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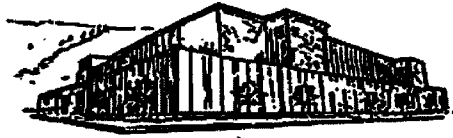
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**ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE:  
AN IMPETUS TO INFLUENCE ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR  
AND DECISION MAKING**

by

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**M.A. University of Wyoming, 1995**

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**Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements**

**For the degree of Master of Science**


**The University of Montana**

**December 2005**

Approved by



Chairperson



**Dean, Graduate School**

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## **Introduction**

The study of organizational culture is an interdisciplinary endeavor.

Anthropology, sociology, communications, public administration, political science, economics, and business administration and their associated scientific paradigms have all collectively influenced the development of the construct 'organizational culture.' In the literature, organizational culture has been described as strong, weak, unique, general, unitary, comprised of subcultures, cognitive/ideational, behavioral, having been 'co-opted,' dependent upon a leader or hero, a determinant of behavior and decision making, a fad, something to be managed, something to be understood, something that is unto itself, or something that an organization has. It would require a Herculean effort to discuss each of these concepts in any detail. Instead, this paper will focus on the role of organizational culture in influencing organizational behavior and decision making or choices. However, additional historical and theoretical considerations will be discussed in an effort to situate or provide the reader a frame of reference for understanding the role of organizational culture as an influence on behavior and choices.

Initially, a historical perspective on the development of organizational culture will be provided. This discussion will acquaint the reader with the '*story*' of organizational culture's development. As such, organizational culture will be defined, several models of organizational culture will be presented, the role of subcultures in advancing the study of culture will be discussed, and the prominent competing paradigms will be addressed. Following this, the emphasis of the analysis will shift to organizational behavior. Multiple studies, representing the two predominant paradigms, will be discussed that will portray how behavior has been fundamentally influenced by organizational culture.

Behavior or action is distinguishable from choices or decision making. The next focus of the paper address decision-making theory and how culture and its manifestations (identification, symbols, politics/power) influence decision making by limiting the range of acceptable alternatives. Again, several studies in the literature will be used to support these assertions. Finally, a discussion will be provided that examines possibilities (paradigms, methodologies, domains of interest) for future research in organizational culture.

### **What is Organizational Culture?**

Whereas the term 'culture' had been prominent in the anthropology and sociology literature prior to the 1970s, it became popularized in the communication literature in the late 1970s and the mid-1980s (Pettigrew 1979; Smircich 1983; Frost et al. 1985; Yanow and Adams 2000). The rise of *organizational* culture studies has been viewed by some as a response or critique to positivism or functionalism and its associated ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology (Jelinek et al. 1983; Smircich 1985; Smircich and Calas 1987; Hatch 1997; Eisenberg and Riley 2001). Some of the organizational culture literature (Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo 1982; Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo 1983; Ott 1989; Bantz 1993; Hatch 1993; Hatch 1997) advocated research, grounded within the interpretive worldview, which emphasized lived experiences in the 'real' world. However, at the same time, a competing view of organizational culture was developing. This competing view of organizational culture has come to be known as 'corporate' culture. Corporate culture studies tend to adopt a functionalist or modern worldview (Burrell and Morgan 1979), in which culture is

viewed as an independent or dependent variable that can be measured (Hofstede 1980; Ouchi 1981; Deal and Kennedy 1982; Smircich 1983; Wilkins and Ouchi 1983; Weick 1985, Denison 1990). The origins of the organizational culture movement influenced early definitions of organizational culture.

Pettigrew (1979:574) described culture as a “source of a family of concepts.” The manifestations of culture he includes are symbol, language, ideology, belief, ritual, and myth. Pettigrew (1979:574) viewed symbol as the most inclusive category of culture and defines symbols as “objects, acts, relationships, or linguistic formations that stand ambiguously for a multiplicity of meanings, evoke emotions, and impel men to action.” Baker (1980:8) defined organizational culture as an “interrelated set of beliefs, shared by *most* of their members, about how people should behave at work and what tasks and goals are important.”

Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1982:120) took an even broader approach to defining organizational culture by “indicating that what constitutes the legitimate realm of inquiry is everything that constitutes organizational life.” From a behavioral view they identified several communication activities that lend to sense-making (Eisenberg and Riley 1988) and ultimately serve as expressions of culture: relevant constructs, facts, practices, vocabulary, metaphors, stories, rites, and rituals. Mahler (1997) built on the notion of sense-making and views culture as an influence that guides organizational learning. Acknowledging the role that ideology plays in organizations, Trice and Beyer (1984:654) noted, “the culture of any social system arises from a network of shared ideologies.” Ideologies are defined as “shared, relatively coherently interrelated sets of emotionally charged beliefs, values, and norms that bind some people together and help



them make sense of their worlds” (Trice and Beyer 1993:33). Accordingly, culture has two basic components: 1) substance – networks of meanings that embody values, norms, and ideologies; and 2) forms – expressions of those values wherein they are communicated to other members (Trice and Beyer 1984). Trice and Beyer (1993) also made a point to define what culture is not. Accordingly, culture is not climate, groupthink, social structure, metaphor, nor is it necessarily the key to success.

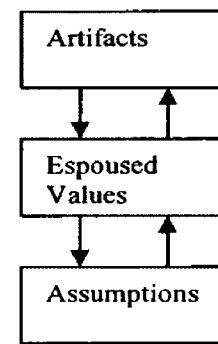
Ouchi and Williams (1985), Robbins (1986), Ott (1989), and Schein (1991, 1992) all focused on the notion of *shared* understandings, meanings, and behaviors as basis for defining organizational culture. Schein (1991:247) defined culture as the following:

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

For Schein (1992), the notion that culture was shared or held in common was crucial. He identified ten phenomena associated with culture: 1) observed behavioral regularities when people interact (language); 2) group norms; 3) espoused values; 4) formal philosophy; 5) rules of the game; 6) climate; 7) embedded skills; 8) habits of thinking, mental models, and/or linguistic paradigms; 9) shared meanings; and 10) root metaphors or integrating symbols. Schein (1992:17) also proposed a model (Figure 1) for uncovering three levels of culture: 1) *artifacts* – visible organizational structures (buildings, logos, dress, material objects, physical layout), behaviors (ceremonies, rites, rituals, traditions/customs, rewards, punishment, processes) and language (anecdotes, jokes, stories, myths, metaphors, jargon, explanations, rhetoric); 2) *espoused values* – strategies, goals, and philosophies; and 3) *basic assumptions* – unconscious beliefs,

thoughts, perceptions, and feelings that influence values. Adams (1993) identified three basic assumptions: 1) dependency – group dependent on the leader; 2) pairing – two members working together will produce something to benefit the group in the future; and 3) fight-flight – the group is together to fight or retreat from a common enemy.

*Figure 1. Levels of Culture (Schein 1992)*



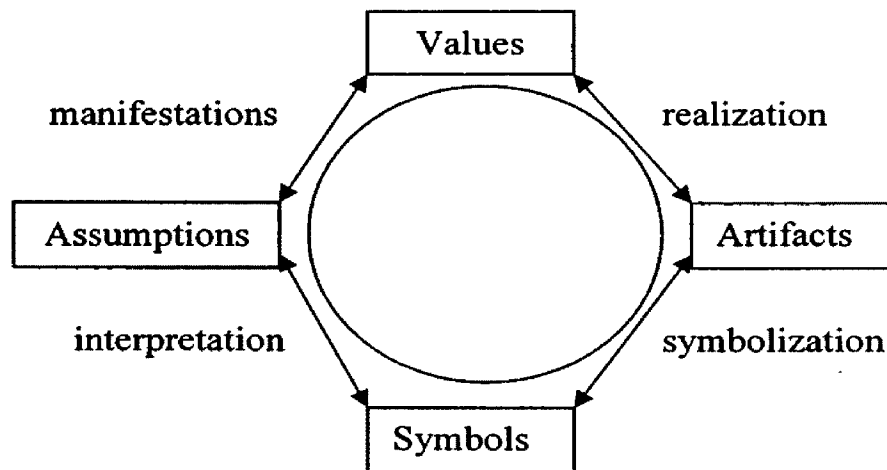
Ott (1989:1) further elaborated on previous definitions of culture and stated, “It [culture] is the unseen and unobservable force that is always behind organizational activities that can be seen and observed.” Ott (1989) endorsed Schein’s (1992) typology of organizational culture composed of three levels: 1) artifacts (observable behavioral patterns), 2) values and beliefs (what ought to be), and 3) basic underlying assumptions (spirit or truth taken for granted – what is). This typology is useful for identifying methods for studying different components of culture (i.e., it is difficult to observe values and beliefs). Robbins (1986) described seven characteristics or expressions of organizational culture: 1) individual autonomy, 2) structure, 3) support, 4) identity, 5) performance reward, 6) conflict tolerance, and 7) risk tolerance. Whereas taxonomies are useful to understand concepts, Robbins’ (1986) characteristics could likely be compressed into three characteristics: 1) behavior (influenced by degree of autonomy,

risk tolerance, and conflict tolerance), 2) identity, and 3) symbols (with rewards and structure being types of symbols).

Building on Schein's (1992) model, Sackmann (1991) and Hatch (1993) proposed alternate models of organizational culture. Sackmann (1991) raised concerns about the lack of research that had been conducted to assess cultural cognitions or beliefs that are not readily observable. In order to enable readers to better conceptualize cognitions, she proposed an 'iceberg' model of culture with a phenomenological orientation. With this model, she distinguished between 1) *manifestations* of culture that are observable as artifacts and behaviors at or above the surface levels, and 2) *basic beliefs* about priorities, processes, causes, and improvements that are commonly held, used, and emotionally anchored below the surface.

Hatch (1993) introduced the cultural dynamics model, in which she proposed a non-linear relationship between cultural components and distinguished symbols as a separate entity from artifacts (Schein 1992). While Schein (1992) and others have included symbols as artifacts, Hatch distinguishes symbols from artifacts because symbols have social meaning, while artifacts merely represent something. According to Hatch (1993:660-661), the dynamic model asks how culture is constituted by assumptions, values, artifacts, and symbols, while also recognizing both stability and change as potential outcomes of the same cultural process. According to the model (Figure 2), assumptions are manifested as values, which are then realized as artifacts. Through symbolization, the artifacts are linked with meaning, which is then interpreted as social reality.

Figure 2. The Cultural Dynamics Model (Hatch 1993)



Organizational culture can best be summarized as a collection of understandings shared by *most* members, which are influenced by assumptions, ideologies, values, and beliefs, and expressed as artifacts (symbols, identity, and behavior). Whereas some have described culture as a unitary or monolithic force characterized by the existence of consensus (Deal and Kennedy 1982; Schein 1991, 1992), in the previous definition, I used to term “most” to indicate the multitude of cultures that can exist within an organization.

### **Subcultures**

Cultures can be viewed as highly integrated, or highly disorganized with little cohesion. These two views need not be mutually exclusive, but instead can be described as a continuum of cultures or subcultures (Figure 3). Smircich (1983:346) alluded to the existence of subcultures when she raised concerns about trying to manage culture. She stated, “Much of the literature refers to *an* organization culture, appearing to lose sight of

the great likelihood that there are multiple organization subcultures, or even countercultures, competing to define the nature of situations within organizational boundaries.” Van Maanen and Barley (1985) acknowledged the contribution of anthropology and sociology to the study of culture, with anthropology viewing culture as a unitary phenomenon, while the idea of subcultures is largely a sociological construct.

Van Maanen and Barley (1985:38) defined subcultures as:

a subset of an organization’s members who interact regularly with one another, identify themselves as a distinct group within the organization, share a set of problems commonly defined to be the problems of all, and routinely take action on the basis of collective understandings of the group.

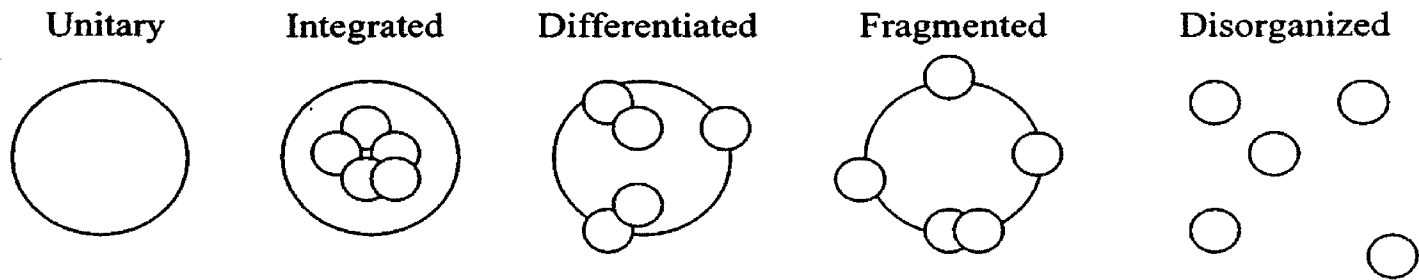
Van Maanen and Barley (1985) identified six elements that can influence the development of subcultures: 1) segmentation (technical rationality and its organizing strategies including professionalization, standardization, automation, specialization, and functionalization); 2) importation (mergers and acquisitions); 3) technological innovation; 4) ideological differentiation; 5) contracultural movements (nonconformity with the group); and 6) career filters (hierarchical ranks or levels).

Most researchers of organizational subcultures have identified three distinct ‘types’ of subcultures as they relate to the dominant culture. Martin and Siehl (1983) described subcultures as 1) enhancing (adhere to core values of dominant culture), 2) orthogonal (adopt core values, but develop separate consistent values) , and 3) counter-cultural (direct challenge to core values). Using a transaction cost approach, Jones (1983) identified three subcultures: 1) production culture (routine and standardized processes involved); 2) bureaucratic culture (non-routineness increases and process by which inputs are converted to outputs is obscure); and 3) professional culture (non-routine and difficult work performed by specialized personnel). Hofstede (1998) utilized

Jones' (1983) theory of subcultures and was successful in identifying the production culture (administrative personnel), the bureaucratic culture (customer interface), and the professional culture (management and specialized staff) within a large Danish insurance company. Golden (1992) distinguished between cultural subgroups by the degree with which individual action increases independent of the organization. As such, Golden (1992) described three subcultures: homogeneous culture, heterogeneous culture, and ambiguous culture.

Martin (1992) further developed her earlier description of organizational subcultures, by incorporating three social science perspectives in the study of organizational culture: 1) integration – expressed as organization-wide consensus; 2) differentiation – consensus located in subcultures; and 3) fragmentation – exemplified by ambiguity and the dynamic nature of consensus. Martin (1992) noted that while all three perspectives may be evident within any one culture, many researchers and organizational members choose not to cross the perspectives. In concluding remarks, Martin critiqued her own approach and suggested that a fourth perspective based on epistemology or methodology might also be appropriate. Denison (1996), too, was critical of Martin's perspectives for her failure to integrate the three perspectives and acknowledge that a singular phenomenon is being studied from three perspectives. The role of ontology and epistemology and their associated paradigms, as indicated by Martin (1992), has shaped and dramatically influenced the study of organizational culture.

*Figure 3:  
A Continuum for Describing a Culture's State of Integration – Differentiation  
(Hatch 1997:226)*



### **Competing Paradigms**

As was previously noted, studies of organizational culture originated simultaneously as a critique and endorsement of the traditional functional worldview of science (Yanow and Adams 2000). According to Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Hudson and Ozanne (1988), the functionalist paradigm or worldview adopts an epistemology (grounds of knowledge) based on predicting and verifying regularities from causal relationships. The observer gathers information and knowledge independent of the phenomena being observed. Ontologically speaking (nature of reality), the functionalists perceive a real world made up of hard and tangible truths. Whether or not they are currently known or understood does not diminish their existence. The goals or axiology of the functionalist paradigm are typically to prove *a priori* hypotheses. The interpretive paradigm adopts a subjectivist approach to the analysis of the social world. According to Burrell and Morgan (1979:28):

The interpretive paradigm is informed by a concern to understand the world as it is, to understand the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of subjective experience. It seeks explanation within the realm of individual consciousness and subjectivity, within the frame of reference of the participant as

opposed to the observer of action. In its approach to social science it tends to be nominalist, anti-positivist, voluntarist and ideographic. It sees the world as an emergent social process which is created by the individuals concerned.

From an ontological perspective, reality is seen as being socially constructed (Berger and Luckman 1967). Interpretivism is characterized by an epistemology in which the knower and the known or the observer and the observed do not operate independent of each other. Knowledge is viewed as being subjective. Axiology is characterized by a desire to understand, not predict social phenomena.

Martin (1985) has distinguished two camps of cultural researchers: cultural pragmatists and cultural purists. Cultural pragmatists, typically fall within the functionalist paradigm, and view corporate culture as something an organization 'has' that should be managed by leaders to enhance productivity, profitability, efficiency and commitment. According to Schein (1992:209), "...the unique function of leadership that distinguishes it from management and administration is this concern for culture. Leaders create culture and, ...must manage and sometimes change culture." Cultural purists mostly associate themselves with the interpretive paradigm and believe that culture is something that 'is' and cannot and should not be managed, but instead emerges from the collective members of the organization and represents their values and beliefs (Smircich 1983). Interpretive cultural researchers speak of culture as "webs of significance" spun by man, symbols, and social constructions (Geertz 1973; Smircich 1985). Those who have studied organizational culture (corporate culture) from the functionalist view – the pragmatists – (Hofstede 1980; Ouchi 1981; Deal and Kennedy 1982; Wilkins and Ouchi 1983; Weick 1985, Denison 1990; GAO 1992; Schein 1992; Schein 1999) have tended not to overly concern themselves with those researchers who have espoused the



symbolic-interpretive framework for studying organizational culture (Pfeffer 1981; Jelinek et al. 1983; Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo 1983; Astley 1985; Smircich and Calas 1987; Hummel 1991; Hatch 1997; Eisenberg and Riley 2001).

However, there are those in the interpretive camp that have voiced concern that studies of organizational culture have been co-opted by those practitioners of corporate culture. Kunda (1993), as cited in Denison (1996:21), has pointed out that “thin description may be a more accurate description of most field research on organizational culture.” Smircich and Calas (1987:229) were so concerned by this phenomenon that they stated:

The original impetus behind organizational culture was to counter the dry and overly rational form of traditional theorizing about organizations. It seems that now, however, organizational culture has been appropriated by the rational tradition. Thus to the extent that “culture” has been incorporated into the positivist, technical interest as part of the “traditional organizational literature,” the organizational culture literature may be “dominant, but dead.”

Whereas Smircich and Calas (1987) provided little evidence to support their claims, Barley et al. (1988) utilized quantitative analysis methods to show that academics have come to adopt practitioners' functionalist view of culture as the dominant framework. According to Barley et al. (1988), published articles on organizational culture grew exponentially beginning in 1982. Initially, most of those studies were completed by practitioners; however, by 1984, the amount of publications by practitioners and academics were equivalent. The convergence of the data raises issues of whether the academics were influencing the practitioners or whether it is the other way around. Barley et al. (1988:52-55) stated:

However, the data suggest that conceptual and symbolic influence flowed in only one direction: from practitioners to academics. Since the “economic value of manipulating culture” and “rational control and differentiation” were themes that

originated in the practitioners' literature, it would appear that academics gradually adopted or accommodated to practitioners' concerns.

...Similarly, one cannot decide from the data whether the convergence is to be welcomed or lamented. To the degree that this [organizational theory was concerned with issues troubling organizations] has occurred, they may indicate the field's responsiveness rather than ease by which it was co-opted. Alternately, if applied social sciences require basic social research as a fount of knowledge (as is generally assumed to be true of the hard sciences), then the results should give us pause, for the data suggest that there may exist a set of social dynamics strong enough to compromise, in less than a decade, a stream of research that is apparently without immediate practical relevance.

Saffold (1988) has also critiqued notions of corporate culture with its emphasis on 'strong' culture. According to Saffold, culture is not unitary, but has many subcultures. Strength as a determinant of culture is problematic for several reasons: 1) strong cultures often hindered the development of organizations because management and labor represented dominant subcultures that often had competing goals; 2) strong cultures imply that management's goals are accepted, wherein in weak cultures they are not, which is a fallacy to assume that one set of social values is superior to another; and 3) the notion of strength is imprecise and carries with it quantitative methodologies that are foreign to the study of organizational culture. Kreiner (1989:65) had this to say about corporate culture:

While perhaps philosophically discomfoting, the corporate culture literature turns "reality reduction" into a virtue. Strong cultures are "clear" cultures, often implying grossly reduced "realities." Typically success is ascribed to a "seemingly unjustifiable overcommitment to some form of quality, reliability, or service". The successful employees of these successful companies develop an "obsession" with one or a few aspects of their task.

Whereas the interpretive and functionalist paradigms have dominated the organizational culture literature, a third perspective has emerged that challenges the assumptions of the other two. Schultz (1992) suggested that a postmodern perspective on

organizational culture is warranted. Postmodernism is often viewed as ‘anything goes’ because it is opposed to fixed categories and absolute meanings. Defining postmodernism is like trying to define Buddhism; however, postmodernism does share similar ontological leanings with the interpretive paradigm. From an epistemological position, truth is viewed as objective knowledge, wherein rigorous and critical standards of review may be used to judge that knowledge (Hatch 1997; Patterson and Williams 1998; Cheney 2000). Postmodernism tends to align itself with critical theory and axiological goals of uncovering power relationships and political influences in dictating behavior and decision-making processes (Pettigrew 1973; Hardy 1987; Stone 1997; Hatch 1997; Mumby 2001). Critical theory’s *a priori* hypothesis of always looking to uncover power relationships has caused some to call it paradigmatic ‘arrogance’ (Cheney 2000).

In a similar vein to the interpretivists, Schultz (1992) proposed postmodernism as a critique of corporate culture’s modernist emphasis on controlling and manipulating culture for profit. Schultz (1992) posited that culture is a hollow rhetorical term used to seduce workers:

Within the postmodern kaleidoscope, corporate culture is not a meaningful guideline for organizational members on how to act. Corporate culture is seduction to act. Corporate culture is not a system of meaning that enforces repetition and uniform actions, but an alluring possibility for mutual reiteration. Just like Don Juan, culture flatters and allures the individual member of the organization, promising identity, influence, and the great orgiastic amalgamation with the collective, whose members play their part in the rituals of culture.

For Schultz (1992), corporate culture’s end game is not about satisficing through ‘bounded rationality’ (Simon 1997), but instead is a power game to create the worldview of the organization. As such, Schultz (1992) concluded, “The modern notions of

corporate culture have come close to annihilating the concept of culture through endlessly revealing the rules that regulate the organizational members' interpretations of cultural expressions and the hidden patterns of meaning turning organizational everyday life into meaningful behavior.”

Over time, these competing incommensurable views have become blurred by a fourth perspective – those advocating an end to the ‘paradigm wars.’ It is currently in vogue to dismiss notions of incommensurability (lack of a common language or meaning between a pair of theories) described by Kuhn (1970) and Burrell and Morgan (1979). Researchers instead have been encouraged to put aside their epistemological and ontological differences, and embrace mixed or triangulated methodologies, characterized by use of both qualitative and quantitative methods (Corman and Poole 2000; Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998; Denison 1996; Schultz and Hatch 1996; Sankey 1994; Martin 1992; and Ott 1989). The previous discussion on paradigms should provide the reader a useful frame of reference for understanding how different organizational culture studies have been shown to influence organizational behavior.

### **How Does Organizational Culture Influence Behavior?**

According to Harmon (1989), much of the literature (March and Simon 1958; Cyert and March 1963; Simon 1997) has focused on decision making as the locus of study in organizational theory. As such, logical positivism has dominated the discourse. Harmon (1989) instead advocates shifting the emphasis of organizational theory to studying social ‘action’ or behavior, which can venture into the interpretive world. Golden (1991:5) has elaborated on the definition of action:

Action is concrete behaviour that is based on either individual motivational patterns (e.g., personality) or on principles that the group or institution places on its members (e.g., social structure). In contrast, culture is the meaning of action; that is, the historically-developed and socially-maintained (although not necessarily shared) system of symbols which individuals use to structure and to make sense of actions. ...culture is not the cause of action, but rather is the context which predisposes humans to take or not to take certain action.

Weick (1987), identified four outcomes of action: 1) actions evoke justification – reasons for actions are more important after decisions have been made; 2) actions displace thinking – action as a substitute for cognition; 3) actions create environments – culture; and 4) actions require interaction – action is a social process. Others have raised the issue of the importance of studying behavior and action as opposed to cognitions (Geertz 1973). According to Eisenberg and Riley (2001:307):

It is clear to us that organizations are first and foremost action systems and that little is gained in trying to separate enactment from interpretation. For this reason, the organizational cognition approach, to the extent that it is characterized by a mostly private view of language and an individualistic bias, will fall short. This is not to say that cognitions are unimportant, only that their importance depends entirely on their relationship to action and behavior and to ongoing conduct with a public conversation.

Whereas the importance of studying organizational behavior or action as a component of organizational theory has been emphasized, others (Sackmann 1991; Schein 1992) have shown that *artifacts*, of which behavior is a component, are only one level of cultural analysis. *Assumptions* and basic beliefs fall within the cognitive realm of inquiry and organizational culture researchers have tended to neglect this level of analysis. According to Hatch (1997:216), behavioral expressions of *artifacts* include, but are not limited to: ceremonies/rituals, communication patterns, traditions/customs, and rewards/punishments. She includes dress/appearance as a physical manifestation of artifacts and distinguishes verbal cues (stories, jokes, metaphors) from behavior;

however, both could easily be included as behavioral expressions of culture (Sackmann 1991).

Numerous studies exist that attempt to document the influence that culture has had on organizational behavior. As has been discussed earlier, however, most of those studies fall within either the corporate culture field (functionalist paradigm) or within the organizational culture realm (interpretive paradigm). Given this distinction in the literature, both types of studies will be presented to afford the reader the full breadth of understanding.

### **Corporate Culture Studies**

Studies of corporate culture can be summed up in the view portrayed by Lahiry (1994:50-51):

Culture represents the values, beliefs, and expectations shared by its members. Culture exerts pressure on its members to conform to shared codes. Culture shapes people's behaviors. From an organization development standpoint, the concept of organizational culture suggests an avenue for fostering changes in behavior and attitudes to bring about desired *results*.

In one of the classic studies on corporate culture, Hofstede (1980) studied the influence of national cultures on IBM in over forty countries. Hofstede (1980) postulated that national cultural differences accounted for differences in promotions, retention of employees, interaction with customers (facing toward vs. facing away), job satisfaction, motivation, union membership, and attitudes/perceptions toward management and the parent company. In analyzing data, he found that behavior, reflected by attitudes expressed by managers could be explained by four dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and masculinity. Power distance referred to how

different countries dealt with issues of human inequality, such as prestige, wealth, and power. Denmark is a country that is characterized by low power distance. Danish law proclaims that no one individual should have more than or stand out from others. The United States was identified as having a mid-level power distance. Uncertainty avoidance describes the ways in which countries have learned to cope with uncertainty. Countries with low uncertainty avoidance tend to develop technology and/or regulatory environments to anticipate uncertainty and plan for it. Singapore, Hong Kong, Sweden, and Denmark had the weakest levels of uncertainty avoidance with the United States not far behind. Individualism describes the degree to which individuals in a society act independently of each other. Whereas individualism tended to be high in the United States where it is viewed as a sign of well-being, it tended to be lower in South American countries where it can be seen as alienating. Finally, masculinity refers to the roles that different genders play in society. Japan and many of the South American countries tended to have high levels of masculinity where women are expected to be less assertive, while Denmark, Sweden, and Norway had low levels of masculinity.

Another classic study on corporate culture was conducted by Deal and Kennedy (1982). According to Deal and Kennedy (1982:4-5):

Whether weak or strong, culture has a powerful influence throughout the organization; it affects practically everything – from who gets promoted and what decisions are made, to how employees dress and what sports they play.

...In fact, a strong culture has almost always been the driving force behind continuing success in American business.

In their survey, they developed profiles of nearly eighty companies. In general, they found that cultures were unique, unitary, and that strong cultures had a widely-shared philosophy and valued the importance of people. They also identified five common

elements of culture: 1) business environment – determines what is necessary for success; 2) values – basic concepts and beliefs; 3) heroes – charismatic or visionary leaders; 4) rites and rituals – day-to-day routines that show employees what behavior is expected of them; and 5) the cultural network – the framework by which the corporate message is carried. Strong cultures embody these five elements and can be used as a guiding tool for shaping behavior. Specifically, a strong culture spells out how people are to behave most of the time, which has been shown to increase productivity in the workplace by as much as one to two hours per day per employee. Secondly, a strong culture enables people to identify with the organization, and ultimately work harder. Culture has the ability to make workers more or less productive, cultivate team players or individuals, or encourage tough or easy-going managers.

Deal and Kennedy (1982:60) defined rites and rituals as the guiding force behind organizational behavior:

In short, strong culture companies create the rites and rituals of behavior in their corporate life – the rites and rituals that exercise the most visible and pervasive influence on, as Bower says it, “the way we do things around here.”

Retirement ceremonies, promotions, presentation of rewards, coordination activities (i.e., meetings, memos) are all examples of rituals to be orchestrated and managed to produce desired behaviors. Deal and Kennedy (1982) even provided managers with five standards for influencing employees actions or behavior: 1) language standards; 2) public decorum; 3) interpersonal behavior (what is acceptable); 4) presentation and format; and 5) explicit instructions. According to Deal and Kennedy (1982:82), “The rituals people learn in one culture mark them – in effect, train them – in a specific mode of behavior.”



In summary, Deal and Kennedy (1982) identified four common cultures that exist across the range of organizations: 1) the tough guy, macho culture – risk takers and quick feedback, role for superstition as a ritual; 2) the work hard/play hard culture – high energy level, with low tolerance for risk, importance of energetic games/parties for motivation; 3) the bet-your-company culture – a high risk, slow-feedback environment, business meeting as primary ritual; and 4) the process culture – hard to measure what is done, so focus is on process (i.e., beauracracy), reorganization and retirements are important rituals.

Baker (1980) provided suggestions for how to shape culture. He identified eight techniques for fostering a desired culture: 1) role modeling – leader exhibits behavior consistent with norms and values; 2) positive reinforcement – reinforce desired behaviors; 3) communication – articulate desired norms; 4) recruitment of employees; 5) promotion and transfer decisions; 6) training; 7) organization design – formal structure, performance appraisal; and 8) physical design of the building. All of the techniques discussed above could be used to engineer or create a culture and subsequently maintain that culture by influencing behavior.

Weick (1985) articulated that corporate ‘strategy’ was a synonym for corporate ‘culture.’ As such, both can influence behavior because they guide expression and interpretation; they provide continuity and identity; they are embodied in actions such as judging, creating, justifying affirming, and sanctioning; and they are social and summarize what is acceptable behavior. Weick (1985:385) concluded:

Strong cultures may be slower to respond to external change, but because of their coherence, they may also be forceful actors and better able to create the environments they want. Strong cultures may exhibit action rationality and be able to bypass the laborious deliberations that are necessary to achieve decision

rationality. Strong cultures may be slow, but they may also be powerful. Because they are successful at proaction, they could suffer less from their inherent tendency to be slow to react.

Hofstede et al. (1990) used qualitative and quantitative methods to measure organizational culture. They used a combination of interviews and questionnaires to assess culture. The qualitative data from the interviews was used to develop the questionnaires. Using a multivariate analysis technique, they found that shared perceptions of daily practices or behaviors are the core of an organization's culture. Practices can also be labeled conventions, customs, habits, mores, traditions, and usages. Hofstede et al. (1990:311) concluded that, "the values of founders and key leaders undoubtedly shape the organizational cultures but that the way these cultures affect ordinary members is through members' practices."

In an effort to test Downs' (1967) "life cycle" theory, McCurdy (1991) conducted a case study on the decline of NASA through the use of a cultural questionnaire. According to Downs (1967:20), "all organizations tend to become more conservative as they grow older, unless they experience periods of very rapid growth or internal turnover." Conservatism is a synonym for low risk tolerance, which has been a behavioral feature of cultural studies. Following its creation in 1958 until 1966, NASA's budget expanded eight-fold. However, budget cutbacks and a lack of public support contributed to a rapid reduction in the country's space program through the 1970s. During this time, the work force aged (young scientists decreased from 37 percent in 1966 to 12 percent in 1978), promotion rates declined, and turnover rates declined to just 5 percent. In support of Downs' (1967) aging theory, NASA agency officials have become more conservative. McCurdy (1991:313) stated:

This part of the aging theory [ascension of conservers] appears to be half true for NASA. Agency management may have become more conservative, but the underlying culture remained one in which NASA professionals prized change. A conservative organization is a matter of values, a question of what type of behavior the members hold dear. These values are reflected in the type of people elevated from middle-management ranks to lead the organization and the beliefs that make up the agency.

In summary, Downs' theory cannot be proven; however, the NASA experience provides for some refinements. It is not possible to isolate the influences of bureaucratization/conservatism on NASA due to age versus changes in the federal government prescribed by Congress. The NASA officials ultimately retained a culture devoted to change, yet the increase in conservative behavior may be more of a reflection of organizational decline than from the promotion of conservative employees.

According to Lawson and Ventriss (1992:205), "organizational learning, goal setting, and self- and collective efficacies are central to the influence of organizational upon specific organizational performances." Organizational learning aims to adjust overall norms, while at the same time creating new skill development, new knowledge, and new norms and insights. Goal setting is a key instrument in modifying behavior. Specifically, setting goals can achieve the following: 1) serve as immediate regulators of human action; 2) challenge individuals and lead to greater effort and persistence; 3) yield higher levels of performance; and 4) encourage public commitment. Lawson and Ventriss (1992:215-217) concluded:

The present descriptive findings of organizational change suggest that setting and promoting public commitment to specific organizational goals can yield specific changes in shared behaviors as well as shared beliefs and values about the organization and how members view themselves.

In summary, it appears as if an organizational culture that promotes high levels of performance by specific and challenging goals, performance measures, incentives,

and performance feedback mechanisms can lead to enhanced performances at the individual and organizational levels....

At the request of Senator John Glenn, the GAO (1992) conducted a study of organizational/corporate culture in an effort to provide the Department of Defense with ideas on managing and changing culture. Consistent with the corporate culture literature, the GAO developed a typology of techniques (Table 1) used to perpetuate or change culture based on surveys of nine corporations.

*Table 1. Techniques Organizations Use to Perpetuate or Change Their Culture (GAO 1992:3)*

<b>Degree of Importance</b>	<b>Technique</b>
<u>Very Great</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Display top management commitment and support for values and beliefs;</li> <li>Train employees to convey and develop skills related to values and beliefs.</li> </ul>
<u>Great</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a statement of values and beliefs;</li> <li>Communicate values and beliefs to employees;</li> <li>Use a management style compatible with values and beliefs;</li> <li>Offer rewards, incentives, and promotions to encourage behavior compatible with beliefs;</li> <li>Convey and support values and beliefs at organizational gatherings;</li> <li>Make the organization's structure compatible with values and beliefs;</li> <li>Set up systems, procedures, and processes compatible with values and beliefs.</li> </ul>
<u>Moderate</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replace or change responsibilities of employees who do not support desired values and beliefs;</li> <li>Use stories, legends, or myths to convey values and beliefs;</li> <li>Make heroes or heroines of exemplars of values and beliefs.</li> </ul>
<u>Some</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruit employees who possess or will readily accept values and beliefs;</li> <li>Use slogans to symbolize values and beliefs;</li> <li>Assign a manager or group primary responsibility for efforts to change or perpetuate culture.</li> </ul>

Bourgault et al. (1993) studied organizations within the Canadian federal government and identified the role of performance appraisals in creating a corporate culture and influencing behavior. Borrowing from Schein's (1992) model, performance appraisals would fall into the realm of cultural artifacts. Bourgault et al. (1993) conducted 17 interviews using a questionnaire with the goal of determining whether or not performance appraisals of top bureaucrats influenced the values and culture of the Canadian government. Their findings suggested that the performance appraisal does indeed have a homogenizing effect on the values of the deputy ministers. According to Bourgault et al. (1993:77):

The performance appraisal system was therefore, appreciated, for the most part, important, and had an integrating effect. It increased interdependence and group unity by making the judgment of one's peers a source of professional satisfaction. A performance review implies evaluation criteria. These criteria are not neutral: they inevitably influence work behaviors and encourage the adoption of certain priorities and values over others.

In conclusion, the performance appraisal created a shared corporate culture among Canada's deputy ministers. The fact that the evaluations were based on common criteria encouraged the sharing of those associated values.

Near et al. (1993) studied organizational climate (culture) in reference to whistle-blowing. The purpose of their study was to identify measures of organizational values that are related to whistle-blowing and to determine if the values were related to actual practices. Whistle-blowers have been viewed as dissidents and reformers in the literature. Accordingly, using Downs' (1967) theory they could be viewed as zealots or advocates, or using Martin's (1992) typology of subcultures, they could be identified as a fragmented subgroup. The positive view of whistle-blowing as a behavior believes that the practice can help to promote efficiency, productivity, and quality of the organizational

performance. The authors developed a questionnaire, wherein they assessed values and identified measures of practices or behaviors associated with wrongdoing: stealing funds, stealing property, accepting bribes, waste, abuse of position, or violation of laws or regulations. Their results showed that a subgroups' values were not necessarily related to their practices or behavior. According to Near et al. (1993):

Our results are important because they call into question some of the current advice given to managers in organizations. For instance, managing corporate culture has gained much attention since popular writers maintained that organization culture is an important predictor of organization actions; however, our results do not support this widely held assumption. Instead, organizational values are not always related to the actual practice or events taking place currently with the organization.

The authors offer three possible reasons for their findings: 1) given that an organizations' values are based on history, there may likely be a time lag between when the values might be revised and when they would be reflected in actions; 2) the lag in revision to values may not solely be related to time, but instead due to different knowledge among the organizations' members; and 3) the study did not evaluate the effects of how precursors of the organization's values might have acted as a moderating force on the effects of values on whistle-blowing.

In contrast to Near et al., Klein et al. (1995) worked from the assumption that as components of organizational culture, "behavioral expectations can be viewed as shared phenomena that influence the thinking and behavior of organizational members." The authors surveyed 823 members from 159 different organizations to assess organization culture, service quality, and control structure. Their findings suggested that there is in fact a strong correlation between service quality and organization culture. Additionally,

their findings suggested that constructive styles of management, greater amounts of control, and control distribution all led to higher perceptions of quality.

Following on Hofstede's (1980) work on international cultures, Lee and Barnett (1997) set out to determine whether or not national cultures associated with similar banks in the United States, Japan, and Taiwan affects their organizational cultures. Taiwanese and Citibank employees felt that socializing with coworkers was related to success, more so than did American and Japanese employees. These findings are a testament to the view that Taiwanese people typically ascribe success to harmonious relationships with coworkers. Additionally, it was found that Americans do not socialize with their supervisors as much as do the Taiwanese and the Japanese. This was attributed to participatory decision-making models typically adopted by Japanese supervisors that necessitated involvement and communication with subordinates. In summary, they found that there are significant differences in the organizational cultures of the banks studied, and their organizational cultures were directly influenced by the culture of the country that they were located in.

Daley and Vasu (1998) employed a regression analysis to assess the influence of corporate culture on work behaviors in North Carolina state government. In their study, they looked specifically at the role that trust and commitment plays in increasing productivity. Hypotheses that were supported through their study included the following: 1) higher perceptions that benefits are adequate will lead to higher trust; 2) higher perceptions of extrinsic reward opportunities will lead to higher trust; 3) perceptions that available resources are adequate will lead to higher trust; 4) perceptions that the work environment is clean and safe will lead to higher trust; 5) higher job satisfaction will lead

to higher trust; 6) perceptions of political interference will lead to lower trust; and 7) higher assessments of supervisory performance will lead to higher levels of trust. These results emphasize the role that a supervisor has in cultivating a trusting environment by providing employees with necessary tools to complete their jobs, rewarding them sufficiently, and providing a safe working environment. Daley and Vasu (1998) concluded that trust is a catalyst in creating a framework in which productivity can be enhanced. A corporate culture that values trust encourages cooperation and enables employees to focus on the task at hand.

Another characteristic of corporate culture is an organization's tolerance for risk. Bozeman and Kingsley (1998) found that *trust* also played a factor in determining an organization's 'risk culture.' Risk culture is defined in terms of employees' perceptions of their co-workers and supervisors' willingness to promote and take risks. The authors borrow the concept of risk-taking from Deal and Kennedy's (1982) typology of cultures. A questionnaire was mailed to private and public organizations in Syracuse and Albany, New York. Mid-level and top-level managers were surveyed, with the chief dependent variable being TOTAL RISK. TOTAL RISK was assessed using a 10 point scale (10 – strong agreement; 1 – strong disagreement) in response to the following statements: 1) most employees in this organization are not afraid to take risks; and 2) top management in this organization is not afraid to take risks. The authors found that managers who trust their employees promoted increased risk taking, as did clear and well-defined goals and missions. The authors also showed that increased levels of 'red tape' and formalism (rules and procedures), decreased an organization's tolerance for risk taking. Consistent with findings from Daley and Vasu (1998), the authors also found that external political



interference or control is also likely to dampen an organization's risk tolerance. The authors also noted that risk culture did not vary much between public and private organizations, but was more influenced by the factors described above.

### **Organizational Culture Studies**

Whereas the previous set of studies tended to adopt quantitative methodologies in the study of corporate culture, organizational culture studies have tended to emphasize qualitative methods (ethnography, in-depth interviews, participant observation) within an interpretive paradigm. Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) offered a conceptual critique of systems theory and how it has influenced communication studies. For too long, communication has been viewed as a system of inputs, outputs, transfers, storage, and processes. They argued that systems theory fostered a view of organizations as highly complex and tightly coupled, when in fact they are loosely bound social conventions. They expressed concern that many studying organizational culture tended to apply a 'systems' view, without sufficiently exploring how culture is manifested in behaviors within unique cultures. Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983:130) used the metaphor of a theater to describe how organizational culture influences behavior:

The theatricality of performances suggests that organizational members are choice-making individuals. Organizational members do not "conform" to behavioral laws, but rather act (or more precisely, choose to act) in ways which reflect (or flout) the social conventions of other organizational members.

The authors identified four categories of ritual that serve as expressions of culture. Personal rituals (i.e., motivational locker room antics) are individual performances that tend to mold the actor's organizational identity. Task rituals are day-to-day routines that permit the job to be completed. The organizational culture permits these tasks to be

completed with little cognitive energy expended. Social rituals or performances (i.e., Friday afternoon beer gatherings) can serve as a force to strengthen identification within a subculture or the larger organization. Finally, organizational rituals like company picnics or award ceremonies are viewed as events that reveal larger features of an organization's culture.

Following Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo's work, Trice and Beyer (1984) conceptually studied organizational cultures through rites and ceremonials. They identified a typology of six rites and rituals that are expressions of organizational culture: 1) rites of passage – i.e., basic training in the Army; 2) rites of degradation – i.e., public disciplinary actions; 3) rites of enhancement – i.e., rewards, award ceremonies; 4) rites of renewal – i.e., organizational development activities like team building; 5) rites of conflict reduction – i.e., collective bargaining and arbitration; and 6) rites of integration – socialization events like Christmas parties. According to the authors, this typology is useful for identifying and understanding organizational behaviors and occurrences that might otherwise be overlooked.

Martin and Siehl (1983) surveyed published literature and conducted a content analysis to uncover core values and a counterculture that existed at General Motors (GM) in the early 1980s. GM was characterized as a company that had a fairly strong centralized authority structure with a degree of autonomy afforded to different divisions (Pontiac and Chevrolet) on operating issues. The dominant culture at GM was characterized by three values: 1) respecting authority; 2) fitting in; and 3) being loyal. These values were manifested in various behaviors. For instance, to show respect for authority, an airport ritual was developed in which subordinates would meet their

superiors at the airport, carry their luggage, pay for their meals, and accompany them to their hotel. In an effort to fit in, all employees wore a dark suit, a light shirt, and a muted tie. This ensured that no single employee stood out. Finally, loyalty to one's boss was manifested in stories and the company rite of the retirement dinner. It was stated that one GM employee testified before Congress in the 1950s that what was good for GM was good for the country. Expressions of loyalty were exemplified at the retirement dinner, which was the focal point for recounting the storied past of the senior executives.

Through their analysis, the authors uncovered a counterculture wherein Mr. DeLorean, a division manager, bucked the dominant culture of respecting authority, fitting in, and loyalty at all costs. DeLorean valued dissent and worked to change the performance appraisals in his division. He refused to be escorted by subordinates when traveling from airports; he wore suits with a continental cut and shirts that were off-white; and he raised concerns about groupthink with the example of the appalling safety record of the Corvair. Martin and Siehl (1983:63) concluded with their thoughts on the role of countercultures:

A counterculture can serve some useful functions for a dominant culture, articulating the boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate behavior and providing a safe haven for the development of innovative ideas.

Maynard-Moody et al. (1986) utilized ethnographic methods (conducted in-depth open-ended interviews, and reviewed pertinent agency records, memos and reports) to explore the role that the reorganization process had on impacting the dominant subculture of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). Using Schein's (1992) model of cultural analysis, reorganizations can be viewed as *artifacts* or symbols. The authors began their study with three common assumptions: 1) reorganizations are

common; 2) reorganizations are characterized by the rhetoric of efficiency or the “managerial metamyth” (Adams and Ingersoll 1985, 1990); and 3) reorganizations rarely produce improvements in efficiency or productivity. However, the authors do view reorganizations highly symbolic that serve to alter the power structure in organizations. According to Maynard-Moody et al. (1986:302), the dominant subculture legitimates and perpetuates power structures in an organization:

The dominant subculture is, we hypothesize, the primary agent of the institutionalization of organizational power. The dominant subculture exercises power more by determining the agenda and legitimate actors and less by winning any specific policy battles. The dominant subculture controls the “decision structure” of who gets to participate in policy deliberations and the “access structure” which legitimates certain problems, solutions, and criteria as worth of consideration.

In their study, they identified five time periods that characterized the rise and fall of the dominant subculture within the KDHE: 1) 1885-1904: Organizational beginnings – Board of Health founded with minimal authority, budget, or staff; 2) 1904-1923: Founding of the Crumbine Subculture – Dr. Crumbine was appointed as the Secretary of Health, wherein budget and staff grew exponentially. (Crumbine established a culture premised on the supreme role of science, pride in one’s work, and a disregard for politics and the influences of politics on the agency. As such, Crumbine hired employees that tended to have high levels of technical expertise); 3) 1924-1974: Business as usual – Crumbine departed in 1923; however, the dominant subculture remained intact dominated by physicians and engineers, which valued expertise over politics; 4) 1974-1983: Holding on – in 1974, a major reorganization took place in which the old Board of Health was abolished and the KDHE was established in its place and elevated to a cabinet position to be headed by a political appointee. (This profound structural change had a

minimal impact on the agency due to the fact that an internal candidate was appointed as the Secretary; however, it was now more difficult to ignore politics and its influences); and 5) 1983 – present: Coup d’etat – in 1983, for the first time, an outsider was appointed as the Secretary of KDHE. Secretary Sabol had little regard for the Crumbine subculture and embarked upon an effort to purge the old culture by instituting a new set of values and power structure. All managerial positions were reclassified and readvertised to de-emphasize technical skills, instead emphasizing managerial skills. The new Sabol culture, emphasized a responsiveness to political concerns consistent with legislative intent and financial accountability.

Through their study, the authors came to view reorganizations as social dramas. Organizational charts are symbols or artifacts, and the inauguration of a new leader is a behavioral rite. Maynard-Moody et al. (1986:308-309) concluded:

Our research indicates that reorganizations have profound symbolic and communicative impacts. Reorganizations are organizational status dramas that are best understood by what they tell the members about their social system. ...Reorganizations are not merely technical acts of designing the most efficient organizational chart and filling positions with the best qualified. They are social interventions that may challenge deeply held assumptions.

Wilkins and Dyer (1988) provided a conceptual critique of corporate culture based on cultural “frames.” Specifically, the authors argued that culture is something that ‘is,’ not what an organization ‘has.’ They also questioned the adequacy of questionnaires in the study or understanding of culture, but instead advocated the use of ethnographic methods within a symbolic interactionist paradigm.

Wilkins and Dyer (1988:523) defined organizational culture as, “socially acquired and shared knowledge that is embodied in specific and general organizational frames of reference.” Frames of reference are ‘cultural maps’ that enable members to develop an

appropriate response action to a specific situation or stimuli. Frames are related to the lack of organizational decision making associated with routine actions. Examples of reference frames are ideologies, strategies for completing work assignments, contingency strategies, working relationships, operational tempo, and respect for authority:

Organizational frames can be used to interpret events and affect what is learned. Wilkins and Dyer (1988:531) concluded:

Researchers must take culture into account in order to understand, describe, or influence culture change. We question the conventional wisdom found in the literature suggesting that all organizational cultures change or can be changed using the same methods or processes. Such views ignore cultural differences among organizations in their orientation and their ability to change, in their experience with alternative cultural frames, and in their interpretation of events, past or present.

Mahler (1988) utilized qualitative methods to uncover meaning in organizational stories by interviewing 19 officials at the Agency for International Development (AID). Stories are symbolic artifacts that signify or typify values or ideas associated with the organization. Whereas some have questioned the validity of “stories” as good science, Hummel (1991:37-39) argued:

Contrary to the analytic scientist, who takes for granted the existence of a shared world that has relevance to all who use his approach, the manager listening to a story is concerned with the prior problem of establishing the relevance of the world told about to his own world and his interests in it. ...In sum, managers first and foremost communicate through stories that constitute or construct their world. How could it be otherwise?

Mahler (1988) asked officials eight questions: 1) Why did you join AID? 2) What are your reasons for remaining with the agency? 3) How would you characterize the mission of AID? 4) How committed are you to the mission and AID? 5) How would you characterize the motivation at AID? 6) How did you learn about AID’s mission? 7) What events illustrate what working for AID is all about? and 8) Have you been abroad

for AID? The most prominent theme that emerged from the data, was that “only through experiencing firsthand the rigors and setbacks of life in the field could one really understand the development mission [of AID] and be committed to it.” The high importance attached to field experience requires staff to rotate between the field offices and Washington, D.C. Promotions were predicated on field experience, typically requiring two tours abroad before returning to D.C. Shared field experiences and hardships also enabled officials to understand why policies did not always work in host countries, and also served to build a camaraderie among employees.

Adams and Ingersoll (1990) jumped on the bandwagon of those (Barley 1988 and others) who decried the negative impact that functionalism or technical rationality has had on stunting the advancement of the interpretive paradigm in the study of organizational culture. The authors likened the centrality of water for fish to the role that culture plays in human social life. As such it is not very malleable or subject to being managed. In their critique of technical rationality as a set of beliefs, Adams and Ingersoll (1985, 1990) described it as the “managerial metamyth” or a metapattern (Adams 1993). Metapatterns may be constructive, benign, or dysfunctional and are developed by leaders in concert with members of the organization to “organize” members’ behavior (Adams 1993). The managerial metamyth includes the following beliefs: 1) eventually all work processes can and should be rationalized – that is broken into their constituent parts and so thoroughly understood that they can be completely controlled; 2) the means for attaining organizational objectives or ends deserve maximum attention with the result that the ends quickly become subordinated to those means, even to the extent that the ends become lost or forgotten; and 3) efficiency and predictability are more important

than any other considerations in managing an organization. According to the authors, the managerial metamyth permeates all segments of society (academic and applied) and is transmitted through symbolic messages in organizations, the media, and the literature.

Adams and Ingersoll (1990) conducted an ethnographic study to assess how the managerial metamyth influenced the organizational culture and behavior of members employed by the Washington State Ferry System. This ferry system is the largest in the United States, operating more than 22 vessels, carrying more than 17 million people, and employing 1,200 people. Until 1951, the ferry system was owned and operated by a private company called the Black Ball Line, which was renowned for its reliability and 'family style' culture. The authors labeled this culture as the family metamyth, which is characterized by close relationships, and statements such as: "one big happy family and "a family-owned business." The employees exhibited behaviors such as taking interest in one another's personal lives, playing sports together, participating in Friday afternoon social events, and regularly telling jokes.

Black Ball Line sold the company in 1951 due to increased costs and the state bought the ferry system. Until the early 1970s, the ferry system operated much as it had under Black Ball Line. However, in 1972, rising operating costs and budget accountability forced the state to make changes. Whereas the ferry system had previously had a large degree of autonomy, it was reorganized and moved within the Department of Transportation (DOT) in 1977. Unlike the ferry system, DOT had a professional military subculture with distinct lines of authority. This subculture would work to gain control of the ferry system and change the its core identity. A new Secretary of Transportation, Dan Parte, took office in 1981 and he immediately began to



implement the managerial metamyth. He emphasized the need for strategic planning and called for increases in efficiency and automation. During this transition, Parte replaced 77 percent of the top managers in the system, including Dick Foster, the captain of the fleet. With Foster's departure, the family atmosphere (parties, sports, and joking) ended. Other changes were instituted, such as installing bell loggers, which could determine whether or not a captain was liable for accidents or using too much fuel. The bell loggers and the "Flying T" logo of DOT were resented by the employees of the old family culture, and symbolically viewed as DOT's ascendancy over the ferry system. Adams and Ingersoll (1990:299) concluded:

Some might say that such language – replete with words such as accountability, planning, evaluation, performance review, and efficiency – is what management is all about and that the words represent an essential approach to the successful operation of large, complex organizations. The very acceptance of the necessity of an approach that embodies this language is evidence that it is indeed part of a culture that transcends particular organizations. And the fact that it becomes resisted without great cost indicates that the managerial metamyth can become embedded in an organization's cultural ethos even though it includes values alien to the organization's initial tradition.

Sackmann (1991) employed a phenomenological methodology to understand the nature of culture from a cognitive or ideational perspective. In doing so, she conducted 30 in-depth interviews in an unnamed firm in Los Angeles. She asked the following question: "Name three innovations at the company in the past 5 years that they considered the most important." During the course of the interview, they were asked to explain their answers with follow up questions focusing on why was it important, what caused the innovation, and who was involved in its development. Themes were identified in the data using content analyses. Four cultural themes emerged from the data regarding dictionary knowledge (commonly held descriptions): 1) the company's major

goal and accomplishments; 2) the company's strategy; 3) its structure; and 4) its orientation toward people. Additionally, four cultural themes emerged from the data regarding directory knowledge (commonly held explanations of operations): 1) the specific ways in which tasks are accomplished; 2) the relationships among people on the inside as well as the outside; 3) the way adaptation and change are accomplished; and 4) the way new knowledge is acquired.

These different cultural themes impacted employee behavior in various ways. The company's major goal was to build a stable and successful company. Behaviors that contributed to this were an increase in employees, perceived job security, more work, expansion of the department, and the opening of a subsidiary. The structure of the company was fairly decentralized, therefore promoting behaviors exemplified by large amounts of autonomy. The theme of orientation toward people supported behaviors such as people-oriented management, being fair, having a chance, listening, encouragement, instilling confidence, helping people progress, and hiring from within. Tasks were completed using autonomous and team efforts. Taking initiative was emphasized. Relationships among people were described as informal, direct, open, and respectful. Adaptation and change were facilitated through conservative and innovative behavior. When large sums of money were involved, conservative behavior was predominant; however, day-to-day activities were characterized by innovative behavior when money was not an issue. Knowledge was acquired through attendance at trade shows, reading trade journals, and recruitment of new employees. In summary, the author identified seven subcultures under dictionary knowledge and a monolithic culture under directory knowledge. As such Sackmann (1991:313) stated, "This [identification of subcultures]

implies that the proposed methodology is not only sufficiently sensitive to discover existing subcultures but also capable of differentiating between kinds of subgroupings at different levels of cultural knowledge.”

Golden (1992) conducted a qualitative study of a Fortune 500 Company with the pseudonym HAPCO. Golden spent one full year studying HAPCO and utilized participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and archival data collection to generate data. The author acknowledged general themes in the literature that suggest that the latitude for individual action increases as the orderliness of the organization decreases; however, pointed out that individuals do not only conform to the dominant culture, but deviate from it when they comment critically on their situation. According to Golden (1992:6)

This company [HAPCO] consists of a socio-cultural system based on tradition which authoritatively regulates individual action. ...this system restricts the latitude for individual action in HAPCO and employees find it difficult to depart from legitimate patterns of practice and belief. In particular, this system acts to reduce conflict, including the overt discussion of alternative ideas and differences of opinion in organizational decision-making activities.

Golden (1992) found a general theme or culture of *cooperation* permeated the organization. Cooperation was emphasized because it had helped the company survive hard times following World War II. As such, executives place a premium on cooperation, including being a team player and limiting sources of conflict. Cooperation is regarded as a superior way of interacting with coworkers. The culture of cooperation has elicited three responses from management to differences of opinion: 1) note the differences and discuss later, which is the most common method of dealing with conflict; 2) recommend that the subordinate look into his concerns with no real intention of addressing the conflict; or 3) exert some forceful action or outburst to express displeasure

and move on. In her observations, Golden (1992) noted times when the dominant norms and culture of cooperation were eluded. She documented a particular instance wherein a subordinate disagreed publicly with the President of the company and he pushed the President for a decision even when he disagreed with the recommendation.

Golden (1992) identified four types of action that individuals exhibited toward the dominant culture of the organization: 1) unequivocal adherence – reflects agreement; 2) strained adherence – individuals feel they must adhere to culture, but experience tension in doing so; 3) non-adherence – covert or secretive departure from the culture, involving deceptive practices; and 4) overt non-adherence – open or public defiance of guidelines.

In summary, Golden (1992:19) stated:

Clearly, no organization can continue to survive over time without some order and uniformity in action. However, to assume that action is a derivative of culture neglects the fact that humans are individuals who, even in highly-ordered organizations, can create latitude and freedom in action by challenging cultural guidelines.

Kunda (1992) was given access to SysCom, a company of about 600 employees where she employed ethnographic ‘realism’ methods while acting as a passive observer in the organization. She was given office space as well as access to three projects. There she gained access to training sessions and was given a first hand account of the entire organization, including senior management.

Working within the interpretive paradigm, she set out in her study to explore, describe, and evaluate the reality and rhetoric of corporate culture. In her findings, she noted three main themes in the management of culture. First, management at SysCom paid a lot of attention to developing and disseminating the organizational ideology or culture within the company. The ideology portrayed the company as morally sound,

organic, undifferentiated, and defined members' roles as the socialization of the company's values. Secondly, the ideological principles or *assumptions* upon which the company was founded are embodied in specific policies aimed to elicit behaviors consistent with the dominant culture. Thirdly, certain rites and rituals (i.e., company gatherings, etc.) are utilized to encourage and enforce conformance to the dominant culture. Through the increased use of control mechanisms, Kunda (1992) saw the rise of corporate culture as a manifestation of power disguised through rhetoric. Kunda (1992:223-226) concluded:

On the face of it, the argument for tyranny would seem to have some merit. In its attention to the formulation and dissemination of ideology. Tech management [SysCom] indeed resembles Big Brother (as some members point out). Similarly, the widespread use of rituals, the importance attached to group testimonials, and the face-to-face control they allow are reminiscent of *brainwashing* techniques. Moreover, members report feeling intense pressure, an invasion of their private life by corporate requirements, and, in many cases, considerable personal suffering, manifested in burnout and associated forms of despair. Together, these facts seem to support the critics' claims that the modern corporation is fast becoming – if it has not already become – a monstrosity that “bosses not only our working hours but invades our homes and dictates our thought and dreams.” ...At Tech, indeed, analysis of the role, use and social consequences of the company's technology was conspicuous by its absence; rather, such issues are glossed over by words like “innovation,” “productivity,” “profit,” with their connotations of inevitability and rightness.

In order to counter what she sees as corporate culture and the managerial metamyth gone awry, Kunda (1992) calls on priests, teachers, government leaders, media operators and the like to articulate an alternate view of reality.

Casey (1999) followed in Kunda's footsteps, employing interpretive analysis methods, while adopting a critical perspective on the role of power in determining and shaping corporate culture. She conducted a field study of a Fortune 500 company, pseudonym Hephaestus Corporation, wherein she utilized participant observation

techniques over the course of an academic year, while also conducting 60 in-depth interviews with employees and some spouses.

In her findings, she saw the rise of a new corporate culture, characterized by the rhetoric of team and family. The aims of the new organizational culture are to “promote an employee who enthusiastically manifests the values of dedication, loyalty, self-sacrifice, and passion for the product and the customer.” This entails working long hours and declarations of commitment to the organization. Through socialization techniques and disciplinary measures, the new cultural message is disseminated. Those who are not convinced or converted are urged to leave the company. The constant reminder of ‘appropriate’ behavior has caused consternation among many of the employees. Casey (1999:167) stated:

In particular, obsessive compulsions are considered to be commonplace, “normal” neurotic behaviors that are freely facilitated, and expected, in the organizational culture. Some employees acknowledged their obsessive compulsiveness believing the phenomena to be individual “personality traits,” rather than culturally produced defenses within the workplace. These behaviors typically presented in minor forms such as pacing, shaking, incessant finger tapping, handwringing, and blurting out in meetings, to more disabling compulsive routinized alignment of pens, papers, and desk items in ordered patterns, or other personal ritualized movements performed to diminish anxiety.

In conclusion, Casey (1999) warned that the new organizational culture will encounter problems of ambivalence, compliance, integration, and control. The corporate notion of a family will not adequately empower workers; therefore, egalitarian qualities associated traditional notion of family will never be achieved in the employee-corporation relation.

## **How Does Organizational Culture Influence Decision making or Choices?**

The previous section focused on the ways in which organizational culture influences organizational behavior. As noted earlier, behavior or action is distinguishable from decision making or processes by which choices are made. According to Simon (1997:72):

Choice, in so far as it is rational and cognizant of its objective conditions, involves a selection of one alternative from among several. The alternatives differ with respect to the consequences that flow from them, and an analysis of decision-making in its objective aspects will refer primarily to these variable consequences of choice.

This section will begin with a discussion of traditional decision making theories, followed by a critical perspective of decision making, concluding with examples in the literature of how components of organizational culture (identification, autonomy, and symbols) influence organizational decision making.

Classical economic theory and ideas of rationalism, based on F. W. Taylor's notion of scientific management, have pervaded the development of decision-making theories (Hardy 1987). The influence of politics was largely ignored because it was viewed as a force that undermines rationality in business (Hatch 1997). Rationalism (Simon and March 1958; Downs 1967; Dye 1972; Simon 1997; Hatch 1997), 'bounded rationality' (Simon 1997), incrementalism (Lindblom 1959), and group theory or the coalitional model (Cyert and March 1963; Dye 1972; Hatch 1997), have all been instrumental in guiding public policy since the formation of the United States.

## **Theories of Decision Making**

Rationalism is identified with a scientific or economic approach to analyzing and solving problems. According to Dye (1972:27), “a rational policy is one which is correctly designed to maximize ‘net value achievement.’ ” Net value achievement assumes that all values of society are known and measurable and that sacrificing any one value will be compensated for by the attainment of other values. March and Simon (1958:137) described the concept of rationality when they stated, “The rational man of economics and statistical decision theory makes “optimal” choices in a highly specified and clearly defined environment.” March and Simon (1958) also identified four components of rationality: 1) alternatives are developed from which a decision will be made; 2) each alternative has a set of consequences based on certainty, risk, and uncertainty; 3) the decision maker identifies preferences from most to least preferred; and 4) the decision maker selects the alternative leading to a preferred set of consequences.

Downs (1967) premised his discussion of administrative decision making on the rational model, wherein bureaucratic officials are motivated by their own self interest. Three components comprise this model: 1) officials seek to attain their goals rationally, focusing on efficiency; 2) officials have a complex set of goals motivated by self interest; and 3) organization’s social functions strongly influence its structure and behavior (Downs 1967:2). Rational analysis provides a systematic framework for making decisions according to standards of logic and consistency.

In their critique of the rational model, March and Simon (1958), Dye (1972), Simon (1997), and Downs (1967) listed numerous obstacles to rational policy making with only a few being mentioned here: 1) there are no universally agreed upon societal



values, only conflicting interests; 2) the many conflicting values cannot be compared or weighted; 3) it is impossible to accurately weigh many societal values, especially those values which have no active or powerful proponents; 4) information is incomplete; 5) time available for decision-making processes is limited; 6) problems are extremely complex; 7) policy makers have little incentive to maximize societal goals, and instead seek to maximize their own rewards; and 8) policy makers are not motivated to maximize net goal achievement, but merely to satisfy demands for progress. In their critique of the rational model, March and Simon (1958) acknowledged the existence of conflict; however, they viewed it as a breakdown in the decision making process.

Due to the limitations of the rational model of decision making, Simon (1997) proposed an alternate model titled 'bounded rationality,' wherein administrators 'satisfice' because they do not have the 'wit' to maximize. Examples of satisficing criteria include statements such as: "share of the market," "reasonable profit," and "fair market value." Whereas the rational, economic man purports to work in the real world, the administrative man works in the perceived world with limited resources and information. According to Simon (1997:119), "Because administrators satisfice rather than maximize, they can choose without first examining all possible behavior alternatives and without ascertaining that these are in fact all the alternatives."

Incrementalism, first introduced by economist Charles Lindblom in 1959, views public policy and planning as continuation of past government policies with only incremental modifications (Dye 1972). Today, many people call this approach "adaptive management" (Lee 1993). According to Lindblom (1959), decision makers do not annually review the full range of options for achieving societal goals as the rational

model would demand, but instead decision makers are constrained by time, budgets, and data in identifying alternatives to address societal goals. Dye (1972) stated, “The incremental model recognizes the impractical nature of ‘rational-comprehensive’ policy making, and describes a more conservative process of decision making.” Dye (1972:31) lists four main reasons for the prominence of incrementalism in public policy: 1) agencies lack the time, intelligence, or money to investigate all alternatives to existing policy; 2) policy makers accept the legitimacy of previous policies; 3) there may be large investments in current policies (sunk costs) which prevent any substantial change; and 4) it is politically expedient – agreement comes easier in decision making when discussion revolves around modifications to existing programs an not radical changes.

Madison (1961) first introduced *group theory* in Federalist Paper No. 10. He warned of factions, and espoused the necessity of a vast frontier in which competing interests could balance themselves out through a system of checks and balances. Cyert and March (1963) built on the work of March and Simon (1958) when developing the coalitional model of decision making. To Cyert and March, decision making was a political process built on a theory of search and choice in the face of uncertainty and complexity. Whereas March and Simon (1958) viewed conflict as a breakdown in the decision-making process, Cyert and March (1963) viewed conflict as a result of competing interest groups that arise out of the division of labor. Coalitions of interest groups form together to realize their goals of acquiring or preserving scarce resources.

Dye (1972:23), summed up the coalitional model when he stated, “Group theory begins with the proposition that interaction among groups is the central fact of politics. Individuals with common interests ban together formally or informally to press their

demands upon government.” Accordingly, public policy is the equilibrium achieved by the influence of competing interest groups. Changes in the influences of interest groups will result in shifts in public policy (Dye 1972).

## **Power and Politics**

Whereas Cyert and March (1963) acknowledged the role of politics in decision making, they have been criticized for failing to address the nature of political processes and sources of power (Pettigrew 1973; Hardy 1987). Just as the functionalist paradigm was critiqued in the study of organizational culture, critical theorists have also taken it upon themselves to identify the role of power and politics in decision-making processes. According to Hatch (1987) and Pettigrew (1973), organizational decision making is fundamentally pluralistic activity comprised of factions and subcultures negotiating and renegotiating in a never-ending stream of political haranguing.

Power is a key component of these negotiations and is defined as the ability of one person to influence someone else to do something that they would not otherwise do. Power is usually legitimized through authority and structure and can be manifested in symbols or artifacts (i.e., titles, office size or structure, salaries, or parking spaces). Power is developed by the following activities: 1) creating dependence in others; 2) coping with uncertainty on behalf of others; 3) developing personal networks; and 4) developing and constantly augmenting your expertise. Additionally, power is used to: 1) control information flows to others; 2) control agendas; 3) create legitimacy for positions and actions (Hardy 1987); 4) control decision-making criteria; 5) cooptation and coalition building; and 6) bring in outside experts to bolster your position (Hatch 1997). Pettigrew

(1973), Hardy (1987), and Hatch (1997) note that political influences and power are likely to be exerted when uncertainty exists due to changing traditional patterns of resource use, or when resources become scarce. According to strategic contingencies theory, power derives from the ability to produce something that is highly valued, like a critical resource. However, power is not necessarily produced from uncertainty, but instead from the coping mechanisms [*prevention*, *forecasting* (providing information), or *absorption* (taking action after the event to limit negative consequences)], or lack thereof, employed by the organization.

Stone (1997) offers her own critique of the rational or market decision-making model and proposes a *polis* model in its place. Stone (1997:17) argued that the market model, “a social system in which individuals pursue their own welfare by exchanging things with others whenever trades are mutually beneficial,” is insufficient for describing political decision making that occurs in the social world. According to Stone (1997:32), the polis entails the following: 1) it is a community distinct from individual goals and behavior; 2) it has a public interest; 3) most of the policy problems are commons problems; 4) influence is pervasive and the boundary between influence and coercion is always contested; 5) cooperation is as important as competition; 6) loyalty is the norm; 7) groups and organizations are the building blocks, so accordingly the whole is greater than the sum of its parts; 8) information is interpretive, incomplete, and strategic; and 9) it is governed by the laws of passion (resources renewable) as well as the laws of matter (resources are finite). The polis model is contrasted with the market model, which focuses on the individual as the unit of analysis, wherein motivation to maximize self

interest is achieved through production, competition, and utilization of complete information.

### **Influence of Culture on Decision Making**

Earlier, Schein's (1992) model of cultural analysis was discussed. The model included three levels of culture: *artifacts* or symbols (physical, behavioral, and verbal), *espoused values* (strategies, goals, philosophies), and *assumptions* (unconscious beliefs). This model will be used to describe the influence of organizational culture on decision making. Assumptions have not been documented widely in the literature due to their difficulty to assess; however, the role that artifacts and espoused values play on influencing decision making has been documented. For the purpose of this paper, the term *identification* will be used as a surrogate to study espoused values, while administrative rule-making (autonomy exercised as a ceremony) and the role of symbols will be used to assess the impact of artifacts on organizational decision making.

### **Identification as Espoused Values**

March and Simon (1958:65) introduced their notion of identification in 1958:

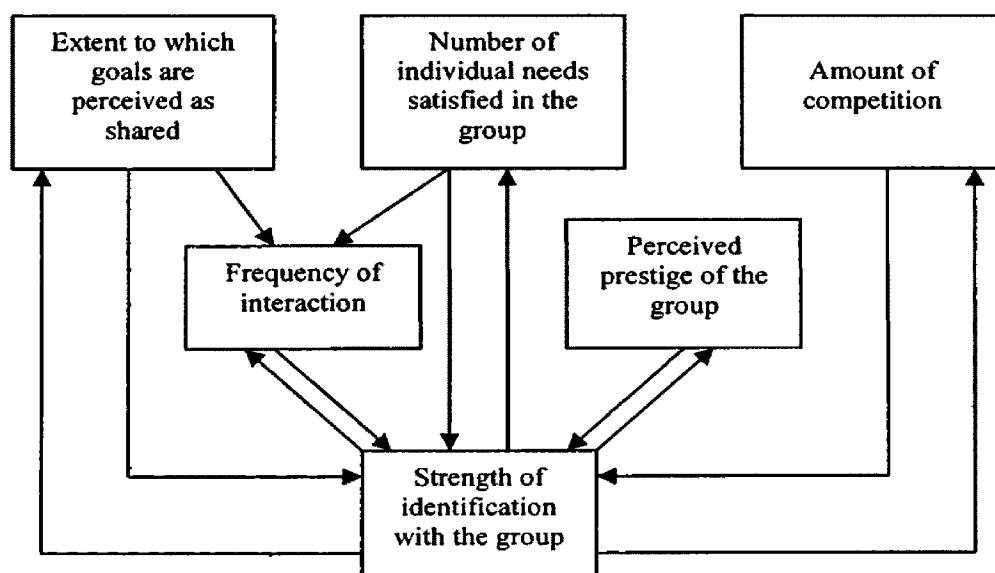
Humans, in contrast to machines, evaluate their own positions in relation to the value of others and come to accept others' goals as their own. In addition, individual members of an organization come to it with a prior structure of preferences – a personality, if you like – on the basis of which they make decisions while in the organization. Thus, individual goals are not “given” for the organization, but can be varied both through recruitment procedures and through organizational practice.

Working from their initial definition, March and Simon developed a typology of identifications: 1) extra-organizational identification; 2) organizational identification; 3) task identification; and 4) subgroup or subculture identification. According to March and

Simon (1958:65), “The stronger the individual’s identification with a group, the more likely that his goals will conform to his perception of group norms.” This premise was key to the development of five basic factors influencing group identification (Figure 4):

- 1) the greater the perceived prestige of the group, the stronger the propensity of an individual to identify with it;
- 2) the greater the extent to which goals are perceived as shared among members of a group, the stronger the propensity of the individual to identify with the group;
- 3) the more frequent the interaction between an individual and the members of a group, the stronger the propensity of the individual to identify with the group;
- 4) the greater the number of individual needs satisfied in the group, the stronger the propensity of the individual to identify with the group;
- and 5) the less the amount of competition between the members of a group and an individual, the stronger the propensity of the individual to identify with the group.

*Figure 4. Basic Factors Affecting Group Identification (March and Simon 1958)*



Robbins (1996:431) defined identity as “the degree to which members identify with the organization rather than their particular work group or field of professional expertise.” Identity has also been defined in the literature as *commitment* or *loyalty*. As defined, identity has both an organizational and professional component. Hall et al. (1970) defined organizational identification as “the process by which the goals of the organization and those of the individual become increasingly integrated or congruent.” Research has shown relationships between organizational identification and tenure and fulfillment of higher-order needs (self fulfillment, autonomy, job challenge) (Hall et al. 1970; Hall and Schneider 1972). Lee (1971) challenged March and Simon’s (1958) premise that organizational identification of scientists was related to the prestige of the organization. Instead, Lee found that organizational identification of scientists is more closely related to general satisfaction with the job, organization, and profession.

Simon (1997:284) defined organizational identification with the context of decision making: “a person identifies himself with a group when, in making a decision, he evaluated the several alternatives of choice in terms of their consequences for the specified group.” Simon (1997) noted that the individual’s identification may be with the objectives of the organization or the conservation of the organization itself. Downs (1967) developed a typology of officials based on behaviors aimed at conserving the organization. This typology is similar to, but more detailed than Simon’s (1997) discussion of individual identification.

Downs (1967) identified five types of bureaucratic officials: 1) climbers, 2) conservers, 3) advocates, 4) statesmen and 5) zealots. *Climbers* are motivated by a desire to maximize their self-interest through promotion, aggrandizement, and jumping (leaving

for another organization). *Conservers* are similar to the individual described by Simon (1997) (who identifies with conservation of the organization), and they seek to maximize security and convenience. Conservers tend to prefer the status quo and oppose change as a result of diminished expectations, usually related to tenure, or other personal traits. *Advocates*, much like Simon's individual who identifies with the objectives of the organization, act in pursuit of the public interest in an altruistic fashion, when it is aligned with organizational goals. Advocates also tend to act highly partisan externally, while acting impartially internally (within the organization). *Statesmen* are similar to advocates; however, their promotion of the public interest is more broad and related to ideals that may not necessarily be aligned with the organization. Loyalty to the nation or society as a whole is paramount. Finally, *zealots* act to promote the public interest regardless of the resistance that they may face within the organization. Zealots tend to have a very narrow focus of interest and often fail to see the larger picture. Typically, zealots vehemently oppose the status quo and act as antagonists toward the conservers.

Cheney (1983b:342), following from the work of Simon and Kenneth Burke, defined identification as "an active process by which individuals link themselves to elements in the social scene." As such, identification has been linked to job motivation, job satisfaction, commitment, decision making, conflict resolution, employee interaction, tenure, work socialization, recruitment and selection of personnel, promotion, communication, public relations and rhetoric (Buchanan 1974a, 1974b; Cheney 1983a, 1983b; Glisson and Durick 1988; Cheney and Christensen 2001). Cheney (1983a:146-147) in pointing out the role of that rhetoric plays in developing and transmitting corporate identities warned:



Simply put, an individual who is inclined to identify with an organization (or an organizational subunit) will be open to *persuasive* efforts from various sources within that unit. The organization “initiates” this inducement process by communicating its values, goals, and information (i.e., the organization’s own stated “identifications”) in the form of guidelines for individual and collective action; the member may then “complete” the process by adopting or adapting the organization’s interests, doing “what’s best” for the organization, and perhaps even developing a salient identification within the organization as a target.

Cheney (1983b:346) also elaborated on Simon’s (1997) discussion of the role of identification on decision making when he stated, “A person identifies with a unit when, in making a decision, the person in one or more of his/her organizational roles perceives that unit’s values or interests as relevant in evaluating the alternatives of choice.” In effect, the range of acceptable or possible alternatives as well as the ‘decision space’ is bounded by the self interests of the decision maker (Downs 1967) and the objectives of the agency and its culture (Tompkins and Cheney 1983). It is fairly evident that organizational identity has the potential to have a large influence on organizational decision making; however, one must not forget the influence of professional identity on decision-making processes also.

As was previously mentioned (March and Simon 1958), cultural identification has four components: extra-organizational, organizational, task, and subgroup (professional). For the purposes of this discussion, subgroup or professional identity will be examined along with organizational identity. Professional identity is the degree to which an individual identifies with their profession more so than the organization. Using Downs’ typology of officials, either zealots or climbers (expressing *jumping* behaviors, i.e., free agency) would likely have a stronger allegiance to their profession than the organization. Typically, organizations comprised of individuals with strong professional loyalty or identities tend to have a weak organizational culture, characterized by low sharedness

(Robbins 1986). Occupational title, ideology, job challenge, multi-organization career systems (R&D, high tech firms) and advanced levels of education have been linked with high levels of professional identity (Becker and Carper 1956; Glaser 1964; Hall and Schneider 1972). Jabes and Zussman (1989) have noted a general trend toward professional identity away from organizational identity. Along those lines, they discovered that public sector employees were more likely to have more loyalty to their profession than private employees, who were more likely to have higher degrees of organizational identity. While some (Bullis and Tompkins 1989) have lauded increased professional identities and weaker organizational cultures, others like the U.S. Armed Forces have tried to combat all-time levels of attrition (FY94-FY98 – 36.9%) due to decreased organizational identification (U.S. GAO 2000b, 2000c).

Simon (1997), Cheney (1983), Tompkins and Cheney (1983) have offered theoretical perspectives on how organizational identity influences agency decision making. Kaufman's (1960) seminal work, *The Forest Ranger*, and subsequent research (Hall et al. 1970; Hall and Schneider 1972; Cheney 1983; Bullis and Tompkins 1989; Tipple and Wellman 1991; and Mohai and Jakes 1996) provide excellent natural resource case studies to support previous theoretical ideas. Kaufman (1960) set out to study how the forest rangers at the local level carried out the management of the national forests.

Kaufman (1960:vi) stated:

In the management of natural resources, it is the man on the ground who actually carries out the program. This is equally true for private and public organizations. It is what he *does*, not what the department secretary, bureau chief, or company president *says*, that actually makes the program.

In his study, Kaufman (1960) identified multiple mechanisms aimed at promoting and building organizational identification: 1) discouraging deviation through inspections; 2)

recruitment and selection – ninety percent of professional positions within the agency were foresters at the time of Kaufman’s study (Tipple and Wellman 1991); 3) use of training and manuals; 4) promotion and transfer; 5) use of symbols; and 6) communications between the field and headquarters. Kaufman concluded that the Forest Service had a high degree of unity or strong culture. Kaufman (1960:197), as cited in Cheney (1983:345), described this strong culture as follows:

Much that happens to a professional forester in the Forest Service thus tends to tighten the links binding him to the organization. His experiences and his environment gradually infuse into him a view of the world and a hierarchy of preferences coinciding with those of his colleagues. They tie him to his fellows, to the agency. They engender a “militant and corporate spirit,” and organized “self-consciousness,” dedication to the organization and its objectives, and a fierce pride in the Service. They practically merge the individual’s identity with the identity of the organization; the organization is as much a part of the members as they are of it.

Jack Ward Thomas (2000:10), former Chief of the Forest Service from 1992 till 1996, echoed the findings of strong organizational identification in Kaufman’s study:

I admittedly begin and end with a strong bias. I believe that the Forest Service – warts and all – is the best conservation organization in the world. The people of the past and present Forest Service have made it so. I came to the agency thirty-three years ago after ten years with a state wildlife agency because I simply wanted to be part of the Forest Service – part of something bigger than myself and an agency that set standards for the world.

Several studies (Bullis and Tompkins 1989; Tipple and Wellman 1991; Mohai and Jakes 1996) have revisited Kaufman’s (1960) original study. These authors have shown that the strong culture that pervaded the Forest Service in the first half of the century has slowly diminished. Bullis and Tompkins (1989:297) argued, “The overwhelming trend has been a decline in these unobtrusive control practices which encourage the strong identification of members with the organization.” This in large part has been attributed to changes in societal values that have been reflected in legislation

aimed at protecting natural resources and well as legislation aimed at promoting diversity in the workplace. Tipple and Wellman (1991:424) stated, “Thus a departure from homogeneity of staffing, an internal phenomenon that Kaufman described, was brought on by changes in the external environment.” The homogeneity that once pervaded the Forest Service no longer exists. The emphasis on diversity mentioned previously has increased the percentage of women, minorities, and specialists (i.e., biologists) in the agency so much that foresters are now in the minority (Tipple and Wellman 1991). This diversity has facilitated the promotion of biologists (Thomas and Dombeck) to the Chief’s position in 1992 and 1997, which in turn has impacted the culture of the organization and subsequent decision making.

Bullis and Tompkins (1989) noted that many veteran employees long for the strong organizational culture of the past, with one individual going so far to equate working for the Forest Service as a “calling.” However, the researchers are not persuaded by this longing for strong identification and welcome the diminishment of the culture of years past:

...concertive control, or strong culture should be approached with caution. While we are sympathetic to the nostalgia expressed by employees for the identities and identification of the past, the homogeneity of that “strong” culture made the organization less flexible and adaptive to the changes in the environment. ...The heterogeneity of the current “weak” culture is no doubt more flexible, more adaptive in relation to its environment – including the political climate and its inevitable fluctuations. Strong culture, then, may create inflexibility as members think in concert (Bullis and Tompkins 1989:304).

Whereas Bullis and Tompkins laud the retreating strong culture of the Forest Service as an opportunity for flexibility, caution should be exercised because it is an active ingredient for *gridlock* that permeates the agency (Lowi 1969; Wondolleck 1988; U.S. GAO 1997a). The weak organizational culture of the Forest Service appears to rely

on pluralistic decision-making processes driven by interest groups competing for scarce resources (environmental values, goods, services, and justice) and power. This unto itself would not be problematic, were it not for the rational decision-making framework that is currently mandated in statute and utilized by federal agencies. The foundation of environmental laws [National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Endangered Species Act], and the judicial system set to interpret them, are both predicated upon facts and expert witnesses and fail to adequately weigh the values and preferences of the competing interest groups. NEPA is patterned after the rational model of decision making steeped in traditional economic theory and requires agencies to develop a range of acceptable alternatives to meet preordained goals and objectives. There is a presumption that a scientifically defensible alternative should be selected that maximizes one objective against resource constraints. The mantra of scientific management and decision making originated in the Progressive Era and was espoused by Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the Forest Service. Fairfax (2005) recognized the Progressive Era cultural trappings faced by the Forest Service and called for its and the National Park Service's assimilation into the Bureau of Land Management. As the Forest Service has internally diversified its values and recruitment of employees, in effect changing its culture, much of this has been without the consent of Congress (U.S. GAO 1997a, 1997b, 2000a; Sedjo 2000; Hoberg 2001). This is due largely to the discretion that has been afforded to the agency by Congress.

## **Administrative Rule-Making as a Ceremonial Artifact: Autonomy Exercised**

Robbins (1996:431) defined autonomy as “the degree of responsibility, independence, and opportunities for exercising initiative that individuals in the organization have.” Autonomy, like identity can be viewed at multiple levels (i.e., individual, bureau within an organization, organization under the executive branch and so on). While reflecting on the importance of autonomy for a bureau within an organization, Downs (1967:7) had this comment, “No bureau can survive unless it is continually able to demonstrate that its services are worthwhile to some group with influence over sufficient resources to keep it alive.” Even though Downs was referring to a bureau, the same could be said of the individual. Each individual wants enough autonomy to demonstrate that he is worthwhile in the eyes of the agency. According to Simon (1997:310), “The broader the sphere of discretion left to the subordinate, the more important become those types of influence which do not depend upon the exercise of formal authority.” Greater levels of autonomy afford individuals more discretion when evaluating alternatives and making decisions based on their own values and preconceptions within the overall sideboards of the organization. Administrative rule-making is a specific example of where autonomy or discretion can have significant impacts on the organization’s ability to meet its objectives.

Federal and state administrative procedures acts provide procedures for agencies to interpret laws passed by Congress or state legislatures. West (1982:420) defined rulemaking as, “the exercise of legislative authority which has been delegated from Congress to an agency.” It is not uncommon for laws to be vague and open to various

interpretations; therefore when agencies undertake a rule-making effort, they are afforded discretion to interpret legislative intent. Pending the level of autonomy delegated by higher authorities, the potential exists for individuals in an organization to have varying levels of influence in how laws are interpreted and eventually implemented on the ground. It must also be noted the rulemaking is inherently a political process (West 1982). Calls for autonomy are typically advocated by politicians and organizations alike, to allow for local solutions to local problems. The idea is that decisions made at local levels will foster and incorporate citizen input at higher levels than if decisions are made at national levels. In an effort to show how autonomy has influenced decision making examples from the Federal Trade Commission and the Forest Service will be discussed.

West (1982) documented the role that politics and organizational culture had on the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) ability to promulgate Trade Regulation Rules (TRR). The two primary missions of the FTC are antitrust enforcement and consumer protection. Agency personnel took their commitment to consumer protection seriously. In an effort to curb deception in the market place, the FTC regularly issued consent orders, advisory opinions, and consumer guides. Until 1962, the FTC relied primarily on adjudication when attempting to protect individuals and industry from deceptive marketplace practices. However, in 1962 to the dismay of industry and some members of Congress, the FTC decided to promulgate TRR as a means to more effectively police the entire industry. The impetus for rule-making at this time was attributed to a wave of consumerism evident within and outside of the organization.

The first consequence of rule-making was that cigarette companies had to put warning labels on their products. Thirty years of adjudication could not accomplish what

one year of rule-making could. The backlash from the cigarette industry and Congress was so strong that the new rule was nullified by a statute, and the FTC was forbidden to promulgate new cigarette rules for four years. West (1982:422) stated:

The reaction by cigarette manufacturers and tobacco grower [to the health regulation] was so formidable that Congress soon enacted a statute which nullified the regulation.... Congress's lack of support "burned" the commission deeply, and as a result, the agency reverted to the issuance of trivial rules.

Public outrage, initiated by Ralph Nader, coupled with internal frustration over Congress's actions, led to further activism by the FTC in the late 1960s and 1970s. This renewed vigor toward consumer protection was met with challenges from the regulated industry. Questions of authority were common, with the FTC going as far as petitioning Congress to amend the FTC Act to include a specific grant of rule-making authority. This authority was granted in the Magnuson-Moss Act of 1974, and was hailed by consumer protection groups and the FTC alike.

West (1982) concluded:

In general, the FTC's case history illustrates the political costs inherent in a rulemaking approach within a conflictual environment, and suggests why other agencies may be reluctant to issue rules under analogous conditions. ... The commission's experience also suggests, albeit indirectly, that a harmonious environment and the existence of concrete goals in an agency's enabling legislation. The irony of this latter observation is that vague statutory policy makes rulemaking both more desirable from an administrative perspective and less feasible within the context of bureaucratic politics.

The Forest Service would have done well to have heeded West's (1982) observations regarding rulemaking and its political consequences.

Kaufman (1960) described the Forest Service as a decentralized agency that enabled rangers to feel as if they had a high degree of discretion at the local level.

According to Tipple and Wellman (1991:422), "In doing so, the rangers felt as though



they were exercising large amounts of discretion, yet their actions were generally pleasing to the organization. Hence a mythology of decentralization prevailed.”

Kaufman (1960:222) described this myth of discretion as voluntary conformity:

...the techniques of integration earlier identified as developing the will and the capacity to conform are positive as well as negative in effect. They do more than elicit reluctant obedience. They do more than persuade each Ranger to assign higher priorities to the wishes of the organization than to his own. They actually infuse into the forest officers the desired patterns of action in the management of their districts, so that the Rangers handle most situations precisely as their superiors would direct them to if their superiors stood looking over their shoulders, supervising every detail. To overstate the case, their decisions are predetermined. From the Rangers’ point of view, they are not obeying orders or responding to cues when they take action on their districts; they are exercising their own initiative.

This notion of voluntary conformity ensured that decisions made at the local level were consistent with views within higher levels of the organization. While autonomy has been delegated within the Forest Service, delegation of authority has also occurred from Congress to the agencies.

Hoberg (2001) noted that the agency regulations implementing the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), and promulgated under the Administrative Procedures Act (APA), were much more stringent than the original language in the NFMA. Whereas the NFMA [16 U.S.C. sec 1604(g)(3)(B)] mentions the need to provide for a diversity of plant and animal communities, the Forest Service’s regulations require that they manage to maintain ‘viable populations’ of vertebrate species. This subtle change has proven very problematic with the courts (what constitutes a viable population?), with timber management stalled in the Pacific Northwest over this clause as it pertained to spotted owls. Amendments later proposed in Congress to ensure greater consistency between the

NFMA and its regulations, with their species viability clause, were defeated by Congress (Hoberg 2001).

Another more recent example of agency discretion expressed through rule making is the new Forest Service Planning Regulations. Once again, the Forest Service has promulgated rules that go beyond the letter of the NFMA. The new Planning Regulations elevate ‘ecological sustainability’ as the Forest Service’s highest mission, yet this is not codified in law (Hoberg 2001). The GAO (2000a:6) recently reported:

Although the Forest Service’s 1999 proposed planning regulations would make ecological sustainability, rather than economic or social sustainability, the agency’s top priority, the priority assigned to ecological sustainability is not driven by the statutory authorities specific to the management of the national forests. These authorities provide little direction for the agency in resolving conflicts among competing uses on its lands. Rather, the priority assigned to ecological sustainability is predicated on the requirements in environmental laws – enacted primarily during the 1960s and 1970s – and their implementing regulations and judicial interpretations. These laws reflect changing public values and concerns about the management of the national forests as well as increased scientific understanding of the functioning of ecological components.

Whereas the GAO recognizes the role of changing values influencing environmental laws, they are silent as to the impact that changing organizational culture has had on Forest Service values. Why would Forest Service officials propose regulations deemed more conservative than the laws themselves, unless they were not exercising their own discretion within a changing culture influenced by a new identity (Simon 1997)? The increased diversity (i.e., biologists, hydrologists, etc.) in the organization, at lower and upper levels of the agency has resulted in more protections for the environment and lower levels of resource extraction as exercised through discretion. Jack Ward Thomas (1997), wildlife biologist and former Chief of the Forest Service, as cited in Sedjo (2000:177) exemplified this point in testimony before Congress:

It is not widely recognized – much less openly acknowledged – but public land managers now have one overriding objective (or constraint) for management – the preservation of biodiversity. ...The law does not clearly say [the Forest Service should manage for the preservation of biodiversity]. Nobody seems to openly recognize it. ...I don't personally have an objection to [managing for biodiversity] – if that is what society wants.

Thomas is quoted as saying that he would manage for biodiversity if society wanted it, but underneath that, he is implying that he would manage for biodiversity because it is the right thing to do from a wildlife biologist's perspective, and from a perspective of his agency that shares his professional bias.

### **Symbols as Artifacts**

One final notable expression or manifestation of organization culture that influences organizational decision making are symbols. Symbols are defined as social objects, including but not limited to language, acts, and gestures (Charon 1979). According to Charon (1979:39), "symbols are one class of social objects." For Blumer (1969:11), "...an object is anything that can be indicated or referred to." Symbols are used by people to represent different things. Symbols are conventional, meaningful, arbitrary, and are expressed as words/language, acts/gestures, and social objects (Charon 1979). Trice and Beyer (1984:655) defined symbol "as any object, act, event, quality or relation that serves as a vehicle for conveying meaning, usually by representing another thing." Ott (1989:21) further defined symbols as:

...signs that connote meanings greater than themselves and express much more than their intrinsic content. They are invested with specific subjective meanings. Symbols embody and represent wider patterns of meaning and cause people to associate conscious or unconscious ideas that in turn endow them with their deeper, fuller, and often emotion-invoking meaning.

Defining symbol as broadly as has been above allows for most any social occurrences to qualify as expressions of culture (Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo 1982). In an effort to put some boundaries on this discussion, language (expressed as mission statements), dress (Tipple and Wellman 1991), and rituals (Trice and Beyer 1984) will be used as examples that influence decision making.

## **Language**

Burke (1970) provided a taxonomy of words/language that is useful in describing how language, particularly rhetoric, influences decision making in natural resources. The 1897 Organic Act created the Forest Reserves and enunciated the mission of the Forest Service: 1) to preserve and protect the forest within the reservation; 2) to secure favorable conditions of water flows; and 3) to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of the people of the United States. Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the Forest Service was an avowed utilitarian and conservationist. Pinchot modified Jeremy Bentham's definition of utility, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong," as his philosophy/interpretation for how the forest reserves should be managed to provide "the greatest good for the greatest number in the long term." The passage of the Multiple Use Sustained-Yield Act (MUSY) in 1960 elaborated on the mission of the Forest Service by adding the management of outdoor recreation, wildlife and fish, wilderness, and grazing to their responsibilities. Pinchot's utilitarian rhetoric, which emphasized the role of science and efficiency in a rational decision making model, would set the standard for how decisions would be made regarding the management of the forest reserves up until 1973 with the passage of the

Endangered Species Act (ESA) (Hays 1959). Until the passage of the ESA, efficiency and economy were the two top priorities for the Forest Service, thus effectuating decisions that favored timber harvest and grazing over other resource uses or non-uses (wildlife, water, wilderness). Tipple and Wellman (1991:425) noted that since 1973, the values of the agency are now more reflective of responsiveness and representativeness to public and internal environmental concerns than previous values associated with efficiency and economy. This is due in part to public pressure and changing rhetoric from within the Forest Service as advocated by two previous Chiefs (biologists) who served from 1992-2001 and valued preservation of biodiversity and protection of watersheds through reclamation of roads.

## **Dress**

Kaufman (1960) described the use of uniforms and badges to heighten the sense of identification within the Forest Service. Kaufman (1960:184) stated, “The whole purpose of uniforms and badges is to identify the members of organizations, to differentiate the wearers from everyone else and to link them with each other.” Kaufman (1960) noted that not all employees viewed the importance of wearing the uniform equally; however, the use of agency symbols (uniforms) serves to promote agency awareness and ultimately identification. According to Bullis and Tompkins (1989:297), the use of symbols within the Forest Service has declined with fewer uniform allowances and less distinctive office buildings. As such, “Forest Service employees might never be identified by community members as such....” The decreased use of uniforms further weakens the agency culture, contributing to greater personal identification and less organizational identification and decisions more aligned with personal goals rather than agency goals.

## **Rituals**

Trice and Beyer (1984) presented a typology of rites (passage, degradation, enhancement, renewal, conflict reduction, and integration). Kaufman (1960) discussed techniques for integration of newcomers into the Forest Service. The Forest Service used numerous techniques or rituals to foster a strong organizational culture. An integration ritual involved use of the Forest Service Manual, which was and still serves as a guideline for performing duties. Another integration ritual was post-entry training. This training was designed to socialize employees to ensure that they would think and act like others in

the organization, in effect preforming the decision space. Movement of personnel was a renewal ritual designed to enhance agency identification, similarly to the military. Employees would ideally identify with the Service first and their unit or district secondly. Improved communication has also changed the rituals for resolving disputes. Whereas Kaufman (1960) noted that disputes (rituals of conflict reduction) were often resolved at local ranger districts with rubber stamping by higher officials, today those higher officials at the regional levels are more involved in the formation of decisions. Bullis and Tompkins (1989:294) reported, "The 'onslaught of the public' as well as better communication technology changed decision making so that the regional office and the public have more power than the ranger."

## **Conclusion**

Studies of organizational culture have evolved as both a recognition and rejection of the functionalist paradigm of science. Corporate culture studies have tended to view culture as something that an organization 'has' that can and should be managed or changed to achieve the goals of the organization. Organizational culture studies have viewed culture as something that 'is', which cannot necessarily be managed. Studies of organizational culture have become overly concerned with the implications of managing for a 'strong' corporate culture, wherein the rhetoric of teamwork and family is used in pursuit of profit to the exclusion of societal values. The same critical theorist critique has dominated the decision making literature. Theories of politics and power have been advocated as rationale for explaining human behavior and decisions instead of traditional economic theory predicated on maximization of self interest.

Regardless of one's personal paradigmatic bias, I have tried to show that organizational culture through its manifestations in artifacts (symbols, reorganizations, risk tolerance, performance appraisals, autonomy, rituals, ceremonies, language, dress), espoused values (identification), and assumptions (underlying beliefs), has directly influenced organizational behavior and decision making. The culture of an organization frames the setting for action and choice by defining appropriate behavior, limiting the range of selectable alternatives, transmitting symbols, and enforcing behavior with rewards or punishment as appropriate.

Studies of early organizational culture were decried as faddish; however, organizational culture has endured and firmly rooted itself within the discourse of organizational theory. The future of organizational cultural studies is uncertain. Whereas studies of corporate culture dominated the 1980s, critical perspectives focusing on the role of power in culture appear to have dominated the late 1990s. Even though the literature predominantly argues for an interpretive framework when studying organizational culture, interpretive studies have tended to be more conceptual than field oriented. The final section will provide some recommendations for future research in the area of organizational culture and its effects on behavior and decision making.

### **Implications for Further Research**

As was evidenced earlier in this paper, two distinct scientific paradigms dominate the organizational culture literature. Before proceeding with outlining a methodology, domain of study, or identifying a specific organization to study, one must situate himself within a scientific paradigm (Burrell and Morgan 1979; Patterson and Williams 1998).



When studying social phenomena, I am more persuaded by the usefulness of the interpretive worldview when contrasted with the functionalist paradigm for reasons previously discussed. However, within the interpretive worldview, there are numerous social science paradigms from which to choose.

## **Paradigm**

Bantz (1993) and Hatch (1997) suggested that symbolic interactionism (Mead 1934; Blumer 1969; Meltzer et al. 1975; Charon 1979; and Stryker 1980) is an appropriate paradigm from which to study organizational communication and more specifically organizational culture. According to Bantz (1993:23), "... by communicating, persons constitute symbolic realities." This notion of symbolic realities finds its origin in the premises of symbolic interactionism popularized by Herbert Blumer (1969). According to Stryker (1980), Blumer (1969:2-5), drew on the works of several authors (Dewey, Cooley, Thomas, and Mead) in laying out the three premises on which symbolic interactionism is founded: 1) human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that things have for them; 2) the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction, which *forms* conduct, that one has with one's fellows; and 3) symbolic interactionism sees meanings as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact, which is an interpretive process.

Much of the previous discussion indirectly outlines the normative commitments (ontology, epistemology, and axiology) of the symbolic interactionist paradigm. The basic ontological assumptions of symbolic interactionism are that there are multiple,

socially-constructed realities. Humans interpret the world according to social definitions (Charon 1979). Berger and Luckman (1967) (as cited in Hudson and Ozanne 1988:509) first articulated this idea and stated, “Reality is also socially constructed in that all human knowledge is developed, transmitted, and maintained in social situations.” According to Blumer (1969:12-22), “Objects have no fixed status except as their meaning is sustained through indications and definitions that people make of the objects. ...It is *impossible* to cite a *single* instance of a characterization of the “world of reality” that is not cast in the form of human imagery.” According to Peter (1992:74):

... No meaningful interpretation of that world can be made that does not involve some form of human processing, typically in the form of symbols. ...An important point of this discussion is that even for simple objects, the labels placed on them and the meanings given to them are human constructions in the form of language, mathematics, or other symbols; they are not the objects themselves.

The basic epistemological assumptions of symbolic interactionism are that the knower and the known are inseparable, truth is viewed as subjective knowledge, and the focus of research is on the acquisition of ideographic knowledge (motives, meanings, reasons, and other subjective experiences that are time and context bound) (Burrell and Morgan 1979; Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998; Hudson and Ozanne 1988:511). For the symbolic interactionist, the social world can only be understood from the point of view of the participants being studied (Burrell and Morgan 1979). Truth is considered a social construction, or a concept designed to refer to a particular belief within a specific context or setting. The idea that universal truth can be determined and understood independent of human social constructions is foreign to the symbolic interactionist. Peter (1992:75) stated, “Truth is a subjective evaluation that cannot be properly inferred outside the context provided by the theory.”

The primary goal of research or axiology for the symbolic interactionist is *understanding* the processes linked to human behavior, and not predicting it. (This is in direct contrast to critical theory with its ideological goal of uncovering the abuses of power and politics in almost any social situation.) Accordingly, interpretations are fluid and incomplete, never allowing one to achieve *the universal* understanding, but instead *an* understanding (Hudson and Ozanne 1988:510). According to Blumer (1969:21), "...[symbolic interactionism] is an approach designed to yield verifiable knowledge of human group life and human conduct." The symbolic interactionist goal of understanding is achieved through knowing culturally-shared meanings or *Verstehen* (Geertz 1973), as well as "identifying motives, dynamic uses of shared meanings, individual meanings, and interactions between shared meanings and individual meanings" Hudson and Ozanne (1988:510-511).

Stryker (1980:80) graphically depicted a notion of symbolic interactionism (Figure 5), which emphasizes the role that self, viewed from the outside (Mead 1934), plays in explaining interaction. Charon (1979:56), depicted the importance that symbols hold in producing society and the individual (Figure 6). According to Charon (1979:39), "symbols are one class of social objects." For Blumer (1969:11), "...an object is anything that can be indicated or referred to." Symbols are used by people to represent different things. Symbols are conventional, meaningful, arbitrary, and are expressed as words/language, acts/gestures, and social objects (Charon 1979). Burke (1970:14-15) provided a typology of words or realms to which words (symbols) may refer: 1) words for the natural (things); 2) words for the socio-political realm (social

relations); 3) words about words (rhetoric/ideology); and 4) words for the supernatural.

Charon (1979:55) summarized the role that symbols play in constructing social life:

Symbolic communication with each other is the basis of our socialization, which brings about a shared culture, which allows for understanding each other's acts—what we do is meaningful to each other and cooperative group life is made possible.

Burke (1966:16) also recognized the role that symbols play in defining who man is:

Man is the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal, inventor of the negative (or moralized by the negative) separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making, goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (or moved by the sense of order), and rotten with perfection.

Figure 5.

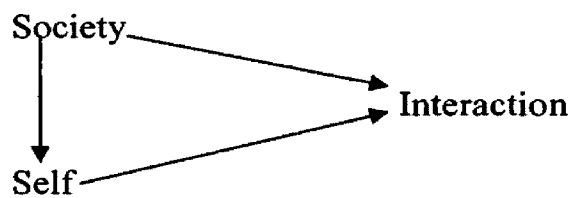
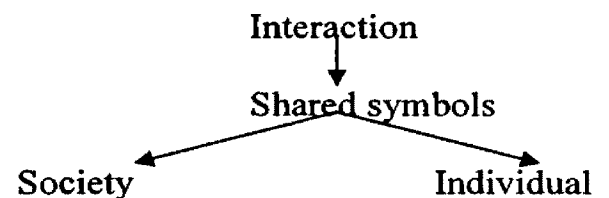


Figure 6.



### Research Program

The research program refers to the specific theories or methodologies that are utilized to study substantive issues of concern (Patterson and Williams 1998). In his description of appropriate methodological considerations, Blumer (1969:40-60) called for *direct* examination of phenomena through exploration and inspection. While Blumer fails to provide specifics for how such methods might be conducted, others (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Geertz 1973; and Strauss and Corbin 1998) have attempted to sort this out. Glaser and Strauss (1967) are best known for their development of *grounded theory* through inductive methods. Geertz (1973), in intricate detail describes the *art* of “thick

description.” Strauss and Corbin (1998), under the rubric of qualitative research attempt to provide a pragmatic framework for conducting the type of research that Blumer envisioned.

Whereas many of the interpretive organizational culture studies tend to be conceptual in nature, studies by Maynard-Moody et al. (1986) and Sackmann (1991) both employed ethnographic or qualitative methods to study organizational culture. Over a 6-month period, Maynard-Moody et al. (1986) conducted 47 interviews totaling 80 hours across all division of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). The focus of their research was to research the role of reorganization in the rise and fall of dominant subcultures. Interviews were conducted with key informants and lasted between one and two hours. Each informant was asked a standard series of open-ended questions (Table 2) to increase comparability of responses. Data gathering also included collecting memoranda, letters, documents, and reviewing annual reports dating back to the agency’s inception in 1885. Key informants included all of top management, as well as selected individuals representing all sections of the department. To increase external validity, informants were deliberately selected for their diverse viewpoints. Most of the interviews were conducted at the work site. Interviewing ended when no new perspectives were provided (i.e., saturation had been achieved). Interviews were transcribed and examined for themes, which were compared across work and subcultural groups. Member validation of themes and interpretations was used to increase internal validity.

*Table 2. Question Topics for Open-Ended Interview (Maynard-Moody et al. 1986)*

1. Background with state government and KDHE. What are your personal plans viz. KDHE? How long do you expect to work there, etc.?
2. Describe your work, what do you do, and to whom you talk and report.
3. What happened before, during, and after the reorganization?
4. Rationale(s) for the reorganization. (Probe for a variety of reasons including political, managerial, personal interest, efficiency, etc.)
5. What, who, and where was the impetus for the reorganization? (External or internal. Role of the governor and the legislature.)
6. Problems encountered during the reorganization.
7. What has changed? (Probe to get as complete a list of the changes as possible).
8. Have the rules for behavior and advancement changed with the reorganization? If friends of yours had been hired by KDHE following the 1983 reorganization, what would you have told them? If they had come to work here before the reorganization, how would your advice have differed?
9. What individuals and groups have benefited most from the reorganization? ...have been hurt the most?
10. If you wanted to describe to a friend the changes in KDHE, what events – meetings, memos, conflict, etc. – would you give as examples?
11. If you had the authority, what four policies, new or established, would you emphasize at KDHE?
12. In addition to the issue we have discussed, what do we need to find out to understand the reorganization?
13. Can you suggest other individuals with whom we should talk?
14. Are there any documents – memos, reports, etc. – that would help us to understand the reorganization?

Sackmann (1991:305) adopted a phenomenological orientation, wherein she focused on insiders' perspectives. She described the process as follows:

Rapport needs to be established initially. After a broad introduction and a triggering, open-ended question, which is used to tune the interviewee into the subject matter of exploration, the interviewer stays with the flow of the respondent during the interview. Those facets of the issue that are mentioned by respondents are explored further. This approach enables the researcher to enter and explore with the respondent his or her phenomenal world and the cognitive frameworks that come to bear, and ultimately learn the respondent's point of view. The interactive process allows the researcher to check understandings during the exploration. To ensure that the researcher understands the phenomenal world of a respondent, he or she can silently answer a posed question before the

respondent answers. The degree of accuracy of such silent answers indicates the extent to which the researcher has established an understanding.

During the course of the study, she conducted 52 interviews with organizational members – including top management – across three different divisions during four different interview stages. In an effort narrow and structure the focus of the study, the author identified a singular issue with which to guide the interviews. Consistent with the phenomenological orientation, the interview began with a broad open-ended question: “Name the three innovations at the company in the past 5 years that they considered the most important.” In addition to that open-ended question, the researcher also addressed the questions in Table 3 during the interview without disrupting the flow.

*Table 3. Questions (Sackmann 1991)*

1. Why is the mentioned innovation considered important?
2. What was the context of the particular innovation?
3. Who was involved at what time during the innovation process and how?
4. What caused the innovation?
5. Who and what aspects promoted the innovation?
6. Who and what aspects presented obstacles to the process and how?
7. What should/could have been done to improve the innovation?
8. What would you do differently in the future to make it better?

The data was analyzed using thematic content analyses. This involves identifying themes or categories from the data and interpreting meaning associated with those themes. The author used member validation techniques (discussions of interpretations with top management) coupled with simultaneous observation of behavior during interviews to validate the procedures. Reliability is difficult to ensure with qualitative methods; however, Sackmann (1991) used three different procedures to address this concern: 1) toward the end of each interview, the researcher asked a question and posed

a silent response – the interview continued until the silent response matched the verbal response indicating understanding; 2) during the analysis and interpretation stage, emerging themes were critically debated and discussed with two colleagues not directly associated with the study, yet had an understanding of cultural studies; and 3) all interview data were reanalyzed within 1 month later and no significant changes were noticed in the second analysis.

### **Methodological Strengths and Weaknesses**

Both studies (Maynard-Moody et al. 1986 and Sackmann 1991) adopted an interpretive worldview with which to study organizational culture. The strength of this perspective is that it allows the researcher to understand the social phenomenon being studied from the perspective of the informant, thus allowing the researcher to create a representation of the social event grounded within the data. This ideographic approach is considered to have high degrees of validity when techniques such as member validation are employed; however reliability or the ability to replicate the results is difficult given the subjective nature of the investigation. Sackmann (1991) addressed reliability issues in her study; however, Maynard-Moody et al. (1986) failed to address them.

A limitation of ideographic studies is that they are not readily generalizable across the population. Researchers who use these methods accept these limitations up front in their epistemological and ontological commitments, but that does not stop nomothetic researchers from reminding them of that limitation in the data. This brings up an interesting point in the study of organizational culture. Initially, it was the quantitative messengers of corporate culture (Deal and Kennedy 1982) who argued that culture was a



unitary and unique phenomena across organizations. The interpretive and critical researchers (Martin et al. 1983) countered that culture is not unique, but that all cultures share common stories or metapatterns (Adams and Ingersoll 1990; Adams 1993).

One other methodological issue has to deal with the unit of analysis. According to Hall (1987:84), “The focus on organizations as the unit of analysis falls squarely within the sociological tradition.” Accordingly, organizations are realities, actors, consequences for actions, and responders. Psychologists and those interested in studying cognitions have tended to focus on the individual as the appropriate unit of analysis. Others have taken a more pluralistic view on this subject.

Early disputes about the “proper” level of analysis – individual, organization, or some intermediate unit – have gradually given way to recognition that work at several levels of analysis is not only appropriate but necessary. The organization as a whole cannot be understood simply by reducing it into component parts and studying only groups and individuals. Still, we cannot understand organizations without also developing useful concepts about individual and group behavior in organizations. (Lawrence 1987:4)

Maynard-Moody et al. (1986) initially focused on the organization as their unit of analysis, focusing on the role that the dominant culture had on behavior. The authors then shifted their focus to exploring the role that the reorganization had on the entire group and its subsequent development of two distinct subgroups. Sackmann (1991) took a cognitive or ideational perspective was more concerned with individual perspectives on how innovation affected the behavior of the company toward employees. As I have alluded to earlier, I tend to fall more within the behavioral camp than the ideational one, so my preference for unit of analysis falls to the organization. I think Maynard-Moody’s (1986) approach of starting at the organizational level and working one’s way down to subcultures is appropriate given Lawrence’s (1987) sentiments.

## **Domain of Interest**

I am interested in understanding the role that organizational culture plays in influencing trust land management decision making in Idaho and Washington. Whereas both states have a clear fiduciary mandate to generate revenue from their lands, I posit that the dominant organizational cultures in those two organizations have influenced management actions and decisions on-the-ground in different ways. The traditional ideographic view would preclude direct comparisons between the two states; however, the enlightened view of culture, as sharing common stories, would allow for some comparisons. Adams and Ingersoll (1990) showed that the “managerial metamyth,” with its emphasis on efficiency and productivity is rampant across many cultures.

Maynard-Moody et al. (1986) and Sackmann (1991) provide good examples of how one needs to focus the emphasis of their cultural study. Both authors examined the roles of subcultures in understanding the influence on behavior and choices. Given that both the Washington Department of Natural Resources and the Idaho Department of Lands have recently experienced reorganizations (artifacts), wherein new department directors or commissioners have either been elected or appointed, I expect that organizational and professional subcultures exist in both organizations that are currently being challenged. In Washington, an eight-year Democratic reign has just been supplanted by a Republican Land Commissioner (a newcomer), whereas in Idaho, an internal candidate (Republican) was appointed by the Land Board to serve as the new Department Director.

As previously discussed under identification, it is expected that both professional and organizational subcultures exist within the agencies. Whereas the organizational subcultures may have common symbols (i.e., language of efficiency), the professional subcultures (i.e., biologists, hydrologists, foresters, range specialists, real estate marketers) might provide for fruitful comparisons and development of 'types' or themes. Maynard-Moody and Sackmann also provide excellent examples of types of questions that are open-ended and not leading. Many times it is difficult for researchers bracket their beliefs and this is reflected in leading questions. Interview questions need to provoke thought on the part of the informant, but should not lead them into identifying an *a priori* bias (i.e., power) of the researcher.

## **Conclusion**

Studies on organizational culture within the domain of natural resource management have focused exclusively on the United States Forest Service. Given the increased scrutiny of trust land management and the controversial role of a fiduciary mandate in guiding management decisions, it is high time that interpretive research is conducted regarding the impacts that organizational culture has on trust land management decision making. This research would provide novel insights to current understandings of trust land management (Souder and Fairfax 1996).

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