an organization is created by people and for people. From the organization's standpoint, a strong culture is a construct to ensure new members are appropriately socialized, the values are sufficiently articulated, priorities established, survival strategies developed and selected, creative approaches considered, and points of view expressed. Further, culture can be defined as that which gives direction (Cunningham & Grasso, 1993) and is transmitted through observation, shared beliefs, rituals, games, sagas, symbols, gestures, mores, folkways, customs, memories, clothing, and methods of doing relations. Culture reflects the dominant values of members in that organization. It is important because it shapes the different ways we recognize and react to events in our lives. New members to the church organization described at the beginning of this chapter, for example, learn that one of the assumptions is that new members will become involved in activities soon after joining. The survival of church programs depends upon volunteers to carry out decision-

making and projects. If new members don't offer their talents and willingness to serve on committees, other members will call to seek their help in a variety of ways. At project end, all members are encouraged to "feel good" about their efforts and often throw parties as a way to celebrate their group's accomplishments. Thus, the church's culture reflects a strong volunteerism ethic and this is communicated immediately to newcomers through the socializing activities.

Culture Elements

While an organization's culture includes its mission statement, underlying values and basic assumptions that guide and shape its organizing efforts, the culture can be further identified in terms of several elements. In this section, I will use Schein's (1981, 1984, 1985) definition of levels and several key elements of organization culture: level I includes artifacts, socializing methods, themes, myths, and public documents such as mission statements; level II consists of values; and level III consists of basic assumptions. These elements, grouped in layers, most nearly represent a continuum, "from unconscious processes to highly observable structures and patterns of activity" (Schneider, 1990, p. 159), and thus the concept of culture can be more readily understood. These elements include the most visible, the most fundamental, the most original, and the most symbolic elements of the culture.

Perhaps the most recognizable elements of the organization culture are its artifacts, Schein's level I, or the most visible level. Artifacts include "material and nonmaterial objects and patterns that intentionally or unintentionally communicate information about

the organization's technology, beliefs, values, assumptions, and ways of doing things" (Ott, 1989, p.24). At this level, the organization's values and assumptions are transmitted and take on the function of "creating, changing, maintaining and transmitting socially constructed organizational realities" (p.184). A few examples are behavior patterns, work areas and meeting rooms, computers, artwork, and ceremonies. However, as Axley (1996) states, artifacts are easier to see but also the most difficult to interpret. Further, Ott (1989) argues that artifacts are relatively passive results of an organization's culture and, while more easily identified, are unreliable indicators. Since every organizational culture is different from other organizational culture (Ott, 1989), because values and assumptions vary, the more manifest areas are going to carry different meanings for its members.

To help the observer identify artifacts, Schein (1985) suggests that we ask the question, What is going on here? Often one can readily identify artifacts by the people, their manner of dress, their activities, their tools, products, and language. Most of us have been to parades, for example, where the Shrine organization members wear clown costumes and ride through the streets in little go-carts. While we are entertained and enjoy the spectacle, we wonder what this says about the Shriners themselves, their purposes and their values. Thus, artifacts of organization culture are more difficult to interpret.

Socializing methods, another element of level I and one that is fairly recognizable as a form of helping newcomers adapt, are ways that organizations instruct newcomers in the language of the organization (Ott, 1989). This element of culture describes the ways

that leaders transmit organizational values to its members. They help others make sense of what's happening, thus helping to ensure a commitment level to the organization (Ehrlich, 1994, p.495). Formal methods include orientation sessions, training programs, and apprenticeship programs. Informal methods include observations and storytelling. Thus a university graduate program offers potlucks and social get-togethers and assigns second-year students to help new recruits orient themselves to expectations of the department. Newcomers learn what behaviors are acceptable and which professor is most helpful to ensure their success in their academic programs. In the case of the folk dancing club presented early in this chapter, newcomers learn who are merely members and who are the most knowledgeable and thus the most apt to be the instructors.

While many elements of Schein's level I are tangible and readily identifiable, such as the artifacts and socializing methods, an organization's themes are less obvious. Themes represent important preoccupations in organizations and provide focus for the organization's day to day energy. Themes of a work culture are defined by its leader's visions, values and interests. An example of a theme is "reinvention," adopted by the federal government when it began downsizing in the early 90's. Every decision made, every memo written, every speech delivered by a government official focused on the reinvention theme guiding all activity in the federal sector. Another perspective on organization themes is offered by Cunningham and Gresso (1993), when they state that an effective organization is characterized by themes of diverse perspectives, long-term focus, continuous and sustained improvement, vulnerability and risk, accountability, and ability to celebrate their events. Thus themes are important to study because, ideally, they reflect

shared beliefs and values of organizational members.

A similar, but less obvious element in level I are the organization myths. In Rollo May's, *The Cry for Myth* (1980), he specifically defines "myth" as "that which holds us all together"(p.46). Myth constitutes an (organization's) ideology and view of the world and reveals and reinforces particular themes (Yerby, et al., p.244). Further, myths provide explanations through implied values, reconcile contradictions, and resolve dilemmas (Cohen, 1969). Pettigrew (1979) states that these value-imparting, reconciling qualities suggest that the concept of myth plays an important analytic role in any study of organizational culture (p.576). Myths are important to an organization because a shared myth makes it easier to develop internal cohesion and sense of direction and to maintain the confidence and support of external entities.

Additionally, an organization's "religion" or cosmology, telling the members how to deal with the uncontrollable and unexplainable, can be determined through its myths. An example of myth in the broader culture is "rugged individualism" drawn from the American Frontier era. From this myth, we have learned that when the "Going gets tough, the tough get going"(May, 1980). This has spurred many a defeated person to overcome great odds. Thus, organizational myths function to transmit moral lessons to its members, serving the function of religion. As in the above example, the moral lesson entails the goodness of not following the crowd and even more, moving forward when all the forces around try to block us. Thus, myths serve to guide behavior and are helpful to members in any organization during times of uncertainty.

The organization's mission statement, the final element of level I, can be defined as

a document that carries the ideology, culture, and ethos of the organization (Swales & Rogers, 1995). These tend to contain fundamental visions of leaders and are used as a basis for formulating goals and objectives. They tend to “stress values, positive behavior and guiding principles within the framework of the corporation’s announced belief system and ideology”(p.227). Corporate mission statements can be as short and pithy as Ford Motor Company’s “Quality is Job 1” or as detailed as the Montana Contractors’ Association, which reads:

MCA serves the Montana construction industry:

- by representing the interests of the members to lawmakers, administrative rule-makers and the public
- by providing services to meet members’ needs
- by offering education, safety and training programs
- by communicating with members
- by providing opportunities for members to interact.

As is evident, most mission statements tend to be general statements, claims, and conclusions (Swales & Rogers, 1995, p.226) and tend to reflect the visions of the organizational leaders.

Level I, the most visible but often not the most decipherable, consists of those culture elements that are most palpable to an observer. The objects and behavior patterns represent the surface level and often tell the outsiders how the members of that organization interpret deeper layers, or the values and assumptions that underlie day to day decision making.

Schein’s level II consists of the values of the organization. This level sheds additional light on an organization’s culture. One can identify values which support the

artifacts (Schein, 1985), by asking such questions as What is going on here, and Why are we doing what we do? For example, a service club such as Kiwanis that advertises a pancake breakfast as a fundraiser, tells the community that they value fun, organized, and practical efforts as means of raising money to give back to the community in the form of community projects. Values help people focus on certain things and overlook other things. Their values give them focus and help guide their decision making.

As is obvious with Shriners and Kiwanis, one can see style of dress and behaviors, but they don't tell an outsider what the basic assumptions of the organizations are. While artifacts are the most visible elements of an organization's culture, and values are what help to evaluate the usefulness of the artifacts, the least visible elements of organization culture are the assumptions, Schein's level III.

According to Axley (1996), basic assumptions are the least accessible but the clearest expression of an organization's culture. He compares an organization's assumptions to the law of gravity: first you experience it, then you assume it as a given and so don't worry about it but go on, counting on it to be true (p.140). These are worth studying because they represent patterns of thought that have kept the organization in existence, through trial and error (Ott, 1989). An example of an organization assumption is that the organization exists for the people, rather than the people existing for the organization. This difference is an example of a major shift in perspective as argued by McGregor when he introduced his Theory X and Y in 1960. These assumptions, that man is either inherently lazy or self-motivating and wants challenging opportunities for growth, show how differently leaders and managers can approach their workforce. Thus, revealing

assumptions can reveal fundamentally different stances.

In summary, organization culture can be identified through three levels of elements: the visible elements such as behaviors and artwork, mission statements, and themes; and less visible elements such as the values that help the members evaluate their efforts, and the underlying assumptions. In a community service organization such as Kiwanis, for example, one of the services they provide is placing playground equipment in public parks. The visible evidence of their organization culture, the level I artifacts, is time and money applied to building public parks for children in the community. The invisible level of their organization culture is the value of community service and the assumption that children in a community wouldn't have playground equipment available to both rich and poor kids without the organized efforts of a group of adults.

Relationship of Organizational Culture to Communication

According to Ott (1989), "the most effective mediums for communicating important cultural assumptions, beliefs, values, and behaviors include an organization's language, jargon, metaphors, myths, stories, heroes, scripts, sagas, legends, ceremonies, celebrations, rites and rituals"(p.97). He further argues that organizational information transmitted through these forms of communication is remembered longer than through other media. Additionally, he suggests that when explicit values are at odds with implicit values, the latter usually is believed. Moreover, several researchers (McDonald & Gandz, 1992; Rogers & Ballard, 1995) have argued that values that are shared, positively affect organizational performance. These researchers all argue for the effectiveness of

communicating values and assumptions. But how are values and assumptions to be communicated?

Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) argue that, while current ideas on the culture metaphor stress static features such as ceremonies, jargon, and values, it is more important that we examine processes by which all these features are created, maintained, and transformed. These researchers argue that we need to apply the notion of communication as a meaning-making activity to the culture metaphor. When we apply meaning making to organizational activities, we bring "the significance or meaning of some structural form---be it symbol, story, metaphor, ideology, or sage---into being"(p.129). They suggest that all organizational activities are performances, with members revealing and interpreting particular dramas and strategies. From their view, "a culture is not something an organization has; a culture is something an organization is"(p.146). This notion of meaning making when applied to organizations, thus, helps us examine organizational activities with a clearer, more accurate view.

Summary

Organizations are diverse and can highlight different problems. Some organizational members experience disruption with change of leadership and organizing structure. Some experience confusion with unclear goals and guiding principles. Still others experience resistance and alienation when members are not allowed participation in decision making.

The organizational culture perspective is a useful theoretical framework for

discovering, understanding, and guiding organizations. Because the culture perspective touches so many important aspects of an organization's existence, this perspective most fully captures the richness of an organization.

In understanding organizations through its culture, several key elements are revealed. The most visible elements in an organization's culture are the artifacts, myths, missions statements, socializing methods and themes. Less visible and harder to detect are the values and basic assumptions. When the guiding assumptions and values are identified, the leaders can better manage and guide their work force in a desired direction. When the leadership understands the importance of such aspects as a guiding set of values, they can more effectively enhance the existing practices or develop new ones to strengthen the commitment of their work force toward company goals.

Increasingly, organizational effectiveness depends upon clear and unambiguous communication. Since members are in a constant process of making meaning, it is reasonable to conclude that an atmosphere of openness and clarity will result in more effective outcomes. In the next chapter we'll deal with potential problem areas that hinder the efficiency of organization communication.

Chapter 2. Some Common Problems in Contemporary Organizational Life

“It takes two to speak the truth--one to speak and another to hear.”
(Henry David Thoreau)

The current state of organizations is troublesome. According to a poll conducted by Coopers & Lybrand’s Human Resource Advisory Group, 31 percent of 471 companies nationwide had laid off workers in 1994. Of this group, more than two-thirds reported lower morale and higher levels of stress among those who remained (Martinez, 1995). Individuals often respond to organizational shifts with negative stress reactions such as anxiety, difficulty sleeping, tiredness, and irritability (Antonioni, 1995).

Lay-offs are only one source of stress in an organization. The World Health Organization estimates that stress is the major health concern of two out of three workers and that work-related stress causes health-related problems (Seaward, 1995, p.64). In another article linking stress to mental, emotional, behavioral and leadership impairments, Jane Cranwell-Ward (1995) suggests that a thorough examination and a revision of the corporate culture, policies and procedures are a positive step to relieving extreme stress in the workplace (p.22).

In the business world, communication is critically important. Managers and employees in any business organization need to listen effectively, speak effectively, write effectively and perceive accurately. Stress and conflict can and often does occur between managers and employees due to misunderstandings over what an employee’s job is or should be. Goldhaber (1986) states that his research shows that role ambiguity is a leading cause of employee dissatisfaction (p.243). When employees aren’t sure how to

interpret verbal guidelines and written directions, stress will result. He adds that stress can result from major changes in policies or procedures, unresolved conflicts, and daily pressures that build up such as too much work and too little time. In a similar study conducted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison to investigate how surviving middle managers from down-sized organizations handle stressors related to organizational changes, Antonioni (1995, p.7) states four stressors were believed to be associated with organizational changes: role conflict, role ambiguity, work overload, and time pressure.

Moreover, stresses in the workplace have hidden costs. In an article on managing health care in organizations, Gibson (1993) states that the financial impact of stress is staggering: “\$68 billion annually in lost productivity due to absences from work, stress claims costing up to 10 percent of a company’s earnings, and health care professionals reporting that up to 90 percent of patients complain of stress-related symptoms and disorders” (p.15).

All of these writers and researchers suggest that communicating effectively is needed to reduce the stress and resulting conflicts. Since any successful business or organization accomplishes its tasks through joint effort, poor communication can result in added stress. Rather than seeing communication breakdowns as a result of semantic differences or lack of clarity, however, we might recognize that such breakdowns often result from real differences in how people perceive and understand things because of their membership in different cultural groups (Schein, 1985, p.41). When people of different subgroups using different jargon and technical language, for example when the budget department and the engineering department try to communicate with one another during

meetings, problems can sometimes occur when the two subgroups attempt to find common meanings. Thus, misunderstandings should always be treated initially as a cultural issue rather than an issue of individual personality (Hall, 1959; Schein, 1981).

Communicating effectively is important in all organizations, whether a complex organization such as a federal agency or a small social service group. In order to accomplish their tasks, members need to be unified in their efforts and understandings of what is to be done as well as who is to do it. When service organizations plan their annual projects, they need to maintain accurate records and establish a yardstick for success. In order to accomplish this, people need a common language and common meanings.

The culture metaphor is a useful way to view organizations. Through this framework, one can identify deeper, more pervasive elements of any organization. In this chapter, we'll see what happens when cultural artifacts are misinterpreted and the values and assumptions are ambiguous. Additionally, the characteristics, elements and attributes of conflict will be examined in light of the culture metaphor.

Organizational Problems as Seen through the Cultural Perspective

As stated earlier, Ott (1989) defined artifacts as including “material and nonmaterial objects and patterns that intentionally or unintentionally communicate information about the organization’s technology, beliefs, values, assumptions, and ways of doing things (p.24). Artifacts are the most visible and most easily recognized elements of the organization culture. These include behavior patterns, organizational structure, rites and ceremonies, socialization methods, themes and myths, and public documents such as

memos and mission statements. When these artifacts are misleading, confusing, or don't conform to organizational values and assumptions, problems can erupt in a variety of ways.

Organizational Problems as Revealed by Artifacts

Behavioral patterns may be confusing. Since the way people behave influences outcomes, it is important that behaviors reflect the cultural norms, those patterns that give predictability to members. One behavioral pattern that can cause confusion is the distance that one member stands or sits when around other members, for example, at meetings. As a result of his studies, Hall (1966) points out that in the United States, there is a high consensus on what we consider intimate distance (touching to eighteen inches) and public distance (over twenty-five feet). Most of us have learned how to manage what Hall calls "intrusion distance;" that is, how far away to remain from others without interrupting conversations and yet making it known that one wants attention when appropriate. Schein (1985) adds that this distance can have strong implications when it comes to spacing in an office and what happens when people come closer than is comfortable to others. These distance cues vary from one culture to another and reflect underlying values and assumptions held by members. Unless there is consensus on these values and assumptions, group members will not know how to define their relationships to each other, thus undermining communication efforts (p.98).

Another pattern that can cause problems in an organization can be found in how the organization organizes its members. The organizational structure may promote

alienation among its members. A general theory of hierarchical organizing is put forth by Etzioni (1975), in which he distinguishes among 1) coercive systems, 2) utilitarian systems, and 3) systems based on goal consensus between leaders and followers. In the coercive system, members are alienated and will exit if possible; in the utilitarian system, they will participate according to the norms of fairness--"A fair day's work for a fair day's pay;" and in the goal-consensus system, they will be morally involved and identify with organizational goals. When the organization conducts its business under the coercive system, for example, members will not become involved in the goals of the organization and may find ways to leave. However, according to Rogers and Ballard (1995), if the organization structure is described by its leaders as a system based on goal consensus, then values of open and lateral communication, flexible roles and shared leadership need to be displayed in all organizational activities (p.165). Incongruous behaviors can thus result in conflict.

Not only individual behavior patterns and organization structure patterns present problem areas. Problems arise when members play their parts badly and when organizational rituals and ceremonies lose their potency (Bolman & Deal, 1984). Deal and Kennedy (1982) further state that problems can result when these rites and ceremonies are disorganized. Suppose, for example, that organization leaders attend to people-related activities in ways that are perceived as an afterthought. The social get-togethers are sporadic and carried out only when someone is willing to organize them. Imagine a work environment where significant events such as retirement, promotion and special achievements are overlooked or simply considered private events. These events, while

important in the lives of each employee, are treated as insignificant by management. This is bound to bring about ill feelings among members and result in lack of trust in leadership. As Pettigrew (1979) puts it, the crucial feature of ritual as a medium of organizational culture creation is the message it contains. Thus, disorganized rituals and ceremonies send a powerful message of little to no value of shared experience and belonging.

Behavior patterns of members, organizing structure and ritual meetings can promote effective organizational outcomes or generate problems that are difficult to undo. An equally problem-laden area in organizational life can be found in its socializing methods.

As defined in the last chapter, socializing methods are ways that organizational leaders instruct newcomers in the language of the organization and perpetuate their values and basic assumptions (Ott, 1989). Further, Schein (1985) states that some of the ways that leaders communicate these values and assumptions to the members are conscious and deliberate while some may be unconscious and may even be unintended (p.223). He offers two examples of managers, one who stated a philosophy of delegation and decentralization but intervened frequently on very detailed issues and another who advocated simplicity, clarity and high levels of cooperation but often supported ambiguity and competitiveness. The subordinates in either organization will have to find ways to live with these inconsistencies or confront the leaders, neither of which may be acceptable. The emerging cultures “will then reflect not only the leader’s assumptions, but the complex internal accommodations created by subordinates to run the organization ‘in spite of’ or ‘around’ the leader”(p.224).

Sometimes members learn the wrong or the least adaptive behaviors. In an informal field study, Ott (1989) tells of a situation where an attractive, competent, divorced, upper-middle-class woman manager in a community service organization began wearing “suggestive” clothing to work and sometimes went bra-less. When female members of the cohesive ingroup noticed her “leaning over the director and occasionally brushing against him,” she was immediately ostracized and denied both secretarial support and peer staff assistance. Within half a year, she found another job (p.92). This example shows how one person failed to learn the acceptable behaviors for getting along and advancing in this particular organization. The ingroup clearly made it known that this woman’s type of behavior was not the kind of behavior they wanted perpetuated in this organization.

Schein (1985) states that every organization is concerned about the degree to which people at all levels “fit” into it. If a member is under-socialized or learns elements of a subculture that run counter to the pivotal assumptions, that member usually feels alienated and uncomfortable. At the other extreme, if a member is over socialized, the result is total conformity and lack of responsiveness to new environmental demands. The member who is optimally socialized is one who has learned only those parts of the culture that are essential to the organization’s survival (p.43).

The behavior patterns, organizational structure, rites and ceremonies, and socialization methods are all part of the organization’s visible culture elements. Problems can develop at the less visible level of an organization’s culture, as well.

Messages communicated by leaders through channels such as day-to-day themes,

myths that are transmitted through story, and public documents such as internal memos or mission statements can carry confusing and contradictory messages. As Cunningham and Grasso(1993) put it, people want to be linked to sensible projects that suggest important underlying themes. When members have no unifying theme that gives their efforts consistency and purpose, they are bound to feel unfocused and ultimately unproductive. In contrast, an organization making plans to build a branch office or to enhance the efforts of their public relations department certainly demonstrates a long range goal and accountability to the broader culture, thus giving their members goals and a sense of purpose.

Less obvious focal elements such as myths can be in conflict. For example, if organizational members have a value of “rugged individualism” and leaders encourage their work force to move in the current direction of team work and participatory management, there are bound to be confusing outcomes and resulting tensions. And if we accept, as Scott and Hart (1979) claim, that the lodestar of the American dream is the individual (p.33), then this myth is buried deeply in our psyches/self images. However, the current trend in the American work force is teamwork. How, then, do those two beliefs become reconciled?

Conflict seems to be written in our psyches, embedded in our national pastimes and goals. In his book, *The Cry for Myth*, Rollo May (1991) argues that we moderns, specifically we Americans, labor under a myth called the pressure to succeed. He cites R.W. White, *Lives in Progress*, NY: Dryden, 1954 “(American) culture stresses an individual tied to competition, aggressively directed toward fellow human beings, as the

basis for personal and collective security. Each person should stand on his own feet in order to fight for what he gets - such is the philosophy of this culture”(p.125). With this driving our existence, how can we possibly attain peaceful coexistence? How can we possibly refrain from some degree of conflict, no matter what activity we engage in?

While problems can develop when unifying themes and myths in an organization are weak or contradictory, perception errors can also cause conflict. We often think there is only one way to interpret a memo or directive. However, work problems can also erupt when members misinterpret public documents of the organization such as the mission statement. Since the basis for understanding among members in any organization is a shared system of meaning (Huber & Daft, 1987), what happens when values stated in such a fundamental organizational document as a mission statement are not clear? How does it get interpreted and how do such interpretations lead organizational members toward a greater understanding of messages?

All of these cultural elements can pose problems in any organization. However, as Schein suggests, there are deeper layers which reveal even deeper problem areas. I will now address Schein’s level II and III, values and assumptions.

Organizational Problems Revealed in Underlying Values

Organizations are experiencing a resurgence of interest in values (Peters & Waterman, 1982; McDonald & Gandz, 1992; Meyer & Sypher, 1993; Rogers & Ballard, 1995; Avishai, 1994). Numerous researchers espousing the “strong-culture hypothesis,” argue that shared values positively affect organizational performance (McDonald &

Gandz, 1992, p.64). Others echo Chester Barnard's enduring counsel that managing shared values and organizational symbols such as myths, stories, and rituals, is the most important function an executive can undertake (p.65). When relational values such as cooperation and moral integrity are valued by only some of the members of the government office example at the beginning of the previous chapter, the members are not going to be aiming their efforts at accomplishing similar ends through similar methods.

Conflicting values espoused in the normal flow of organizational activity by leaders will generate problems. In the church example, members of the congregation argued over misinterpretations of the new minister's goals and unclear guidelines. Traditional activities were omitted; board members argued over assignment of responsibilities. However, according to Deal and Kennedy (1982), these can be symptomatic of even larger and deeper organizational problems. When there are unclear organization values and no stated beliefs, there are likely to be internal disagreements.

Unclear values from leadership can create problems, but value problems can be generated by membership, as well. As an organization grows, subcultures can develop and clash with each other. Examples of subcultures in businesses are groups of employees who evolve away from the main stream, such as traveling sales staff or those who work out of their homes. These subcultures, if allowed to stay in the periphery, may develop values that preempt the *shared values* of the main stream (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). The identity of these subgroups is maintained through comparison and competition and helps to build and maintain the group culture (Blake & Mouton, 1961). Thus, subgroups, in order to maintain their existence, must develop a value base different from the main

stream.

Another value problem that can be generated by subgroups is in the area of interdependency. Scott and Hart (1979) argue that the current value of specialization that characterize subgroups in modern work forces are in direct conflict with the values of community. They argue that there is not room for the traditional American value of a cooperative community within modern organizations since it requires that individuals often specialize and compete with one another. The ability to work in a cooperative, interdependent manner is undermined when members are competing with one another. In the dance club example, new members demonstrated specialized techniques, thus alienating themselves from the main group. Through inquiry, the other members discovered that these new members felt it their mission to introduce new techniques to raise interest and thus, club growth. Group cohesion in goal attainment was seriously jeopardized. Consequently, when values are in conflict with one another, there is bound to be stress and conflict (p.70).

In summary, values are what give direction to an organization's work effort, be it a church congregation, a dance club, or a federal agency. When some members value cooperation and moral integrity, while others value competition and achievement at all costs, there are bound to be problems. Internal disagreements can erupt from unclear organizational values from leadership or from isolated subgroups who develop a set of values that run contrary with the main stream. Additionally, the American value of community is at odds with today's organizational norms which stress specialization and differentiation in that members are encouraged to compete with one another, thus

jeopardizing efforts at cooperative action. All of these value conflicts will present problems in any organization.

Organizational Problems Revealed in Underlying Assumptions

Schein (1984) adds yet another level of concern and states that while the surface level of an organization's culture and the values that direct the ongoing business of the organization can be problematic, these levels deal with the manifestations of culture, but not with the cultural essence (p.5). He states that "to really understand a culture and to ascertain more completely the group's values and overt behavior, it is imperative to delve into the underlying assumptions, which are typically unconscious but which actually determine how group members perceive, think, and feel"(p.3). He argues that because of the human need for order and consistency, assumptions form an outlook that help us tie together the basic assumptions about humankind, nature and activities. If a group assumes that the way to survive is to conquer nature and to manipulate its environment aggressively, it cannot at the same time assume that the best kind of relationship among group members is one that emphasizes passivity and harmony. If we accept that human beings have a cognitive need for order and consistency, it is reasonable to assume that all groups will eventually evolve sets of assumptions that are compatible and consistent (Schein, 1984). Certainly when these assumptions are at odds, there is bound to be stress.

Schein offers as an example the case of two organizations. One operates "on the interlocking assumptions that: 1) ideas come ultimately from individuals; 2) people are responsible, motivated, and capable of governing themselves; however, truth can only be

pragmatically determined by 'fighting' things out and testing in groups; 3) such fighting is possible because the members of the organization view themselves as a family who will take care of each other. Ultimately, this makes it safe to fight and be competitive.

Contrast this with another organization that operates on the paradigm that 1) truth comes ultimately from older, wiser, better educated, higher status members; 2) people are capable of loyalty and discipline in carrying out directives; 3) relationships are basically lineal and vertical; 4) each person has a niche that is his or her territory that cannot be invaded; and 5) the organization is a 'solitary' unit that will take care of its members" (1984, p.5).

These two organizations will produce two different sets of outcomes and when they come in close proximity with each other, will probably be noticeable by their contrasting perspectives.

Pepper (1995) offers yet another view of organizational assumptions. He suggests that in this country we have adopted a culturally-biased value system of scarcity, hierarchy, the ladder of success, and competition. Members see limited opportunity around them, forcing them to compete harder to climb the success ladder. Within a competitive environment, members use power, seek power, resent power and become victims of power (p.198). Contrast that with an environment where members see a culture of abundance, where all are treated as an unlimited resource, and potential is considered unlimited. He continues, stating that our organizations are products of our culture, not the other way around. Our organizations are going to display these competitive attitudes undergirded by these basic assumptions about how people are with one another. These basic assumptions do in fact guide the organizations, shaping their rule systems in ways

that perpetuate problems.

Schein (1985) gives as an example, a manager brought up with strong beliefs in achievement as the basis for status who could not cope with the fact that a family firm into which he had moved as general manager was completely dominated by assumptions of ascription (social rewards such as status and rank are assigned on the basis of birth or family membership), particularism (specific criteria applied to individuals as a means of preferential treatment instead of broadly applied standards of behavior), and emotional diffuseness (members relate to each other along many dimensions, not just one dimension such as a salesperson-customer relationship). This is a sure prescription for stress and conflict. Tasks were assigned on the basis of who was who, decisions were made on the basis of who liked whom, and promotions were clearly reserved for family members (p.108)

In summary, organizational problems may reveal themselves through confusion in behavioral patterns and organizing structures that promote member alienation. Time-honored rites and ceremonies may lose the potency they once held for members. Socialization activities may contradict themselves, leaving members feeling ambiguous about the intended messages they transmit. When underlying themes and myths are inconsistent, members have to work harder at arriving at a meaningful sense of purpose. Finally, when underlying values and assumptions are misleading and confusing, organizational problems are more likely to unfold.

The Nature of Conflict Within Organizations

As we have seen, all of these cultural elements can be signposts of problems. Certainly when problems arise in any organizational effort, stress results. Whatever the cause or source, it is important to be able to identify the symptoms and manage our stress before it leads to unwanted consequences. In this section, I will discuss the nature of conflict in organizations, characteristics of conflict, elements of a conflict as defined by Wilmot and Hocker, and finally, the attributes of conflict as developed by Kilmann and Thomas.

The nature of conflict in organizations is many-sided. Conflict can interfere with the accomplishment of organizational purposes (Bolman & Deal, 1984, p.119). As argued in chapter 1, organizations that are structured in a behavior pattern of hierarchy raise the possibility that the lower levels will ignore or subvert leadership directives. Moreover, conflict among major interest groups can undermine an organization's effectiveness and the ability of its leadership to function.

Further, conflict is unavoidable, whether people gather in the same physical place, or communicate by e-mail or conference calls. It can surface between people who are casual acquaintances and volunteer in separate organizations or between two employees from adjacent offices. In businesses, problems often develop between supervisors and subordinates, as well as between co-workers. For example, subordinates often complain that their supervisors don't give them enough information or the right information to accomplish their tasks. Misperception of memos and documents that highlight the organizational mission and goals may not be clear and seriously undercut the

communicative ability of members to accomplish the organizational activities, as Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo offer (1982). Conversely, supervisors often complain that subordinates don't keep them informed about events that have the potential to develop into full-blown problems. These conditions often are the result of poorly developed themes and mission statements that give the work force little to no unifying direction in their daily activities.

Conflict in the workplace can bring devastating results. Tensions that develop between two coworkers can distract other employees in the work environment. Since employees usually rely upon each other for specific talents and expertise, interruption can bring uncomfortable and awkward results. For example, if tensions have developed between two supervisors in two related departments, the flow of information will be disrupted between the departments. This often stems the flow of vital information and resources needed for employees to perform their tasks adequately. Moreover, time is often diverted from work efforts when workplace tensions go unresolved. Time is wasted when employees discuss the relational issues around the water cooler or over coffee. Conflicts can erupt throughout any workplace, but conflicts between managers and workers are particularly important because they can disrupt the harmonious relations in the workplace and affect productivity (Tjosvold & Chia, 1989).

Further, not only does the flow of work get disrupted, but the employees suffer as individuals. Fears are generated. They ask, Who do I want to get chummy with, Who do I stay away from, Who is safe to talk with, Will I get demoted if I approach this issue? As a result, their personal satisfaction is diminished. Careers can be lost, advancement may

be questionable, and politics may take priority over work efforts.

People typically deal with organizational problems in a variety of ways. They often avoid the person or the issue. They stay away from the hot spot. If they have to interact with the person, they do so only when necessary and in a resistant fashion. They argue for their viewpoints. They sulk, sabotage, and take revenge for wrongdoing. They gossip, backstab, go behind and around the source of resistance, and pull outsiders into their confidence. If things get bad enough, they sue or quit or threaten to harm the other. Unresolved conflicts in the workplace have created harmful results. The “Post Office syndrome” is a term that has developed out of disgruntled employee events that have taken place in Post Offices around the country. Postal workers who have opened fire in the workplace have been presumed to be angered over policy issues that have affected them. This obviously is an extreme example of the results of workplace conflicts, but they exist, nonetheless. While all these problems exist, it is important to consider keeping and maintaining effective work relationships.

While it is highly probable that we will experience some form of conflict in the workplace, it is possible to reduce the negative impact of these conflicts. It is possible to transform our conflicts. We can do that by understanding their characteristics, identifying their elements, and describing ways that people typically do conflict.

Characteristics of Conflict

Differences of opinion exist in any healthy, dynamic organization (Burke, 1970). Many would argue that differences of opinion are even vital to the progress of any

organization or unit. However, as Wilson and Hanna (1986) point out, when the differences become unresolved, the problem becomes one of dealing effectively with them rather than eliminating them. In this section I will discuss the characteristics of conflict, the elements of conflict and finally, Thomas and Kilmann's five styles of doing conflict. Throughout, connections to organization culture will be suggested.

One of the ways of viewing organizational conflict is by seeing it as destructive. Most of us tend to believe that conflict is inherently destructive and avoid it at all costs. This attitude can be perpetuated when there are no socializing efforts to counter this assumption about how people deal with differences. Deutsch (1973) argues that "a conflict clearly has destructive consequences if the participants in it are dissatisfied with the outcomes and all feel they have lost as a result of the conflict"(p.158). Smith (1966), in a comparative analysis of conditions and consequences of intra-organizational conflict, found that when an organization is structured hierarchically, with many layers of subgroups, chances of arriving at common goals and shared perceptions is reduced. As a result, organizational objectives are harder to achieve.

The symptoms of organizational conflicts are often easy to detect. We see and hear them in varying degrees of intensity around us. We see and hear people try to outdo each other in the boardroom, on the playground and in the classroom. We see and hear people get angry and defensive and attempt to convince others of the error of their thinking, calling others names and ridiculing them in front of their peers or subordinates. We watch people plan and strategize to "get even," spending time and money in an attempt to sabotage the efforts of others. Kolb (1987) states that wasteful aspects of

conflict can be observed in decreased motivation, diminished flexibility, and psychological stresses and strains (p.123).

What do organizational members do to keep conflicts going? In our dance club example, the members were observed talking about the newcomers in terms of their personalities. While reduced member involvement seemed to be caused by the new couple who took over instructions, the disgruntled members were focusing on personal characteristics and not specific behaviors, as conflict managers typically suggest. As Kolb (1987) points out, this is a sure way to keep a conflict going at a destructive level.

On the other hand, another way to see conflict is as constructive. Several researchers argue that conflict serves to bring out innovativeness and continued growth and development (Kieffer, 1984; Deutsch, 1973). The developmental model proposes that humans are continuously intertwined in the dynamics of action and reflection. When organizational members assume that each offers differing views and that these views will bring about the best solutions, all will feel more comfortable about allowing differences to surface. With that process, the effect of conflict brings new insights and challenges in an ever-changing cycle. In this respect, a shared assumption that conflict will bring about good outcomes is helpful if this attitude has been developed and maintained by all members. It can prevent stagnation, it stimulates interest and curiosity, and may even be considered highly enjoyable as one tests and assesses one's capacities to deal effectively with change (Deutsch, 1969).

Moreover, Kolb (1987) reiterates early theorists when she states that constructive conflict between groups can enhance intragroup cohesion and energize efforts (p.123). In

our dance club example, a move toward constructive conflict would have been for the members to describe the behaviors of the new couple instead of judging their character and interpreting their behaviors. Further, a shared value of new ideas would have helped them see the worth of what the new couple had to offer to their overall mission. Without identified values and assumptions of innovativeness and joint effort, this group felt doomed.

While conflicts produce many negative side effects, they also serve a useful function of increasing involvement. We typically care a great deal about issues before we are engaged in a conflict over them. Cunningham and Gresso (1993) state that conflict is constructive if it emerges out of a collaborative process emphasizing values and interests. Conflict of values can drive us into further investment in the issues at hand (Wilson & Hanna, 1986). Once we become involved, we are likely to risk more, say more and pull others into discussion. This in turn will increase the involvement level of those in the organization.

As Rahim (1986) states, conflict may be both functional and dysfunctional for an organization. This is similar to the idea that socializing activities such as training and social get-togethers can be both underdone and overdone, as was argued above. Too little conflict may lead to stagnation and too much conflict may lead to confusion and organizational disintegration. In other words, a moderate amount of conflict, managed well, may be functional for an organization (p.112).

Elements of a Conflict

We can begin to understand the nature of a conflict by examining the elements of the conflict. Wilmot and Hocker (1998) define conflict as “an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals” (p.21). The ability to change the nature and direction of a conflict depends upon how the parties in the conflict interpret these elements.

When examining the elements of a conflict from the cultural perspective, it is useful to ask, “What is the issue? What are we arguing about?” The answers could be deadlines, procedures, violation of territory, interpretations of policy, arrangement of furniture, values, definitions of what a quality situation is and the like. Sometimes the conflict parties don’t even know what they are fighting over or arguing about. They just keep going at each other until one of them backs down or leaves. This of course doesn’t resolve the conflict. Let us examine each of these elements in light of the culture perspective.

Conflict is an expressed struggle. We can express our conflicts in subtle ways or overt ways. Often, we don’t even realize we are having some discomfort with a relationship. We tell ourselves that the other is not important to us or the situation will pass. This type of thinking can result when members are distant, isolated from each other, as often happens with subgroups. We often justify the tensions by thinking that this tension is acceptable, that it is natural for supervisors and subordinates to be adversaries, or that managers and employees naturally are at odds with each other. In cultural terms,

we make the basic assumption that it is the nature of a supervisor/subordinate relationship to be adversarial. If the supervisor also assumes this basic assumption about the nature of this relationship, then often negative outcomes will be predictable. We let these tensions exist until an event happens that escalates the exchange to a decided level of conflict. The expressed struggle needs to be recognized by both parties.

Conflict is between at least two interdependent parties. Since conflict is a mutual activity, each party has to recognize the importance of the other. They are bound up in common activities and need what the other contributes to their joint efforts. They have mutual interests, even if the interest is only in keeping the conflict going (Wilmot & Hocker, 1998). They may or may not agree that they are in this conflict. They may decide that their best interests will be served by thinking in independent terms. Depending upon the importance of the relationship, the parties may tacitly agree that they are dependent upon one another for resources. Again, this can come from mutual agreement of an assumption of interdependency, using culture terms. On the other hand, over socializing that leads to too much team work may lock members into a mind set that they can't function without other members. Thus, socialized thinking that leads to too much team work can be just as dysfunctional as socialized thinking that encourages too much independence.

In a workplace study, the importance of interdependency was shown to produce effective interaction and productive outcomes. In a field study using Deutsch's theory (1973), Tjosvold & Chia (1989) found that cooperative goals and even more, interaction during conflict, was found to be more strongly correlated with constructive outcomes.

Thus, when members have mutually understood goals and feel committed to cooperating with one another, the chances increase that the outcomes will be more constructive.

Conflict includes perceived incompatible goals. Perceived incompatible goals are central to all conflict struggles (Wilmot & Hocker, 1998). Since a healthy relationship includes the ability to express differences (Fisher & Brown, 1988), an unhealthy one locks participants into silence and a reluctance to speak one's mind. We confuse good relations with approval, shared values, avoidance of disagreement. An employee may be nursing a grudge toward the boss for all the years she contributed to the work effort but didn't receive any compensation or recognition for her efforts. Her boss, on the other hand, wants to move ahead on a new project. Unless this employee feels able to express these concerns, their goals will not be arrived at mutually. In this case, the employee is likely to take out hurt feelings on the work group. The hidden goal for the employee is to sabotage the efforts of the supervisor she thinks is standing in the way of her goal--to be recognized. However, when the organizing structure encourages goal consensus, members don't need to be preoccupied with hidden agendas. The hierarchical structure tends to promote alienation in efforts, as Etzioni offers (1975).

Conflict involves competition for scarce resources (Blake, et al, 1964; Neilson, 1972). Scarce resources can come in the form of bonuses, desired positions, and prized work projects. If organizational members carry underlying assumptions that there is a scarcity of resources, that there is simply not enough to go around of the desired resource, there will always be two sides, at least; the have's and the have-not's and thus conflict is inevitable in this kind of environment. While most people think in terms of tangible

resources, such as salaries, bonuses, promotions, there are intangible ones such as acceptance, prestige, boss's favors and recognition. With perceived scarce resources, there just isn't enough to go around. What I want and what you want can't be done because there isn't enough time, money, supplies, attention from bosses, business interests, ability, power, confidence, and intangibles such as care and respect. When members have conflicting assumptions about resources and how to use them, as Schein states, they will tend to compete and feel at odds in their efforts.

Finally, conflict includes interference or a perception of interference. Even when we say we have enough resources and determination and ability, we see the other as blocking our efforts. This condition can come about when efforts at consensus building or participatory problem solving are not part of how an organization does business. Further, we sometimes even assume that the other is intentionally getting in our way and sabotaging our efforts. We speculate about the others. In the case of the dance club, several members wanted increased attendance. They grumbled that the domineering couple were driving newcomers away, thereby reducing their chances for increased public invitations. They perceived that the couple was blocking their goals. The members handled this by avoiding the couple, and strategizing ways to intercept their organizing decisions. The conflict remained at a low level until several key members disbanded the group. Without clearly stated goals and participatory problem solving, the group was unable to identify their resources and solicit cooperative action from members.

In summary, we can begin to understand a conflict by characterizing it as destructive or constructive. We can also define a conflict in terms of an expressed

struggle, involving at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals (Wilmot & Hocker, 1998). Next we will understand conflict further by examining the five conflict-handling styles first developed by Blake and Mouton (1964) and further developed by Kilmann and Thomas (1977).

Attributes of Conflict Styles

The American Heritage Dictionary (1985) defines attribute as a quality or a characteristic of a person or thing. They further define it as a qualifier, a way to describe something. One of the ways that we can identify a conflict is through observable behavior patterns and qualities that we ascribe to individuals. We might say that someone is a good listener, that they are easy to be with, that they like people and smile readily. These are styles that we attribute to them. We might say that someone is highly successful because they say the right things, go to the right places, read the right books, adhere to the right moral beliefs. These are tactics that we attribute to them. These are all attributes we assign to others.

Similarly, we can describe a conflict in terms of styles that organizational members use. In understanding the styles and their underlying tactics, we can make educated choices about moves and approaches that are available to us when we feel limited or cornered by what is happening. The following are styles that were developed by Kilmann and Thomas. These styles can also describe organizational approaches that members use in solving their differences.

1) Avoidance. One way organizational members manage their conflicts is by avoiding them. This style is characterized by protecting or withdrawing behaviors (Rahim, 1986), denial that there is a conflict, changing and avoiding certain topics, and using joking to avoid dealing with the conflict at hand (Wilmot & Hocker, 1998). It displays a low concern for self and others. This style has several advantages and disadvantages for organizational members. For example, this style is appropriate when the participants feel the issues are trivial or when a cooling-off period is needed. However, this style is inappropriate when members in the conflict have the responsibility to make a decision or when the issue is important to other members.

2) Competition. Described by dominating or forcing behaviors, this style has high concern for self and low concern for others. This style typifies an organizational atmosphere where members assume scarce resources or when they value solo efforts instead of group efforts. When the goals of two or more people are interconnected so that only one can achieve the goal, a competitive condition exists (Lewicki & Litterer, 1985). A workplace example is the pursuit of a promotion or recognition for superior work. If the conflict parties perceive scarce rewards and limited opportunities, they will vie with each other and jockey for an advantageous position. This style is appropriate when a conflict issue is trivial and a speedy decision is needed or when subordinates lack expertise to make technical decisions. In organizations where group decision making exists and the input of each member is important for long-range outcomes, this style is inappropriate when the issues are complex and all parties are equally powerful.

3) Compromise. This style is an intermediate condition and expresses a so-so

attitude in concern for self and others. All members let go of important concerns in order to make a decision that will end an impasse and help the organization move forward. This style is appropriate when goals of organizational members are mutually exclusive, such as often happens with subgroups; when members are equally powerful, when consensus cannot be reached, or when the members need a temporary solution to a complex problem. However, this style is inappropriate when the organization has one member who is more powerful, or when a problem is complex enough needing problem-solving approach.

4) Accommodation. This style is characterized by a low concern for self and high concern for others. Organizational members typically are obliging or yielding or conceding to the others. This style is appropriate for members when they believe they may be wrong, when the issue at hand is more important to the other members, or when preserving the relationships is important (Wilmot & Hocker, 1998). It is inappropriate in terms of organizational health when the issue is more important to us, we believe that we are right, or we want to buy time, believing that we may reach an agreement in the near future.

5) Collaboration. This style is characterized by a high concern for self and other. It typically displays behaviors that are integrating or problem solving. In organizations that have a participatory management method or accomplish their goals through team efforts, this method of working through differences is most effective. This style is appropriate when issues are complex and synthesis of ideas is needed to come up with better solutions. Further, it is appropriate when commitment is needed from other

members for successful implementation. It is inappropriate when the task or problem is simple, when an immediate decision is required, or when the other members are unconcerned about the outcome.

All of these styles have advantages and disadvantages within organizations. Of these five types of behavior, conflict theorists maintain that collaboration may be highly effective in managing differences (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Folger & Poole, 1984; Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). Borisoff and Victor (1989) state it positively, when they assert, "Because collaboration requires the effort, effective communication, and open-minded attitude needed to ensure that the concerns of both sides are fully articulated and addressed, the likelihood of arriving at solutions acceptable to both sides is greatly enhanced"(p.28). Moreover, in terms of organization culture, Cunningham and Gresso (1993) state, "Collaboration allows individuals to develop a common understanding and language out of which a common culture can emerge"(p.44). When members can share values, knowledge, expertise, aspirations, visions, and difficulties in a supportive way, they are more apt to move forward together, not in a combative and disoriented way.

Summary

Problems in organizations that result from unclear communication patterns can be revealed through the culture metaphor. At Schein's first level, behavior patterns may be confusing resulting in tense and conflicting relations; organizational structure may promote alienation resulting in decisions that don't reflect the needs and concerns of all members; rites and ceremonies may have lost their potency and purposeful meaning for

members over time resulting in a lack of shared experience and belonging; socialization methods and goals may be nonexistent or unbalanced resulting in disparate attitudes about how to best accomplish organizational efforts; themes and myths may be nonexistent or contradict each other resulting in members feeling unfocused and unproductive; and, finally, public documents such as memos and mission statements may be confusing and open to misinterpretation resulting in confusion about goals and desired outcomes. At a deeper level, the organizational values may be unclear or not shared by everyone, and basic assumptions may be at odds, resulting in conflicting efforts.

While these cultural elements may be unclear, the member's perceptions of self and other's style may be equally unclear. Person A's view of self and the other's style and person B's view of self and the other's style may be inaccurate. They act on their perceptions, accurate or inaccurate. This can add even more stress.

When the elements of Wilmot and Hocker's(1998) definition of conflict and Kilmann and Thomas's(1977) five styles of conflict are applied to cultural elements, we have a richer picture of how problems in organizations are manifested. When we apply the elements of conflict and the five styles of conflict to organization problems, we begin to get a better grasp of possible solutions.

Chapter 3. Methods of Discovering and Analyzing Organizational Culture

Getting one's hands around a company's culture is like putting one's hands into a cloud.

(Howard Schwartz and Stanley Davis, 1981:30)

Most of us live our entire lives within organizations. As Cheney argues (1991), throughout our lives, we are part of an organization of some form or the other. It is difficult to escape organizational life. Often, we find it amazing that anything gets done in an organization because of rituals that don't seem to make sense or rules that bind us into mindless behaviors.

Since we assume that an organization intends to survive, it seems logical to conclude that it works continuously to maintain and renew itself. Toward this end, an organization is driven by values and ideals that its leaders consider worth pursuing. When goals aren't reached within planned time frames, leaders typically resort to analyzing their situations for solutions. Historically, organizational structure and behavioral patterns have been the focus of organization problem solvers (Bolman & Deal, 1984). This focus is much like band-aid surgery, where the symptoms or most noticeable aspect of a problem get the treatment. Areas that often receive this symptomatic treatment are policy, salary plans, accounting procedures, hiring techniques and communication behavior patterns. Diagnosticians were looking at procedures and structures to solve people problems.

However, results indicate these historical methods have often served to distract leaders and change agents. Applying these methods obviously was not the total solution to organizational problems. Even more troubling, managers and leaders have been divided

over the best approach to take. Cunningham and Gresso (1993) claim that the diagnosing error has been on the focus. While there may not be one ideal approach that is best, the culture perspective affords leaders and diagnosticians a deeper look into organizational behavior in order to discern communication patterns that may be troublesome.

In this chapter, I will discuss several ways to discover and analyze cultures. First, I will propose examining and analyzing an organization's artifacts to reveal its values. Second, I will argue that examining socializing processes will help expose attitudes that can identify problem areas. Third, observing ordinary organizational activities such as meetings and ceremonies can be a useful method in revealing values and relational information. Fourth, isolating and examining written documents through rhetorical analysis can identify potential areas of misinterpretation. Finally, getting information directly from the members through focus group interviews serves to bring personal perceptions to the total analytic activity.

Examine Artifacts and Analyze to Reveal an Organization's Values

According to Schein (1984), a culture's artifacts are the easiest to discern. They consist of material and nonmaterial objects and patterns that communicate information about the organization's beliefs, values, assumptions, and ways of doing things (Ott, 1989, p.24). As stated in chapter one, they represent the member's history, their value choices, their preferred way of living and the member's sensibilities about how life in that organization is best set up and carried out in order to ensure its survival. Artifacts can reveal an organization's ideal image, behavior patterns and underlying philosophy.

Artifacts reveal values to both outsiders and insiders. The place where organizational members gather is itself an obvious artifact. For example, the place of doing business says a lot to an outsider about the degree of pride the members hold about their organization. Certainly a back-room operation will be viewed as less successful than a show place with the mark of an interior designer. To this business organization, the image of success is a strong value. Another example of a visual artifact is the area a visitor encounters when entering the organizational environment. How the reception area is arranged tells outsiders how the organization members present themselves to the outside world. A coffee pot with cups tells the visitor to a corporation, for example, that this is more than just a speedy place to conduct business. A cup of coffee suggests a seat, a discussion, time to stop and talk. In some respects, a coffee pot suggests that this organization has a ritual of doing business over a cup of coffee. To this organization, taking time for conversation and relaxation is a strong value in their work life.

Further, by asking, “what is going on around here,” as Schein (1984) suggests, the observer can note rituals. When we approach an event and ask, What are these people doing and what significance might it have for them, we can uncover behaviors that the members carry out that give them satisfaction and self-worth. One usually thinks of the company picnic and the annual Christmas party as formal rituals. However, there are informal rituals as well, such as midmorning coffee breaks and gatherings around the water cooler. By asking the question, “why,” as Axley (1996) offers, one can find out, for example, that the organization leaders value social times for the members to relax, joke, and swap stories. Further, by asking why members are doing what they are doing, one can

analyze the behavior patterns for any incongruencies and inconsistencies. As was argued in chapter two, organizational value conflicts can often be revealed at this level. And as is usually the case, rituals and behavior patterns that have withstood the test of time and have a long-standing tradition hold deeper meaning and value to its members.

These examples of physical artifacts are obvious to an outsider, but there are behavior patterns that may not be as observable. A diagnostician would want to look closer, into activities going on behind the scenes such as socialization activities of its members and routine meetings.

Observe Socialization Processes and Write Up Observations

A major factor in the examination of organization culture is the socialization process. This includes all the deliberate ways leaders indoctrinate members into organizational thinking. Researchers have stated that a major way to ensure the positive development of new members is through adequate and significant socialization methods (Louis, 1980; Schein, 1985). It is during these initial encounters with new members that leaders can communicate the ideal attitudes and values that assure organizational success. Further, according to Jablin (1987), one of the ways that an organization's culture is carried out and perpetuated is through its socialization processes. Since the new member brings to the workplace preconceived notions of what is to take place there, it is in the best interest of the organization to socialize the new recruit into the preferred thoughts and values of the organization. There are several stages in the socialization process that can be examined.

First, the hiring procedures and the interview process all determine how applicants are selected and oriented toward their new roles. Studies have shown (Jablin, 1987) that how much and what kind of information an interviewee has about the organization at the time of the interview has a significant impact on their expectations for employment. Similarly, the interviewer's perception of the interviewee has a great deal to do with outcomes. For example, the applicant who is articulate and asks questions about the organization is perceived to have concerns about long term commitments while the applicant who merely listens to the interviewer outline the job description is perceived to have their own interests in mind and not the organization's. Clearly, the preconceptions that a new recruit brings to the workplace have a great impact on the assimilation process of the new employee.

Once inside, the new recruit still has to learn how to maneuver. Pepper (1995) asserts that a problem for the new recruit is "compounded by the fact that much of the cultural information necessary for the newcomer to make rational, informed decisions is tacit" (p. 135). This makes it harder for the newcomer to learn the culture. Thus organizations often develop orientation packages, informing newcomers of values, missions, purposes and images that the organization holds dearly and offers as a standard of inspiration for success. Much of this tacit information is hard to draw inferences about until the newcomer has been around for awhile. As argued in chapter two, members who are over socialized or under socialized will develop attitudes and values that can run counter to the pivotal assumptions of the leaders. Obviously, it is in the best interest of the organization for new member to be optimally socialized in ways that ensure the

organization's survival.

Moreover, over time, policies change and conditions change. Leaders come and go; economic conditions fluctuate. In our federal agency, for example, the work force was confused over policy changes formulated nearly 2000 miles away and administered nearly 800 miles away. As a consequence, employees resisted change and spent more time complaining than being productive. These conditions can complicate relationships and the way members interpret what is going on and negotiate their meaning making. People need to renegotiate their social activities and rituals, making them more meaningful to them in their current conditions. Thus the socialization practices require a re-examination as new members enter and older members exit the organization.

Finally, the training and career development that a member receives and the rites and ceremonies that are shared help maintain those preferred images and values sets. Workshops, seminars, and award ceremonies are examples of socialization practices that communicate the values and assumptions of leaders. This developmental process continues until members exit the organization. The standard gold watch at retirement is one example of a socialization practice that transmits the value of appreciation. Since gold is perceived as being a precious metal, this gift signifies an exchange of one precious gift for another. These activities help transmit the values and assumptions of the leaders to members as a means of validating what is worth aspiring toward.

Inconsistencies in these important rituals and socialization practices can reveal conflicting values and assumptions about what is important and not important among organization members. When members hold conflicting values and assumptions about

how to best conduct their efforts, communication will be confusing and productivity will be in question.

Isolate Gathering Locations, Meetings and Ceremonies and Write Up Observations

In addition to examining artifacts and observing socialization methods, another method of data gathering for the diagnostician is the observation method. Undoubtedly, walking around the physical plant will reveal data. Do there appear to be groups that are under stress? Are some members rushing about their activities with heads down, unwilling to take the time for small talk with other members? Perhaps the shutdown of a machine has made one group of members idle. Do people help each other solve the problem or do they wait for others to get it started? Do leaders move about smoothly, considerately, or do they interact stiffly and authoritatively? Noting behaviors of leaders throughout the organization might reveal attitudes toward members that engender distrust or resistance. These conditions can impact the flow and accuracy of communication within the organization. Inconsistency of values and assumption about how best to get the business done can be revealed in how people interact in their work time together.

A more specific method of gathering data is to consider attending and observing the organization's meetings. The meeting is a rich setting for data gathering about organization problem solving and decision making, as Schwartzman (1989) has so painstakingly described in her observations of a Midwest community mental health center. The meeting is a place where organizational members negotiate their relationships with one another. Leadership styles are most demonstrated, productivity and membership

satisfaction are most evident and conflict and cooperation are processes to be worked through in accomplishing the group's tasks. Incongruities in attitudes can be detected during this negotiating process, as was noted by Schein (1985) in chapter two. Further, meetings are sometimes left ambiguous because people will defend their views, as an indication of "the truth" (Bolman and Deal, 1984, p.20). Finally, as Schwartzman discovered, the meeting can be a place where sense making takes place. This is a crucial communication process for members of any organization as they try to define their place and meaning within the organization. Conflicting values and assumptions can be revealed during these key organizational activities as members negotiate their relationships and organizational processes with one another.

The walk-around method and meeting observation will help reveal attitudes and relational information. To ensure getting the "whole story," Levinson (1972) recommends a minimum of two hours observation time. This will help standardize conditions to permit later comparisons, both within a setting and across settings. He suggests the setting summary include the total number of observed episodes, the average episode time, the number of stimuli events, the type of task process for each setting participant, the outcome of activities and orientation of occupants to each outcome and finally, the patterns of interpersonal relation in each setting. All these factors help the diagnostician ascertain the effectiveness of communication within an organization. Any inconsistencies or conflicts will be revealed following a descriptive write-up of these observations.

Isolate and Gather Documents and Conduct Rhetorical Analysis

One method of diagnosing an organization is through a method unique to the field of communication, the rhetorical analysis. Organizations, whether churches or service clubs, are persuasive enterprises. Cheney & McMillan (1990), in exploring the ways modern organizations have become more a collective voice rather than an individual's voice, argue that they must, in Barnard's view (1938/1968) "(1) maintain a system of communication, (2) communicate a common purpose, and (3) secure the essential contributions of members"(p.97). To accomplish these goals, leaders employ rhetoric to motivate current members, recruit new members, and maintain the preferred identity throughout the entire membership. An analysis of an organization's literature will thus reveal the ends and the means leaders justify in influencing the organization's inside and outside stakeholders. Specifically, any rhetorical situation such as a leader's speech at a company retirement party or a press release offered to the public to explain a current policy typically attends to the nature of the source of the message, the message itself, the intended audience, and the goals of the message. Thus, a rhetorical analysis of the reports, memos, and speeches can reveal the organizational leader's values, philosophical stance and intentions. Do the annual reports and mission statements express similar values and visions? Who receives the monthly newsletter and memos? Does everyone have access to this message channel or just a select few? In looking at quarterly reports and press releases of businesses, for example, do outside and inside messages convey the same values and purposes? If leaders espouse values of member development, how do brochures, training manuals and resources such as films and audio cassettes address the

development of the members? Is there career-path progression and longevity written into job descriptions? A lack of consistency of values within policy manuals and memos could signal confusion and lead to leader/member tensions. Additionally, unless all members have access to the same messages guiding activities, conflicts of interest can result. In short, an examination of documents can help leaders and problem solvers better comprehend not only how activities are actually carried out, but also how organizational members exercise control over one another (p.108).

To further examine an organization's culture, a diagnostician might identify its goals and values through topical areas that appear in these memos, reports and directives. These themes can be arranged by frequency and examined in terms of their metaphorical meanings. For example, written messages in organizations with continual conflicts might contain words describing ills and pains within the organization, implying an unhealthy condition exists. As Seiffert (1995) argues, language choice about conflicts may illuminate some of the problems that are at issue, the perceptions of the people involved, and possible methods in managing conflict (p.7). The metaphor as a figure of speech is particularly useful in identifying themes because it is language that creates reality and makes reality accessible to us (Foss, 1996). Thus metaphorical themes such as the "reinvention" theme adopted by the federal government and used consistently in organization documents help organizational members evaluate, experience and understand the messages put forth by the creators of the messages. An absence of these unifying themes will undercut the feeling of direction and resulting productivity among organization members.

Conduct Focus Groups, Administer Surveys and Interviews and Write Up Findings

While the analysis of organization documents reveals a different type of data, the direct quizzing of employees through questions and interviews reveal individual perceptions and attitudes. The survey questions can be developed around key issues that the organizational leaders consider relevant and problematic. For example, if employee development is in question, questions addressing training and promotional possibilities can be asked. If trust issues have been problematic, relational questions addressing reliability and dependability can be asked. The forms could be distributed to a predetermined group within the organization, collected and analyzed. This survey would include both qualitative and quantitative data. An analysis would then reveal disparity of perceptions between and among different groups of organizational members. Obviously, when members hold opposing perceptions and attitudes, conflict is apt to be the prevailing condition.

Another method of gathering member information is the interview. While time consuming, it is a highly effective means of gathering personal opinions and subjective comments. By carefully constructing questions around key issues, the interview can reveal useful data such as frustrations with current policy matters or procedures. Perhaps members detect an inconsistency of assumptions about how they are to use their time. Employee dissatisfaction with current hiring practices or discontent with the quality of leader/member relationships might be the key problem area. This method has potential to reveal the most subjective data and can supplement the data obtained in questionnaires and surveys.

As people repeat certain behaviors, they become subconscious (Schein, 1984, p.4) These behaviors are lumped into level III, where attitudes and beliefs tend to become taken for granted. They can be brought back into awareness and exposed, through methods used by anthropologists, such as focused inquiry. This method is recommended by Schein (1985) as a tool for giving insiders a quicker insight into their own culture without going through the formal processes of analysis already mentioned, that is, the survey and individual interviews. This method can be direct and involve the members in the diagnosis process. For example, the members could be asked where they consider themselves to fall along a certain cultural dimension such as the organization's ability to tolerate ambiguity. This focus group interview would necessarily follow a mini-lecture or seminar on the general concepts of culture and to familiarize the members with the terms and illustrations of the specific cultural dimensions.

Summary

I have discussed several ways to discover and analyze organizational cultures. I have proposed, first, looking at an organization's artifacts to reveal its values. Second, I have argued that examining socializing processes will help expose values and assumptions that can identify problem areas. Third, observing ordinary organizational activities can be a useful method in revealing values and relational information. Fourth, examining written and printed documents through rhetorical analysis can identify areas of misinterpretation. Finally, getting information directly from the members serves to bring personal perception to the total analytic activity. As a result of these discovery and analytic methods,

inconsistencies and incongruencies in values and assumptions will help expose problematic areas.

There are several possible recommendations that can be offered to the organization's leadership. Considering the variety of sources developed through analysis of the organizations culture and documents, it is possible to propose a variety of options. In the next chapter, the areas proposed will be discussed.

Chapter 4. Proposed Methods for Managing Organization Culture.

“Communication is almost always an attempt to control change, either by causing it or preventing it.”

(Hanna and Wilson, 1984:21)

When we look at an organization through the culture metaphor, we find several areas that can present communication difficulties among its members. Not only are there the more obvious behavior patterns such as routine meetings and training activities that can be misinterpreted, but there are structural constraints that inhibit flow of ideas toward full commitment and desired outcomes for everyone. We typically think organizational problems erupt between leaders and followers, but we have found that separate subgroups can evolve their own unique tensions.

When people come together for any joint activity, there are bound to be a score of complex issues to sort through. According to D’Aprix (1988), the membership has basic questions that underscore all organizational activity. Simply put, the person who depends on a leader wants to know, What is my job here? How am I doing? Can you and will you make it clear that you, at least, value me and my work? D’Aprix contends that when the “I” questions are dealt with, then, and only then, is the individual ready to cross the important line to the “we” questions. What are we up to and how are we doing? How can we work better together? What is our role vis-a-vis other work groups? How do we support them? How can I help? In essence, the member begins exploring the most valuable questions that lead to commitment. In this chapter, I will offer a look at ways that organizational leaders can shape and influence their cultures. I will also offer ways

that those who are not in leadership positions can enhance their own efforts, thus involving everyone in the process.

Leadership Development

The role of leadership is crucial in the culture perspective. Ott (1989) argues that an organization's culture cannot be dealt with independently of organizational leadership. When we look at an organization's culture in an attempt to diagnose and change it, we have to look at leadership. As Ott argues, if we modify an organization's culture, "leadership cannot stand by disinterested, since it is both an artifact of and a prime shaper of the culture" (p.195).

Promote Effective Leadership Traits

Strong, positive traits in leaders go a long way in managing organization culture. What traits are most effective in leaders when considering their effectiveness in working with organizational change? Deal and Kennedy (1982) propose that managing the culture is done most effectively by a leader who is sensitive to culture and its long-term success, adding that this includes placing a high level of trust in the work force to ensure success. These researchers use the term process, suggesting that effective culture leaders demonstrate patience while the problems surface and process takes the problem through its own natural cycle toward a resolution or solution. They further emphasize that effective leaders are aware of subcultures, such as a specialized work unit, and take the time to show relatedness of subcultures to higher organizational efforts. Thus the

effective leader is one who is trusting, patient, and can keep all the parts connected so one does not become isolated from the whole. These attitudes in leaders should ensure a consistency of value sharing among members, thus reducing conflicts and alienation.

Identify Organizational Values

In addition to developing effective leaders who are sensitive to culture, another effective method for managing organization culture is to identify the organization's values. In a study on organizational excellence, Peters and Waterman (1982) found that leaders of highly successful corporations were clear on what they stood for and act according to those values. They state that when asked for one, all-purpose bit of advice to managers, they would reply, "Figure out your value system. Decide what your company stands for" (p.279).

Further, there is a connection between effective leadership and identifying values. In their thorough discussion of cultural leadership, Cunningham and Gresso (1993) detail the outcomes of effective leadership and focus on values held and attitudes assumed. They state that in an effective organization culture, its leaders promote an identity among members with core organizational values, ensure effective member communication through the development of joint meaning, and clearly stated direction. Leaders articulate the organization's cherished values and demonstrate a commitment to establishing priorities, considering a variety of approaches, expressing different points of view and selecting and developing strategies. Cunningham and Gresso (1993) offer a visionary model, defining it as proactive, involving synthesis of the various needs and values of the

organization, driven by the organization's values, ideals and inspirations and one that is farsighted and continuous.

Promote a Condition of Trust

Moreover, leaders can effectively manage organization culture by promoting a condition of trust. In addition to clearly stated values, research shows that the condition of trust is important in an organization (Sergiovanni, 1992; Hosmer, 1995, Axley, 1996; Cunningham & Gresso, 1993; Tompkins, 1984). The expectancy of trust is the most important ingredient in relationships and is vital in maintaining cooperation in society at large (Hosmer, 1995). Further, the condition of trust affects an organization (Axley, 1996). When we distrust, we doubt more, distance more, devalue more, watch more, critique more, protect more. As Axley puts it, distrust taints everything it touches: communication, leadership, decision making, problem solving, and even an organization's culture, "if it persists long enough"(p.162). While these researchers may differ in their definition of what trust is, they all agree on the characteristics that an effective leader displays that enhance the working relations in an organization. The list reads like an ideal: integrity, honesty, truthfulness, competence, consistency, reliability, loyalty, benevolence, willingness to protect, support and encourage, openness and responsiveness. The leader who displays this list of characteristics is sure to be an asset in promoting effective communicating within the organization.

Culture managers understand the role of trust in dealing with people. They know that they must demonstrate integrity before they ask it of their employees. With a

commitment to enhancing and promoting a trusting environment, fears and conflict will be reduced. The leader who trusts, also delegates responsibilities and serves primarily as coach. They know how to bend the rules to fit the situations. They manage best by walking around, talking and discussing issues with their work force. In this way, employees learn what is important and what is hearsay. Having learned ways to manage their culture, effective leaders are in a better position to guide the efforts in a desired direction.

Promote Interpersonal Competence

Identifying values and developing the condition of trust are key to managing effective organizations, but these must be communicated to all members. Argyris emphasized the importance of interpersonal competence as a basic management skill. His research showed that managers' effectiveness was often impaired because they were over controlling, excessively competitive, uncomfortable with their own feelings, and mentally closed to ideas other than their own (Argyris, 1962; Argyris and Schon, 1974). Further, Bolman and Deal (1984) argue that effective leadership skills are, in fact, very rare. The result is that many change efforts will fail not because the intentions are incorrect or insincere but because managers lack the skills and understandings necessary for implementation (p.80).

The need for leaders who can develop their work force through shared values, high levels of trust and effective interpersonal communication skills is clear. In his account of the work of the Classical Philosophers, Ott (1989) states that Chester I. Barnard argued

that

“the most critical function of a chief executive was to establish and communicate a system of organizational values among organization members. If the value system was clear and strong, the structural concerns of the classical organization theorists in effect, take care of themselves. In the language of organizational culture, he understood the importance of behavioral justification. Further, Barnard’s conceptualization of the role of an executive implied a symbolic role for leaders. The linkages between Barnard’s emphasis on values and the assumptions of the organizational culture perspective are self-evident”(p.149).

Obviously, a leader’s role in disseminating key values and assumptions of the organization is critical. Leaders communicate important values and assumptions to organizational members through the channels mentioned throughout this paper, through spoken channels and through written channels. However, there is another key factor, equally important, in managing an organization’s culture and that is through member development.

Member Development

While we usually think that leaders control and establish the guidelines for all organizational members to follow, there are several goals and attitudes that all members throughout the organization can follow to enhance their own development.

Adopt Coaching and Mentoring Skills

Considering the importance of long-range investment, a mentoring and coaching arrangement between those with more experience and those with less experience would be advantageous. Such a program would enhance the socialization of new members into the preferred ways to think and act, thus building the confidence needed to achieve success

within the organization. With appropriate and adequate training, members have a better chance of becoming innovative to the cause, committed to long-range goals.

The goals of the organization are best met when all members are committed to and identify with the organizational goals (Axley, 1996, p.149). The surest way for people to own an idea is to be a part of creating it. This ensures greater success toward organizational outcomes. When people have a hand in generating the task, they will work toward accomplishing it. When they can get excited about their own ideas, they will be more motivated to act. However, Cheney & Tompkins (1987) argued that identification and commitment are two different conditions. Identification with organizational goals is important for the newcomer to cope with highly abstract or ambiguous circumstances. Commitment, on the other hand, is when members share importance values and attitudes with one another, helping ensure adequate socialization of members.

Develop Attitudes of Participation

The most effective way for members to become committed to and identify with the organization's goals is to participate in planning and decision making. Participation in key organizational decisions and projects can be defined as the degree of involvement of members (Ehrich, 1994; Stohl, 1993; Cheney, 1995, Rothschild & Whitt, 1990). In participative methods for introducing changes in work procedures in businesses, for example, work groups discuss proposed changes and participate in deciding what changes should be made. The results of studies suggest that resistance is lower and morale higher under participative methods. A related term is collegiality as defined by Cunningham &

Grosso (1993). They state that collegiality is characterized by trust, honesty, loyalty, commitment, concern, camaraderie, enthusiasm, patience, and cooperation. In the interest of participating fully in an organization, members should display high degrees of collegiality.

The most noticeable format for participation is the meeting. Meetings can serve many purposes. As Schwartzman (1989) states, meetings can be events that serve to facilitate communication about events, they can be events in themselves where solutions to ongoing organizational problems are attempted, or they can be events where the validation of status hierarchies take place. In any case, participation in the meeting is a key place for members to develop their sense of commitment to organizational concerns. She further suggests that the participants come to see and experience their organization through its meetings. The meeting can serve to highlight both the conflicts among its members and also the predictability of certain outcomes. In our folk-dancing club, for example, the new members came to experience a high degree of animosity among the leaders when they met for informal meetings, but they also learned they could predict that everyone would ignore these animosities and move on to learning new dance steps.

While participation activities themselves can enhance mutual understanding, the language that is used can be equally troublesome in organizations, especially in large organizations. In his thorough examination of bureaucracy, Hummel (1994) points out that part of the frustrations with complex organizations is the way they use language. He suggests that using simplified language, terms that are concrete and present-oriented, is one way to reduce tensions during meetings. Additionally, open dialogue can serve as

sense making, helping people involved unscramble events that are happening. However, what is wanted is dialogue that clarifies, not clouds issues. Wilmot and Hocker (1998) suggest that constructing common ground by developing common meanings for words is an effective meeting strategy. Also, dealing with conflicts as they happen is an effective measure. Using interpersonal communication skills of disclosing attitudes, thoughts and feelings about the issues at hand can bring about an honest exchange. While honesty can backfire and exacerbate the handling of discussions at meetings, the premise is that no problem can be solved until it is addressed. Using communication skills such as perception checking and using "I" statements to show ownership can further the efforts at clarifying and taking ownership for one's thoughts and feelings. When ownership is stated instead of assumed, the chances of defensive behavior are reduced. All these suggestions can promote the active participation of members and reduce alienation.

Participate in Conflict Management

Managing conflict is increasingly becoming important in today's work environment. With current trends in down sizing and layoffs as companies adapt to changing conditions, the stresses can seem endless within organizations. While everyone believes that conflict management is good, there are mixed opinions about how to approach it.

Theories exist that state conflict is a result of personality differences as well as problem organizational structures. Many studies have focused on personality styles that might predispose parties to use one choice of strategy over another, adding that the

strategy to increase the range of style choice helps reduce that locked-in feeling (Daves & Holland, 1989). However, further studies have shown that the styles approach does not cover all the possibilities. Kolb (1987) states that some organizational theories show that many organizations may have tensions built into their structures. The hierarchical model lends itself to separation of the work force, to a division of labor with certain members delegated more authority than others. Add to that the requirements for task interdependence and sharing a common resource pool, all of which cause conflict in organizations (Kolb, 1987; Kolb & Silbey, 1990). Tension could be a central fact of organizational life. However, she further states that insiders almost always attribute conflict to personality causes, not structures or processes. With familiarity of a variety of conflict styles, members can apply whichever style best fits the situation, thus preventing stalemates from forming and hampering organizational efforts..

Develop Interpersonal Competence in Skills That Reduce Conflict

Regardless of the proposed theory, researchers and writers on conflict management can agree on the importance of interpersonal communication skills. Putnam and Poole (1987) argue convincingly for the use of communication skills in conflict management. They state that communication constitutes the essence of conflict, undergirding the formation of the opposing issues, framing perceptions of the felt conflict, translating emotions and perceptions into conflict behaviors and setting the stage for future conflicts (p. 552). Thus, they argue, knowledge of communication skills is a major step in reducing the instances of conflict. They further state that the apex of the conflict

resolution process, the negotiation, rests largely upon the interpersonal skills employed by the parties. Ideally, bargaining employs maximum sharing of information and open, accurate disclosure of negotiator's needs and objectives (Walton & McKersie, 1965). With the resulting information, conflict participants can better redefine problems, explore causes and generate alternative solutions (Lewicki & Litterer, 1985). In this respect, the role of interpersonal communication skills has a major impact on the outcomes of conflict negotiating.

Participating in conflict management can be everyone's job. There are three key skills that parties in any conflict can employ. First, they can attempt to find commonalities with their conflict partners. When we look for commonalities, we see positive aspects of our relationships. This can be a decided shift in attitude. When we hunt for the negatives, they will be there. When we deliberately hunt for positive things, they will be there as well. We might share mutual interests, or find that our goals are very similar. We may find that our values and beliefs about an issue are similar. According to Axley (1996), shared assumptions make it easier for people to agree on "what's important." If you and I agree on our assumptions about why a job should get done, it will be easier for us to agree on how it will be done (p. 142). On the other hand, if I believe that you are obstructing my progress, and you believe that I have nothing in common with your proposed goals, then a lot of time and energy is wasted.

The connection between commonalities and shared values is one key to reducing conflicts. Working well together requires a value that includes others. One has to be able to recognize the worth of what others contribute. Those with a higher value of

independence will have a tougher time with meetings and teamwork. In the church organization example, members who value joint efforts will value the processes of joint decision making. If they don't know how to compromise or collaborate, their organizing efforts will be more cumbersome and ineffective.

A second way we can manage our conflicts is to identify and reconcile the interests that are driving the conflict (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993; Wilmot & Hocker, 1998; Fisher & Ury, 1981). Almost always, the conflict parties think they know what the conflict issues are (Mayer, 1995). They can be content interests, relational interests or procedural interests. With content issues, we focus on the words, the message itself. These are the obvious issues according to Mayer. With relational interests, we mean those intangible needs that we give each other, such as affection, self esteem, and inclusion. One example is appreciation for a job well done. Conflict can result when one organizational member feels recognition should have been but was not given. With procedural interests, we mean the methods we employ to get things done. An example of a procedural interest, for example, is the method of conducting church meetings, whether they are open or closed to outsiders. These are the interests that drive any conflict. Clearly, identifying interests with their underlying values and assumptions can help establish greater understanding and lead to reconciliation.

A third method of reducing conflict is to increase our range of style. If we feel we are stuck in a competitive conflict style discussed in chapter two, for example, we lack the flexibility to adjust to changing situations, according to Wilmot and Hocker (1998). They further state that when we are able to respond to situations with a broad array of conflict

styles, we are then able “to see the behavior of others in a different, more objective light”(p.133). If we are mindful of our own styles, we will probably judge others as being more reasonable as they adapt their styles to changing situations. Simply put, the goal is to intercept the threat/fear/anger cycle for all parties involved. This can best be achieved by adapting our conflict style to the situation.

Several researchers have promoted specific interpersonal skills that enhance relational smoothness. Blake and Mouton (1973) promote the increased understanding of the roots of conflict and the acquisition of the skills of gaining and resolving of differences, stating that interpersonal skills are the most useful in the negotiating process. Other researchers highlight the need for interpersonal skills, recommending their use in business and public administration and as an addition to the negotiator’s repertoire (Fisher & Davis, 1987; Buntz & Carper, 1987, Borisoff & Victor, 1989). Obviously, the use of effective interpersonal skills in conflict management is highly recommended.

Summary

A proposed way of problem solving is to make a shift away from procedures and structures to the culture or the human elements of an organization. Leaders can create, manage and modify the culture in a variety of useful ways. Leadership must focus on simple human values as Cunningham and Gresso emphasize. Identifying organizational values, understanding the role of trust and promoting the condition of trust will help create a climate of cooperation, essential to accomplishing all organizational activities. Leaders who attend to basic interpersonal skills will go a long way to achieving desired goals.

Further, all members can take an active role in enhancing organizational effectiveness. The member who takes an active role in mentoring and coaching other members will help develop attitudes and promote the values of participation. Attending to troublesome language barriers during meetings will help clarify messages. Finally, everyone can be involved in conflict management through basic interpersonal efforts at finding commonalities, reconciling interests, and increasing their style range in responding to tensions. Clearly, effective communicating skills have a far reaching effect on relationships. With their promoted use, the chances of conflict are reduced thus making membership in organizations more satisfying

Conclusion

In recent history, organizations have been managed with a focus on organizational structure and on human behavior within those structures. Attempts to manage change have been to apply management principles to people and processes, by managing people, personalities, and personnel practices. Typical training has involved managing information channels, such as writing more effective newsletters. Managing information channels has focused more on the right technique and the target audience, or more specifically, how to get the intended message across in just the right way. The methods tended toward one-way problem solving, with only the leaders involved in decision making.

In this paper, I have presented several key organizational cultural elements and argued the usefulness of the culture metaphor as a communication problem-solving tool. As my framework, I have presented Edgar Schein's three levels of organization culture, detailing the different aspects of an organization that are carried out in each level. Applying these culture elements to communication principles, I have shown how problems can develop among the organizational members. As a problem-solving approach used by outside consultants or inside leaders, I then suggested methods used to help reveal an organization's culture and analyze the data for communication patterns that can pose problems for the membership. Finally, I proposed methods for managing an organization's culture through both leadership and membership development.

As I have noted, several researchers argue that organizations with "strong" cultures are apt to be more successful (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Bolman & Deal, 1984; Peters & Waterman, 1982). This means that organizations with strong cultures are

characterized as being hands-on/value-driven, productive through its people, close to those they serve, and having a strong bias for action. Moreover, Schein (1985) points to a critical linkage between leadership effectiveness and cultural qualities. If we accept their arguments, then organizational culture may be an effective lever by which managers direct and manage their organizations (Smircich & Calas, 1987).

This is not a new scheme, but a very applicable use of a theory taken from anthropology and applied to organizations. The culture metaphor reveals rich details that can not be revealed through Management by Objectives (MBO) and other more conventional management techniques. The culture metaphor reveals the way people think naturally, as they interact in organizations. In any people-intensive organization, these elements will exist. Often these elements, the values and assumptions of why people get together, are troublesome. Once they are revealed, they can be agreed upon or analyzed for feasibility and usefulness.

Additionally, other writers argue that culture is the only solution to today's problems. Cunningham and Gresso (1993), in arguing for effective leadership in school systems, write:

Culture-building requires that school leaders give attention to the informal, subtle, and symbolic aspects of school life which shape the beliefs and actions of each employee within the system. The task of leadership is to create and support the culture necessary to foster as an attitude of effectiveness in everything that is done within the school. Once this attitude is achieved and supported by the culture, all other aspects of the organization will fall in line. This is why culture-building is the key to organizational success (p.25).

They further state that the spirit and energy of an organization can not be found in the structures and practices mandated in policy manuals. To these writers, the culture

metaphor is the only solution to tomorrow's problems.

Not everyone places the culture metaphor in such high value, however. Other researchers, such as Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1982), argue effectively that the culture metaphor is not more useful, nor is it more effective as a consulting tool than the others that have been used in recent years. They see the culture metaphor as an alternative to managing people, their personalities, and their personnel practices. In their view, applying the culture metaphor to organizations can be used well in conjunction with other tools, not as a competing perspective (p.117). They state that organization life is more than meetings and job performances as we typically know them. Organizational life includes the picnic-arranging, the joking around the water cooler, and the sports talk in the board room. Their approach would be to examine organizations, not as a means of understanding them in order to make them work better, but in understanding how organizational life is accomplished communicatively (p.121).

There are other problems with the culture metaphor. Culture researchers rarely discuss the shared understandings that unite people in organizations, for example, on the basis of power or social class, such as managers and workers. Thus, studies of the subcultures of managers or workers are not conducted (Smircich & Calas, 1987, p.239).

However, it is my conclusion that in companies where these cultural elements are cohesive, consistent, and widely shared, people know what is to be expected and what needs to be done and, thus, they are motivated and committed to doing a good job. Little time is wasted on politics, sabotage, or figuring out how to beat the system. Rather, each individual's identity is fused with the culture. The symbols and symbolic activity give

meaning to the workplace and provide opportunities for anyone--from the church boardroom to factory floor--to be part of a dynamic social institution. Used in conjunction with other management tools currently in use, it is my conclusion that the ability to use several skills and approaches is best. It makes one adaptive to a multitude of human styles and changing economic conditions.

Organizational students of tomorrow have an exciting and challenging job ahead. Students of organizational communication could study communication differences between profit and nonprofit organizations, to see if there are any noteworthy differences in member behavior. It seems the motivation factor would have to be a lot different between a profit, salary-based organization, than a volunteer organization. A student could look at cultural differences between profits and nonprofit, or government and educational institutions. Identifying unique features helps them isolate more clearly those solutions that best fit their description and help them avoid those solutions and methods that don't work well for their type. Also, students could study differences between large population centers and small population areas, such as organizational differences between a metropolitan area and a small rural community. Here in Montana, we notice differences in how we think about trust levels and time and space from those of populated areas; for example, that people from the rural farming communities seem to have developed a deeper sense of trust in others than people from more populated areas. Such a study could help highlight views and approaches that are more effective than others.

I plan to work with volunteer organizations and non-profit organizations, studying changes in organizational life cycles, relationships between and among the leaders,

members, and relationships between and among board members. Also, I plan to study and observe the cultural phenomena of symbols and symbolic behavior, language idioms, and the use of story in organizations. I plan to help organizations identify and develop their story through narrative techniques and anecdotal accounts, whether written or oral. I plan to conduct workshops in story writing, character education and values. Finally, I plan to study social identity issues, specifically, how regional location affects perceptions in organizations.

Tomorrow's leaders will manage the insides of the organization. They will manage the assumptions, the fears, the beliefs, the hopes, and aspirations of the membership. Tomorrow's organizations will need managers and leaders who understand the importance of these human concerns and how these basic values can influence and shape the direction of the organization. Tomorrow's leaders can best manage and lead by managing these aspects of culture.

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