

AN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE
ON THE UNIVERSITY:
UNDERSTANDING HOW INDIVIDUALS CONSTITUTE ORGANIZATIONS

by

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The following individuals read and discussed the thesis submitted by student Charles Ritchie Woffinden, and they also evaluated his presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination, and that the thesis was satisfactory for a master's degree and ready for any final modifications that they explicitly required.

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DEDICATION

I would like to first dedicate this thesis to my wife Kristen, and my sons Levi and Will. Without their help and support, I would not have been able survive this program. Kristen's constant encouragement and critiques of my writing and ideas added the necessary content and polishing of this piece. Second, I would like to thank my parents, Gary and Kathy Woffinden, examples of constantly learning and doing their own thing opposite of societal "norms." Third, I would also like to thank the many others who assisted me in my mental, social, emotional, moral and spiritual development. Lastly, I would like to dedicate this thesis to those in universities across the world who make them truly magical places.

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ABSTRACT

An Organizational Communication Perspective on the University: Understanding How Individuals Constitute Organizations

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Master of Arts in Communication

Change in the university has been the topic of recent discussion in contemporary business, popular, and academic literature. This thesis uses organizational communication theory and literature to examine how communication constitutes what we know as the university. This perspective provides an analytical lens to confront the organizational questions central to contemporary ideas surrounding the university. Furthermore, it generates new ways of viewing current issues, debates, and contestation regarding its constitution. This thesis examines the role of communication as a powerful process, and the agency of each individual in creating, recreating, and transforming the university.

To understand the constitution of the university, a state university in the Pacific Northwest, which I call Metropolitan Research University (MRU), was examined. While not representative of all universities, MRU is a small sample of the discourse or the communicative constitution of the university. This study used the instruments of semi-structured interviews, field observation, and document collection to understand the constitution of MRU. Fifteen participants were interviewed for this study consisting of faculty, administration, and students. More than 100 students were observed in classrooms.

What emerged in the data pushes the understanding of the constitution of the university. It demonstrates the fluidity of organizational boundaries and exemplifies the discursive processes that constitute what people understand and interpret as the university. The university is not an object to be described and therefore its constitution cannot be understood by simply studying the participants and practices “within” the university. This fluidity of boundaries brought to the forefront the susceptibility of the university to the ideology of dominant institutions. This is significant because even though university participants demonstrated their agency “in” the university, they sometimes were not aware of how they adopted and produced practices based on contemporary ideologies. The university then should not be thought of or researched as object to be described but as a set of complex relationships of power, knowledge, and discourse produced by social groups as they struggle with one another.

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CHAPTER I—THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY

Introduction

The concept of the university shifts continuously. Recently, much discussion around what a university is emerges in contemporary business, popular, and academic literature. For example, recent discussion around organizational changes in universities include reductions in budgets and funding, the expansion of for profit and online universities, changes in the look of university campuses, amendments to the roles of faculty, staff, and students, and fluctuating curriculums and tuition (Washburn, 2005). These changes are attributed to a variety of sources including a need for greater efficiency or accountability (Gismondi, Ratkovic, & Sosteric, 1998). Gismondi et al (1998) attribute one specific source as a driver for university change: society's focus on consumerism. They argue the university is adjusting in order to serve its customers and help them remain competitive in the market (Gismondi et al, 1998). This thesis probes deeper into such claims and explores the changes in universities This chapter presents the rationale for studying the university using organizational communication theory and literature. Specifically, it explores how communication constitutes what we know as the university and how, through communication, the university is changing.

The university is an important institution in society. It has survived because it has provided people with a place to satisfy an insatiable desire to learn and provided society with advanced knowledge and skilled labor (Ross, 1976). Yet, ideas associated with what

the university is and what it should be are currently being challenged (Gismondi et al., 1998). For example, issues surrounding university education, the knowledge produced at universities, curriculum, and the roles administrators, faculty, and students fulfill are all under review (Gismondi et al., 1998). In essence, understanding what constitutes the university is under review.

While the university has been studied in many disciplines and fields, particularly education, little has come out of the field of organizational communication. Yet, organizational communication scholars can propose a theory of the university different from other disciplines specifically because they focus upon the communicative constitution of organizations (McPhee & Zaugg, 2000). The centrality of communication to the constitution of the university is a unique perspective that needs further exploration. Organizational communication research has the potential to “integrate work on the constitutive force of communication; generate new ways of traversing conventional theory-practice boundaries, and to demonstrate the larger contributions of organizational communication studies” (Kuhn & Ashcraft, 2003, p. 22). Furthermore, this perspective generates new ways of viewing current issues, debates, and contestation regarding the constitution of the university.

This study also has a practical application for those involved with the university, including students, administration, staff, and community members. Specifically, this thesis provides an understanding of communication processes as powerful organizing processes and provides a focus on the agency of each individual in creating, recreating, and transforming the university. For example, faculty, staff, administrators, students, government officials, boards of directors and community members all have roles and

participate in the university. As each fulfills a specific role, they operate on assumptions defining those roles and the purpose of the university. Such a diverse group of individuals participating with one another in differing roles, ideas, cultures and demographics creates tension. As friction or tension develops among individuals, each relies on experiences and current ideas surrounding the university and acts accordingly to re-stabilize their experience (Mumby, 1997). Such knowledge, socially constructed from previous experiences, is subject to the dominant discourses of the time (Deetz, 1992). It is important to recognize the contemporary discourses shaping the university because by identifying these influences, participants can critically examine their communicative practices and better understand their role in this process. In short, this thesis explores the assumptions held by diverse agents that influence the communication processes that constitute the university.

University Defined

To understand the concept of the university a broader question must first be examined: what constitutes any organization? Since its beginning, scholars in organization studies have sought to answer this question (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). Scholars in the field of organizational communication assert that the organization is a discursive construction because discourse is the basis upon which organizational life is built (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). As the field has developed, so have the ideas concerning the constitution of the organization. Despite the varying conceptions of how the organization emerges, there are still some generally accepted assumptions in the field.

Fairhurst and Putnam (2004) discuss three major themes or frames through which organizations have been examined:

Some researchers see an organization as an *already formed object* or entity with features and outcomes reflected in discourse. Other scholars see organizations in a constant state of *becoming* through the ways that the properties of discourse and patterns of interaction shape organizing. Still others see organizations as *grounded in action*, anchored in social practices and discursive forms. (p. 5)

The object orientation treats an organization as a container, with three-dimensional qualities, occupying a somewhat permanent space (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004, p. 9). In this view, the organization appears as objective and independent of its creators and communication is a simple act of transmission of information (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004, p. 9). Participants adjust to organizations through language use and treat organizations as objects having their own realities (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004, p. 9). According to Fairhurst and Putnam, “the organization’s ontological status is assumed, questions about its origins or maintenance are downplayed, and discourse is separate from the organization and its social context” (2004, p. 11). While many organization studies scholars use this object orientation in their work the majority of organizational communication scholars, use a “becoming” or “grounded in action” perspective.

Scholars located within the becoming orientation seek to understand how organizations form, function, and sometimes even un-organize (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004, p. 13). Rather than examining the organization as a product, researchers view it as a process. They specifically focus on the processes of organizing and how discourse maintains, develops, and transforms these processes (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004, p. 13). This orientation assumes discourse constitutes the macro and micro aspects of organization (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004, p. 13). This perspective views discourse as little

‘d’ and big ‘D.’ Little ‘d’ discourse is described as the language in use and talk interaction in specific contexts (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004, p. 7). Scholars focus on organizational discourse as participants’ converse or interact with one another and the texts created from this interaction (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004, p. 7). Big ‘D’ Discourse is described as the standardized ways cultures refer to phenomenon (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004, p. 8). These historical forms order the world in particular ways. Scholars study Discourses to uncover the power/knowledge systems and their use by actors in organizing (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004, p. 15).

The third frame describing the organization is *grounded in action*. This orientation approaches organizations as grounded or anchored at the level of social practices and discursive forms (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004, p. 17). As a result, the organization never becomes an identifiable entity, but rather exists in the practices and forms of participants (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004, p. 17). This view sees action and structure as mutually constitutive. Structure is organized from within and is central to action. As participants account for their behaviors, they objectify events, giving them factual qualities. These created-from-within worlds are organized reflexively. Fairhurst and Putnam explain this as “the unfolding details of organizing influence and are influenced by a reflexive immersion in the whole setting and ongoing stream of experience at a particular time and place” (2004, p. 16). While debate remains as to how this creates the organization, the main assumption is that it emerges at the level of social practices.

Expanding the Becoming Perspective

Organizational communication theorists posit that organizations are not systems or objects that exist prior to communication, but are dynamic processes of organizing constituted through communication (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). This perspective focuses on what the organization is in the moment. One theorist who establishes this process perspective is Karl Weick. He asserts that an organization is a dynamic process instead of a static entity (Weick, 1979). Patterns of sense-making action and communication, that are identified and retained by members, amalgamate to create a social entity called an organization (Weick, 1979). Sense-making occurs as organizational participants talk with one another and then make sense of it retrospectively. Participants then store or retain this talk as knowledge for future use. This process turn in organizational communication had far-reaching implications for organizational communication studies (McPhee & Zaug, 2000).

Another organizational communication theorist, Ruth Smith (1993), takes up this process perspective when she explains the relationship between communication and organization as the root metaphor that supports the discourse of organizational communication (as cited by MCPhee & Zaug, 2000, p. 2). Her work makes the relationship between the organization and communication a central problem to be explored by the field. Other scholars contribute to this process perspective. For example, Gilbert and Mulkey challenge the assumption that organizations can exist independent of communication (1984). Their research finds that an organization is as varied as its participants are (Gilbert & Mulkey, 1984). Hence, there is no way to produce a definitive, scientifically defensible objective account of the organization (Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, &

Robichaud, 1996). Gilbert and Mulkay posit that the organization is constructed through the interpretations of its members through ongoing negotiation and is a repository of multiple meanings (1984).

While some scholars approach the constitution issue by examining how single communication events structure organizations, others focus upon communication as the complex process through which an organization emerges. For example, some focus upon finding the underlying deep narrative structures that characterize speech acts (McPhee & Zaig, 2000). Others assert that the organization emerges as a text-mediated structure and found between the conversation and the text (Taylor et al., 1996). Still others view organizations as sites of domination and address the relationship between power and communication as the central relationship in organizations (Deetz, 1992). Each of these approaches adds value to organizational studies and provides unique ways to understand the complex relationship between communication and organizations.

As an emerging scholar, I would like to enter the discourse by identifying the assumptions of university participants as they interact, communicatively create, and recreate the university process. In order to do this, I will approach the university from an organizational communication perspective using the Becoming perspective, or more specifically a postmodern becoming orientation.

A Postmodern Perspective on the University

Postmodern organizational literature explores the changes occurring within the university process through complex relationships of power, knowledge, and discourse produced as social groups struggle with one another (Taylor, 2005, p. 113). Because the

university process is composed of many different social groups with differing relationships of power, knowledge, and discourse, struggling together, postmodern theory is appropriate.

Even though a postmodern approach in organizational communication studies is a relatively new perspective, several claims can be made regarding how the university emerges in this process view. Taylor (2005) develops five central themes or assumptions organizational communication scholars use in this perspective. First, central to organizational processes and relationships is discourse. Second, organizational cultures and identities are not holistic or unified but fragmented, full of irony, contradictions, and sites of struggle. Third, the organization is the site where power, knowledge and discourse interact through language and create identities (however fragmented) of the organization and its participants. Fourth, communication within the organization involves complex relations of power and resistance. Fifth, because communication in the organization is representational of organizational knowledge, communication should be reflexive, meaning communication influences organizational knowledge and organizational knowledge influences communication. These five assumptions illustrate the approach postmodern organizational communication researchers use to understand organizations (Taylor, 2005).

Part of understanding the constitution of the organization is to identify the conception of communication in postmodern literature. Communication research from this view focuses on the processes of how discursive struggles occur. Because there are always multiple ways for interaction or talk to occur, dominant systems of discourse and practices are susceptible to resistance from marginal groups (Mumby, 1997). Postmodern

scholars view communication not as a static idea, but as stable and unstable. In other words, communication dynamically creates what appear to be fixed discourses and shared meanings, yet communication also articulates new ways to create alternative discourse and other possibilities (Mumby, 1997, p. 16). The postmodern assumption of organizations being sites of struggle and, as Fairhurst and Putnam (2004) noted, constantly in the process of becoming, enables researchers to focus upon how individuals create and transform discourses that constitute organizations (Mumby, 1997, p. 18).

Everyday Politics in Organizations

As actors constitute the organization through communicative processes, postmodern researchers in organizational communication seek to understand the identity of individuals and the motivations that influence how an organization forms in one way rather than another. Communication is political, in the sense that individuals participate with certain motives or goals in mind (Mumby, 1997, p. 16). They perpetuate such goals through the communication process. These motives behind participation often come from larger social ideas or from other groups outside the organization in which individuals participate. Because outside forces influence participation in the organization, a large amount of communication is a struggle between differing groups forwarding their interests to “fix” problems with the organization (Mumby, 1997).

Certain groups and interests in society tend to be advantaged over others. This practice allows these groups and interests greater influence upon the perception of what are real or more legitimate than other interests (Deetz, 1992, p. 115). Perceptions of advantaged groups are taken for granted or referred to as common sense. As participants

from different groups communicate with one another, they challenge taken for granted ideas and in turn, participants defend their invested identities (Deetz, 1992, p. 116). The struggle between and among actors are the politics of everyday life.

This focus upon struggle and identity requires a conceptualization of power, knowledge, and discourse within the organization. A particularly important idea to discuss is disciplinary power. While originally developed by Foucault, Deetz recasts disciplinary power through an organizational lens. According to Deetz (1992), power is not a group of institutions or mechanisms that ensure state control of citizens (p. 252). Nor is power a general system of domination exerted by one group over another (Deetz, 1992, p. 252). Power is a process that operates constantly in the interaction of non-egalitarian and fluid relations (Deetz, 1992, p. 252). These force relations find support in one another and create both stability and fragmentation or contradictions, which isolate them from one another (Deetz, 1992, p. 253). The force relations in organizations are not independent of other institutions but embodied and entangled in state apparatuses, formulations of the law, and social hegemonies (Deetz, 1992, p. 253). In other words, power is not an all-encompassing structure that frames all social interactions but more like capillary mechanisms that pervade the social body (Mumby, 1997).

Power also constructs identity and what counts as knowledge (Mumby, 1997). There is a link between power and knowledge. Powerful groups' knowledge assumptions become "truth" in society and organizations. Researchers focus on the communicative development of truth and the links to identity, power, and knowledge (Mumby, 1997, p. 16). Because truths are political, the question becomes "whose truths" rather than "what truths" are operating in the organization. Furthermore, scholars look for the truths or

possibilities disciplined and silenced through the dominant practices and assumptions of organizational participants.

Identity and Communication

Postmodern scholars not only seek to understand other possibilities and truths but also identities. From a postmodern perspective, identities are a product of contradictory and fragmented discourses (Mumby, 1997, p. 19). This is, in part, because individuals are subjected to dominant narratives within the organization promoting certain values and truths (Taylor, 2005). As individuals in the organization interact with others, they use these narratives to understand and negotiate such interactions. The participants continually draw upon discursive practices and resources to interact with others and understand the interaction; this is part of the identification process (Taylor, 2005). Identification refers to communicative acts illustrative of one's attachment to one or more identity roles such as the role of student, professor, or administrator (Nelson & Kuhn, 2002). In this process, participants accept and reject identities and form competing interpretations. As these crystallize, they create unique identities, which are an amalgamation of multiple voices full of fragmentation (Taylor, 2005; Tracy & Tretheway, 2005). Communication in this process emerges as a means of constructing the identities of individuals by building relationships between the self and the other. As participants communicate with one another, they come to understand differences and similarities. As a result, participants identify with some identities and not with others. Through interaction, their identities develop as their conceptions are challenged and

confirmed. The individual is then both the site and subject of discursive struggle for their identity (Deetz, 1992).

The university is a site and subject of discursive struggle. It is a space where power, knowledge, and discourse interact and participants negotiate identities and mediate relationships. It is not a holistic or unified organization but fragmented, full of irony and contradiction (Taylor, 2005).

A Brief History of the University

The previous section explains postmodernism as a lens through which the manifestation of the university is approached in this paper. This section provides a “history” of the development of the university as an institution. This history examines how the university of today developed from the philosophies of the past. First, it sheds light on how its uniqueness as an institution originated from the practices and politics of various periods. Second, it illustrates how early ideas surrounding the constitution of the university continue to influence the university process. Third, it compares and contrasts historically what happens when dogmatic forces controlled the university versus when it was a space for the free flow of thought. These ideas are critical to understanding the current constitution of the university.

Early Beginnings

The university has its beginnings in Greek civilization (Beck, 1965, p. 8). Between 3000 and 1000 B.C., Neolithic culture developed into what became Greek civilization. In the latter half of the Hellenistic period, the greatest system of education

known to antiquity was established (Beck, 1965, p. 8). During this time, several philosophies of education emerged which serve as the foundation of many contemporary educational institutions. In particular, the Platonic tradition of education was established which focused on excellence in character, physique and mind; the purpose of education was to work on the betterment of self (Beck, 1965, p. 14). The Western world largely adopted Plato's idea that training in a craft or technology has no place in a liberal education but that an education should cultivate body, mind, and character (Beck, 1965, p. 14).

The political environment of the Greek era influenced educational philosophy and the concept of democracy emerged during this period. The spread of democracy meant that many more people could participate in governmental affairs (Beck, 1965, p. 10). As a result, the Sophist idea of education emerged. Sophists wanted to help students grow in "sophistication" as citizens to improve humankind (Beck, 1965, p. 12). To the ruling class, Sophistic teachers seemed little more than moneymakers who would fashion youth after their own image. They disliked young men studying to be influential and wealthy, rather than to cultivate the body, mind, and character (Beck, 1965, p. 14).

These early philosophies of education were clearly different from one another and influenced by politics, literature, economics and war. Those in the ruling class, such as Plato, focused on cultivation of mind as the purpose of education. The Sophists believed education was to learn skills or training for the purpose of influence and generating wealth or property. Over time, bits and pieces of these ideas amalgamated as educational philosophies emerged in educational practices. Educational organizations of the time began as participants gathered around competing ideas that surrounded the purpose of

education (Beck, 1965). For example, organizations emerged with curricula to represent the ideas of these educational philosophies (Beck, 1965, p. 17). The result was courses of study divided into two parts: the *quadrivium*, an elementary level of schooling composed of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music; and the *trivium*, a secondary level consisting of the study of grammar, rhetoric and logic (Beck, 1965, p. 17). These courses came from both the early educational ideas of Plato and the Sophists. Over time, these different belief systems about education merged and formed the seven liberal arts, the curriculum of Western education for a thousand years to come (Beck, 1965, p. 17).

Origins of the University

The philosophies of Plato and the Sophists influenced the development of university curriculum, but around the twelfth century, the university began to be institutionalized as part of an organized system of education. What started as small groups of students gathering around a man of learning gradually became a formal organization (Ross, 1976). During this time the *Universitas*, the whole body of masters or students, began to have something like a corporal existence, adopting customs and claiming privileges (Ross, 1976, p. 6). By 1500 A.D., there were seventy institutions of learning in Europe (Ross, 1976, p. 13). Current universities receive their heritage from these institutions.

The structure of these early institutions borrowed from dominant institutions of the day including the church, monastery, and the guild. From the church was the idea of a supranational organization; a hierarchy with a dean or chancellor; rituals such as convocation; and colorful dress in academic gowns (Ross, 1976, p. 13). From the

monastery came the idea of separateness—insulation from the practical world, a self-governing community which develops its own way of life (Ross, 1976, p. 13). From the guild came an idea of a community of individuals bound together by an oath of mutual support, elected officials, and obedience to its members (Ross, 1976, p. 13). These ideas gave the university distinctive character and structure. This conception of what the university is, or should be, was deeply rooted in academic philosophies and defended by scholars in the centuries that followed (Ross, 1976, p. 13).

As universities became more formalized and institutionalized, and their power and prestige grew, the powers of the day sought to control them to perpetuate their own ideas. For the next 350 years, universities in Europe (except Germany) were relatively unchanging in how they functioned as institutions of learning (Ross, 1976). Universities during this time were not responsive to the social and intellectual movements of the day but were encapsulated and controlled by narrow religious dogma and obsolete teaching methods (Ross, 1976, p. 15). In fact, the only major developments and transformations in higher learning in Europe during this time occurred in Germany. In the early nineteenth century, German universities flourished and developed important ideas surrounding higher education (Ross, 1976). One idea was a focus of university research and scholarship in all fields with professors conducting research with the help of students (Ross, 1976, p. 27). Another important idea was that students in German universities were able to choose programs of study and were free to move from one university to another to pursue such programs (Ross, 1976, p. 27). Unlike other universities in Europe, German professors were able to investigate and teach the results of their research without government interference (Ross, 1976, p. 27). This model of the university attracted many

academics from across the Western world in the early nineteenth century and had a profound impact on the development of Western universities (Ross, 1976, p. 28).

It is interesting to note the difference between German and other European universities. According to Ross (1976), the free flow of information in German universities was what made the major difference between a flourishing or failing university.

While Europe demonstrated a tension between a diverse and insular philosophy of education, across the Atlantic, higher education was just emerging. In 1636, Harvard was established, beginning the founding phase of United States higher education. By the time of the Civil War, there were 800 institutions of higher learning in America (Ross, 1976, p. 22). The aim of most of these institutions was to give “intellectual and moral training”; education existed to create individuals of sound character and instill virtues that would make nations strong (Ross, 1976, p. 26). Education at these institutions focused on cultivating individuals to become citizens who were loyal to the new nation (DeMille, 2000).

Competing Ideologies

The next 100 years affected the whole of society (Ross, 1976, p. 33). The Industrial Revolution began, creating new industries, communities and wealth. The small religious institutions that focused on creating a pious, righteous and educated individual could not fulfill the demands of an increasingly urban, secular and industrial society (Ross, 1976). As a result, conflicts and tensions arose concerning the purpose and forms of universities. Conflict emerged as participants negotiated these new ideas and problems

associated with industrialization. For example, new production methods during this time created a need for skilled laborers to work in factories and created a vocational emphasis on education (Ross, 1976, p. 45). Some participants within the university ignored this approach and continued with the assumption that the purpose of the university was to create well-rounded members of society or good citizens (Ross, 1976, p. 35). Others adopted job-training assumptions and taught vocational courses. As a way to negotiate the worker/citizen assumptions, Canadian institutions divided their bachelor's degree programs into general and honors (Ross, 1976, p. 42). The general degree was vocationally oriented curriculum while the honors degree reflected a liberal arts education. As industrial ideas in society began to be more prevalent, university participants negotiated its constitution.

Theories emerged to reflect the purpose of the organization. During this time, Weber's theory of bureaucracy (1924) was published and Scientific Management or Taylorism (1911) emerged (as cited by Handel, 2003). Weber described bureaucracy as a rational-legal form of authority, governed by universal rules and procedures designed to serve some grand purpose or idea (Handel, 2003). Scientific management took a similar rational approach as Taylor developed a "one best way" for a job to be performed (Handel, 2003). Workers in these approaches to the organization were examined as cogs, not individuals. The role of the worker was to follow precise instructions given by management. Scientific management and bureaucracy became dominant assumptions regarding how organizations should function and be structured (Handel, 2003).

These ideas trickled into the university through the adoption of participants. For example, many American universities shifted from liberal arts to job training education

(DeMille, 2000, p. 112). As a result, the curriculum that arose from industrialization and the need for a trained workforce approach did not focus on how to think but what to think (DeMille, 2000, p. 112). This shift in education and curriculum follows rational-empirical assumptions. Rationality discourse assumes there is one best way to approach knowledge and therefore teaching students how to think is less important than making sure their ideas fit in with the cogs of the discourse (Ross, 1976, p. 48). As society was seized with the prevailing industrial assumptions in society, the university shifted with such assumptions (Ross, 1976, p. 48).

This history shows the early beginnings and development of the university. The structures, ideas, and practices of the university emerged from other historically dominant institutions. Societies reacted in diverse ways to negotiate new challenges. Conflicting ideas of what education should be also emerged early in this history. Of the many assumptions regarding what education should focus on, most could be grouped under two approaches: vocational and liberal arts. As one approach became more dominant than the other, it influenced the constitution of the educational institutions of the time. Each time this occurred, the meaning behind education was challenged and educational organizations were reconstituted to fit such assumptions.

This re-creation process continues today. Conflicts and differing assumptions concerning what the university is and what it should be emerge in the daily educational practices of the contemporary university. Yet, what assumptions influence today's universities? How is communication a constitutive force in the contemporary university? In order to understand the forces shaping the constitution of the university and the role communication plays in this process, I propose the following research questions:

RQ1: What symbolic assumptions guide the practices of university participants and how does participants' identification with these assumptions affect participation?

RQ2: How do participants negotiate dissonant symbolic assumptions and how does this negotiation affect the constitution of the university?

Critical Theory and the Contemporary University

The university is not a stable and coherent institution, but an organization with conflicting, fragmented assumptions. As actors come together to participate in the university with diverse roles, education, and purposes, the university is constantly reconstituted. History shows how the university shifted to become a more legitimate institution to those in and outside of it. There are similar forces shaping the university today to make it more legitimate. In particular, these ideas are shaping how the university is structured, the way it functions, how it receives funding, the type of education given, its relationships to outside institutions, and reasons for participation.

The Corporate University

Corporations are participating in the university to forward their interests and ideas (Washburn, 2005). Corporate ideology promotes market driven discourse. Universities have been referred to as "billboards for corporations" (Washburn, 2005). The corporation is the dominant institution of our society, eclipsing the state, family, residential and moral community (Deetz, 2005). Corporate practices spread throughout modern life, influencing education and knowledge production (Deetz, 1992). Corporations have much to gain by perpetuating their discourse in the university process, such as having curriculum and courses to train future employees, the use of research facilities to

subsidize company research, silencing voices against corporate practices, and creating a dependency upon their organization to operate (Gismondi et al., 1998). Yet, voices in the university have cried out against corporate rhetoric (Deetz, 1992). For example, Deetz states,

The corporate world's fear of what was seen as a liberal press and antibusiness sentiment on campuses has contributed to huge expenditures on public relations, greater educational involvement, and the purchase of most mass communication capacities. None of this has been trivial, and significant shifts in institutional relations have resulted. (1992, p. 18)

Corporations benefit from the new knowledge (research) created in the education process to generate profits. Simultaneously, universities need funding to help sustain the ability to conduct new research and produce new knowledge. An example of this was the passing of the Bayh-Dole Act in the 1980's in the United States. The act allowed for universities to sell patents and products developed with federally funded research. Up until the Bayh-Dole Act, research done at public universities could not be sold to one individual or entity. Universities now had tremendous incentive to do research that could be commodified for the market. The act strengthened relationships between universities and corporations. Thus, as corporations are set up as moneymaking institutions and universities as knowledge making institutions, a relationship would benefit both organizations. Yet, this relationship is not without implications.

In market driven discourse, the university should be centered on the market. The purpose of the university is to create knowledge based on the needs of the market and train individuals to meet those needs (Deetz, 1992). In this discourse, education is a kind of job training, to prepare individuals for their life as a worker or employee. According to some, (Bousquet, 2008; Deetz, 1992; Gismondi et al., 1998; Noble, 1997; Washburn,

2005) this discourse is influencing academe's principles, spaces of public debate, teaching, and research. Examples include increased class sizes, teachers with fewer qualifications, and less student-teacher interaction (Gismondi et al., 1998). Postmodern scholars refer to this idea as *performativity* (Delucchi & Smith, 1997). It is described as “the capacity to deliver outputs as the lowest cost, [which] replaces truth as the yardstick of knowledge” (Delucchi & Smith, 1997, p. 323). In other words, efficiency and performance become the exclusive criteria for judging education and its worth in society within the university (Delucchi & Smith, 1997). Market driven discourse redefines the roles of university individuals in relation to the market. Academic positions, teaching, and research shift to fill the needs of the market. Specifically, students are referred to as consumers and education becomes “the consumption of non-threatening entertainment, which, at its best, puts pedagogical control into the hands of the students and, at its worst, demands that offensive (dare we say challenging) academic material be expurgated from the course lest it offend sensibilities” (Gismondi et al., 1998, p. 9). Students, rather than being participants in the educational process or junior colleagues, see themselves as purchasers of a product to meet their own specification (Gismondi et al., 1998). Bahruth and Lea put it this way,

Learners become consumers rather than producers of knowledge, and ‘education’ becomes little more than one more commodity to be purchased in order to gain access to material wealth and spiritual impoverishment. Anyone with ontological clarity should be able to see that this is a bad tradeoff as demonstrated by those who have benefited materially yet seem miserable and unhappy in their daily living. (2006, p.2)

What Bahruth and Lea refer to can be seen as the shift from an education full of diverse ideas to an insular, employee education. The educational system is market driven and

consumption based, and creates an “ontological death,” where one’s lifestyle becomes “think poor and live rich (materially)” (Bahruth & Lea, 2006, p.2).

Students are not alone in adopting these market driven assumptions. A cadre of “professional” professors is also becoming more common. Much like a consumer, these professionals lead intellectual lives that mimic corporate practices in establishing conferences and travels to get fame, applause, and extra finances (Jacoby, 1999, p. 120). Rather than focusing on contemporary issues, these professors spend time in administration, committee work, placing graduate students, organizing conferences, and managing journals (Jacoby, 1987, p. 149). Professionalization also spells privatization, a withdrawal from a larger public universe and academic freedom becomes nothing more than the freedom to be academic (Jacoby, 1987, p. 119).

Educational institutions are places of meaning (Deetz, 1992). Education affects how individuals perceive, think, believe and act. The meaning of education in the market driven discourse is myopic. As such, other meanings are marginalized (Bahruth, 2006). For example, the definition of success from corporate ideology is generating capital. The educational system is naturally viewed as an extension of corporate training because corporate jobs pay more than others (Deetz, 1992). To help facilitate this idea of success and train employees, corporations donate large amounts of material to schools that embrace and demonstrate a market driven emphasis (Deetz, 1992). In this way, corporate assumptions of education become legitimized. Thus, the university professes to provide an education for the “real” world; the term real meaning a corporate education. In other words, as business assumptions take hold, students, administrators, employers, parents, and so forth come to expect job training or employee based education.

If unchallenged and unchecked, corporate ideology and the consumer education it represents will significantly influence the constitution of the university in contemporary society. Recent studies have shown ties between the corporate and academic world create conflicts of interest that skew research findings, turn education into consumer products, and undermine scientific integrity (Bahruth, 2006; Bousquet, 2008; Fenwick & Zipp, 2007; Washburn, 2005). The concerns raised in this thesis are not intended to vilify one ideology but to understand how such ideologies influence the contemporary university.

To do this I advance the following research question:

RQ3: What are the dominant ideologies in the university and how do they emerge in the discursive practices of participants?

Conclusion

In the 1600s, dogmatic ideas and oppressive institutions controlled the university. The result was a 350-year period of stagnation. We can learn from history about what happens when organizations are dominated by dogma and oppression. Social ideas, institutions, and ideologies shape the constitution of the university. This study re-examines the university by using organizational communication theory and literature to develop a better understanding of the constitution of the university and the influences upon its reconstitution. Specifically, it investigates what assumptions currently emerge in the practices of university participants and how their interactions influence the constitution of the university.

In the following pages, the reader will find a discussion of research methods chapter describing the site of this study, who participated, and the instruments used to collect and analyze the data. The reader will also find results from this research that

highlights participants assumptions and the practices influencing and changing the constitution of the university. Finally, the reader will conclude with the discussion chapter, which emphasizes the implications of such changes and influences, and ways to react, re-check and challenge them.

CHAPTER II—METHODS

Introduction

This study examines a state university in the Pacific Northwest. While it is not representative of all universities, researching this university highlights key elements to aid scholars in understanding the communicative constitution of Metropolitan Research University (MRU), the assumptions influencing this process, and the material practices that create and recreate these assumptions. This chapter describes the research setting, participants involved, data collection and analysis methodology, and a summary of assumptions.

Site of Research

Metropolitan Research University (MRU) is the largest university in the state where the study was conducted, with about 19,000 students enrolled per semester. The institution was founded in 1932 as a small, church-sponsored college with four buildings. Today the campus sits on 200 acres and includes around 165 buildings. MRU has eight colleges and offers degree programs in 190 fields of interest including 96 baccalaureate programs, 73 masters programs, and four doctorate programs. It resides in the population center of the state. The campus is close to the downtown area of the state capital, a city consisting of around 200,000 people.

This site was chosen because of recent changes occurring at MRU. A strategic initiative was instated in 2005 by the administration of MRU. The vision was for MRU to become a *metropolitan research university of distinction*. An email sent out to faculty, staff, and students stated that the planning efforts for this vision were “not about changing the direction of the university, but rather recognizing that we have been constantly evolving...it[the plan] will represent shared goals and agreed upon definitions of success...and will challenge all of us to transform ourselves.”

MRU faculty, staff and students participated in focus groups and provided input to define the operational vision of a *Metropolitan Research University of Distinction*. Once this vision was defined, the planning work continued with a team of more than 40 people, including faculty, staff and administrators. This team collected data to assess the current situation, and developed goals and strategies to attain this vision. From the collected data, the team outlined the strengths and challenges of the university and identified potential opportunities. The team completed its work in April 2006 with the expectation that divisions, colleges, departments, and units would create their own action plans and projects in support of the goals and strategies of the plan.

MRU is an interesting site to understand the constitution of the university, the transformation of the university, and the influences in the environment in which the university is situated because of the changes occurring. This recent initiative from administration accentuated a specific discourse focused upon changing an organization and participants' understanding of their role within such discourse. In addition, since this is a relatively new initiative, it drew participants' attention to everyday practices within

the university and aided in participants' abilities to explain recent changes to what was previously taken for granted.

Selection of Participants

This study used purposive sampling to select participants. Purposive sampling involves selecting a sample based on the researcher's experience or knowledge of the group to be sampled (Irby & Lunenburg, 2008, p. 175). The purposive sample for this study included administrators, faculty, and students during the 2008 Spring semester at MRU. The exploration of the purposive sample allowed for a broad spectrum of individuals participating in different roles at MRU. Qualitative studies use purposive sampling because the sites chosen are critical to understanding some process or concept, or to test or elaborate theory (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 122).

Participants were selected using a purposive sampling approach known as the snowball method. This method selects a few people from the purposive sample population who can identify other people who might be a good participant for the study. The snowball method is most useful when participants are distributed or are more autonomous in an organization (Irby & Lunenburg, 2008, p. 176). The author asked his colleagues to identify faculty, staff, and students at MRU who fit the requirements of the study. Once individuals were identified, they were contacted via email, asking them to attend a brief introduction to explain the study (see Appendices). After explaining the study, a 30-60 minute interview was scheduled to ask questions (see Appendices) regarding their university experience. At the end of the interview, participants were asked to give names of other individuals who they thought might be interested in participating

(see script in Appendices). These references were contacted using the same process. Using snowball sampling allowed the researcher to interview individuals distributed across the university in various departments and positions in the university.

Participants

Participants for this study varied in their experience with MRU. Participants' experience with MRU ranged from a period of one semester to more than 30 years. Fifteen participants were interviewed for this study including faculty, administration, and students. More than 100 students were also observed in classrooms at MRU. The following sections explain each category in more detail.

Faculty

Faculty participants' experience with MRU ranged from less than two years to more than 30 years. Six faculty members in different departments were interviewed for the study. However, three of the faculty had been a dean or chair of a college in the past but their current role was professor. Professors with such a large range of university experience were chosen for several reasons. First, new faculty (one to two years) were selected to explain the role of the professor in this initiative and their beliefs regarding what participation entailed. They were hired right at the beginning of this strategic initiative so they did not have experience with MRU before the initiative. Because of this, they could provide fresh ideas as to the influences and changes occurring in the university. Professors who had been at MRU for more than five years were chosen because they identified the differences they experienced from when they first came to

MRU as compared with the present. These professors elucidated how their role had changed over time and their understanding of why the changes occurred at MRU. One faculty member who was employed for more than 30 years at MRU was selected because it was around that time, according to the literature reviewed in chapter one, in which market driven discourse began to emerge as a prominent type of discourse in the university. This person explained how the university experience had transitioned since that time. In addition, around 30 years ago MRU shifted from a college to a university. This individual was hired shortly after MRU transitioned to a university and described his experiences during that time. He also could compare what occurred during that time to the similarities and differences seen then and now.

Administration

Four individuals in administration were interviewed for this study as well as three faculty members who were recent administrators. Participants in the administrative category experience at MRU ranged from less than four years as an administrator to over ten years. However, some of the participants had been in administration at other universities for longer periods before coming to MRU.

In order to gain a better understanding of the roles of administration, participants were chosen from varying positions in the hierarchy of the university. Their roles ranged from department chair to University Provost. Selecting individuals at various levels of administration allowed for diverse perspectives of the role of an administrator and provided insight into how their roles were affected through interactions with other individuals inside and outside the university. The Provost's role at MRU was much

different from a department chair; each had publics with whom they worked.

Administrative participants that played a major role in the creation and implementation of the vision of becoming a *metropolitan research university of distinction* were also selected.

Participants who had recently left administration were chosen for their participation as both an administrator and a professor. As a participant in each, they often compared and contrasted the two roles and explained what each entailed. The information in the data from these participants provided great insight as some in the administration had little or no experience as a professor or had not been a professor for a long time.

Students

Five student participants were interviewed from differing disciplines and from each class; freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, and graduate. They were chosen because of their differing progression towards a degree at MRU. It was important that each class be represented to understand how the university experience might change during one's progression as a student. Those with little experience were chosen to discuss the taken for granted ideas of those who have been in the university for several years. Those finishing their degree were able to explain the meaning behind the university experience and capture broader ideas of the university.

Participants also ranged in their traditional status as some were married, had children, or single. While some of the student participants came directly from high school, others had returned to pursue a college education later in life. Student participants

ranged in age from 19 to over 30. This variance allowed more perspectives to be included as the roles of all students at MRU are not traditional.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

This study used the instruments of semi-structured interviews, field observation, and document compilation to collect data. The study began with gathering background information and documents to educate the author on the setting of the research and the context surrounding the changes occurring. From this information, a list of interview questions was created (see Appendices) for potential interview candidates. Potential candidates were emailed to see if they would participate in the study. Individuals who consented to participate in the study were interviewed at a time and place convenient for them. Seventeen emails were sent out, 17 participants were contacted, and 15 interviews were completed. All interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted from 30-120 minutes. Each participant was assured confidentiality and the interviews were recorded and transcribed. In addition to semi-structured interviews and document collection, observation of participants occurred in the classroom. For this study, more than 20 hours of interviews and observation occurred which generated 200 pages of data. Each instrument and its use in the study are described in detail in the following sections.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The research questions were to aid in understanding the assumptions of university participants and the meanings of practices, negotiation processes, and identification processes. The primary instrument used in this study was the semi-structured interview.

Interviews are appropriate to understand a participant's experiences and perspectives (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 173). It allows researchers to understand participants' experience in terms of context, action, and intentionality (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 173). In interviews, people often describe the reasons, excuses, or justifications for their actions. Meanings, motives, and negotiation processes emerge in interviews as participants produce explanations for their behaviors (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 173). These interpretations or accountings of behaviors identify the logic participants employ in their communicative performances (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 174). Interviews are especially apt to learn about "physically unbounded social realities," meanings, and identities that transcend the research site (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 173). Since symbolic assumptions often transcend the organization, interviews were apt to respond to the research questions.

The semi-structured approach allowed flexibility to probe for answers at a deeper level and obtain the interpretations of the individuals. Semi-structured interviews use a mix of structured and unstructured questions (Irby & Lunenburg, 2008, p. 193). The structured questions allowed the researcher to receive answers to specific questions while the unstructured questions allowed participants more freedom and creativity when responding providing insights not expected by the researcher (Irby & Lunenburg, 2008, p. 193). Interviews enabled the researcher to understand the rich reasons and meanings behind why individuals participate as they do. An in depth understanding of the individual's participation the university were necessary for the study to understand the meanings of practices, for which qualitative methods are appropriate (Irby & Lunenburg, 2008, p. 192).

There were four main themes under which all questions were categorized: Demographics, Role/Participation, Motivation/Choices, and Interpretive/Analysis. These four categories were the framework for the interview and guided the questions asked. Open-ended and probing questions were also used in the interviews. All questions focused on participation within the university and the meanings behind ideas that were generally associated with the university (see Appendices). Care was taken to avoid leading questions, particularly when using probes. Each question focused on the university and the participant's involvement in it, in an attempt to gather descriptive, open images of all aspects of the university and the interpretations of individuals' ideas surrounding its constitution.

Observation

The next instrument used to understand the constitution of the university was observation. Observation allowed the researcher to see participants act out their roles and see what participation "looks like." Observation allows researchers to be a part of the scene where participation takes place (Irby & Lunenburg, 2008, p. 144). Observation was a way for the researcher to see the tacit knowledge of participants and its use to fulfill their role(s) in the university.

For this study, the researcher observed individuals in classrooms taking a passive role and making notes in a field journal. This allowed the researcher to observe the practices of participants in the classroom and correlate such practices with data gathered in the interview process. Observation produced detailed knowledge of the scenes of the university (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 158). The observation also allowed the researcher

to identify the scene including environmental factors, artifacts, language, and ideas surrounding the university experience. It also gave the researcher the opportunity to understand the actions of participants and reflect on what it is like to be a participant (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 158). The actions of participants created the foundation upon which research claims were built (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 158).

Document Collection

In addition to interviews and observation, documents were collected at multiple locations across campus. These documents familiarized the researcher with the history of MRU and general facts about it. In addition to giving a history and general facts, documents revealed contemporary ideas and discourses emerging in the constitution of MRU. The documents were used only to familiarize the researcher with the site of research and to generate questions; their content was not included in the data analysis. These documents were collected during the 2008 Spring semester.

All of the instruments used in this study provided the means to understand the constitution of MRU. Each instrument was used for its ability to obtain information difficult to obtain by another instrument. Each was purposefully chosen for its capability to obtain specific information regarding the constitution of MRU.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with the process of open coding through which concepts were derived and developed through the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The data (interview, field observation) was initially analyzed and coded using the open coding method. The

researcher examined the interview transcripts and field notes line-by-line and marked chunks of data that suggested a category (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 219). Once coded, the researcher used an analytic process of comparing different pieces of data for similarities and differences known as *constant comparison* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Using this method, each code in the data was compared with other codes for similarities and differences (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 73). Incidents found to be similar were categorized and grouped together under a theme or a code. A *category* is a term covering an assortment of general phenomena including concepts, constructs and themes while *codes* are the links between the data and the categories (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Data was examined according to these differences and similarities from which the categories emerged.

The literature reviewed and research questions posited were used as investigation tools to look for clues to meaning in the data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 214). The data was initially separated into four groups from faculty, administration, students, and field notes. It was then analyzed for themes in the group before comparing the information to that of the other groups. For example, all of the data from the field notes was coded and categories were developed based solely on that data. Once those categories were developed, the data was then compared across the other groups to see if the categories developed were similar to those found in other groups. This process allowed the researcher to keep the data obtained from different participant roles and methods separate and to look for similarities and differences among individual groups before looking for similarities and differences among all participants. The research questions posited aided in focusing the researcher's attention upon specific elements in the data and in making

connections between the data categories and theory. In addition, new ideas and connections emerged in the data that clarified phenomena and identified theoretical and practical applications.

Summary

The research site of MRU provided access for studying and analyzing the experiences of individuals within the university using qualitative methods. All participants had different amounts of experience, roles, and background in the university. Using qualitative methods (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) and grounded theory analysis methods (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) the researcher explored the constitution of the contemporary university and the influences upon its constitution through the eyes of participants.

CHAPTER III—RESULTS

Introduction

The following chapter describes the codes identified during the analysis of data. An overarching interest in the communicative constitution of the university guided this study. In order to address this interest, the following investigative research questions were used and served as a guide for interpreting the data:

RQ1: What symbolic assumptions guide the practices of university participants and how does participants' identification with these assumptions affect participation?

RQ2: How do participants negotiate dissonant symbolic assumptions and how does this negotiation affect the constitution of the university?

RQ3: What are the dominant ideologies in the university and how do they emerge in the discursive practices of participants?

The following section explores the data as it answers the research questions and addresses the overarching interest of this thesis.

Research Question One

Research question one asks, *what symbolic assumptions guide the practices of university participants and how does participant identification with these assumptions affect participation?* The purpose of this question is not to identify an overarching ideology but simply identify and understand the various symbolic assumptions of participants and their practices. This is a two-part question. The first part focuses on

understanding what symbolic assumptions emerge at MRU and how these guide participants' practices. The second part of the question examines how participants demonstrate their identification with these symbolic meanings through their participation at MRU. To respond to each part of the question the researcher focused on the practices of university participants because they are tangible representations of symbolic assumptions. What emerged in the data are two practices labeled *name calling* and *roleplaying*. Each of these practices embodies deeply held assumptions. Furthermore, the findings highlight that as participants performed these practices, they illustrated a division process through which individuals reflexively interpret and identify their actions and the actions of others as symbolizing the right or wrong way to act.

In the name calling section this process is evident as participants claim "I am this" or "I represent this meaning" (because their interpretation of the meaning of this practice is right), but "I am not that" (because that practice symbolizes/represents the wrong way to act). Whereas the practice of roleplaying highlights how participants dually identify in that participants simultaneously identify with symbolic meanings for practices that both represent the right and wrong way to act. The findings highlight that this contradiction in their identification process ontologizes both the subject and the object. In other words, as participants ontologize the subject (themselves) and object (the other) they become both. Although I have named these practices here, in the sections below, I will explicate these practices and discuss what symbolic assumptions they represent for participants.

Name Calling

Faculty, staff, and administration all engage in assigning names to one another as way to assign meaning to others and interpret different patterned practices or roles in a group. This practice of naming reveals ways in which different groups looked at the roles of others and themselves. Participants use names as a means of defining boundaries or differences between themselves and others. An example of using names to assign meaning to others is a faculty member labeling those in administration as management.

The participant stated:

Even though everybody in administration has Ph.D.s and they're academics like I am, they're not. They're administrators and they're there to get more out of me for less. Just like management wants to get more out of labor for less. So its [interaction] becoming more of a confrontational conflictive nature.

The participant names both academics and administration, but the act of naming both academic and administration is a symbolic practice that says administration is an "other". Although the administration may have a Ph.D. and are academics like the faculty member, according to the participant administrators really just want to exploit him. Even though many administrative individuals have gone through the same practices to obtain the same kind of degree (Ph.D.) and title (academic) as he has, the participant makes clear that they are very different from him. In this case, naming administration is name calling in the sense that in assigning a name, the participant also assigns a symbolic meaning for exploitation. Those in administration are not academics because they do not subscribe to his deeply held assumption that to be an academic does not embrace exploitation of workers. Administration's assumptions and practices are wrong because they believe the university should run like a business. Thus administrators begin to act like exploiting factory managers instead of academics.

In this next statement, the individual explained more about what it means to be an academic. The faculty participant stated:

I went out on the job market in the private sector and got an offer and people here at MRU promised to give me a raise if I didn't leave. So I turned down the job offer and didn't get the raise. That's probably when I started to say they're [administration] the enemy....before that I taught extra classes for free because students needed them, they needed a class offered that hadn't been offered in a while and I'd pick it up and teach it

This statement unpacks more of the meaning behind the name academic. The participant assumed being an academic means being honest and trustworthy; academics will stay true to their word. Furthermore, to be an academic means loyalty to other university participants (faculty and students) and the university. There is an assumption that to be a faculty member is to be a part of a community. Until being betrayed by administration, this faculty member assumed the university operated under a communal belief system in which faculty taught classes out of a need, to make the university a better place, almost like a family. As administration betrayed this participant's assumptions they became more than exploiting factory managers, they became the other. Administrators became *something* to oppose, a named entity, because they threatened these deeply held beliefs of a familial university.

Another instance of this name calling occurred when a former administrator experienced difficulty when attempting to describe students in his interview. He stated:

Are our students clients or are they customers? Or who are they? And we have wrestled with that issue and I would always say when it comes to things like financial aid or registration or any of those things, we should treat students like customers or consumers....But on the other hand, does that mean students get to dictate what goes on in the classroom? And there's the rub. Because we have hired faculty with kind of the implied understanding that you're the subject matter expert and you also know the best way to deliver and so students should not dictate the terms of the classroom. It's kind of like letting the inmates run the asylum.

Name calling emerges in this quote as the individual tried to describe who or what students are as a way of capturing what this ‘other’ group represents. Yet he was unable to apply a single meaning to students, which created confusion as to interpret students and therefore interact with them in the “right” way. Trying to apply multiple names to students, each name with its own symbolic meaning, created confusion for this participant because he did not know which assumptions should be followed.

Instead of calling students one name, the interviewee above provided four other names for students: clients, customers, consumers, and inmates. Client, customer, and consumer all signify that students can purchase a product (i.e. a degree). This also assumes that the more one might pay, the better the product. Furthermore, naming students in this way also signifies a level of control for students to direct or dictate what product they would like to consume or purchase. However, this participant then stated that this way of naming the identity of students is problematic because of the assumption that faculty are the experts in the material that students consume. The participant highlighted the implications of naming others in that to interpret students as consumers with the agency to dictate what product they wish to consume contradicts the faculty’s interpretation of themselves as experts there to teach and choose relevant material. The participant then stated that if university participants assume students to be in control of dictating what they consume, the inmates control the asylum. In essence, this participant attempts to explicate his assumption about control, specifically who is in control of knowledge production and consumption. The participant grapples with how to provide a name to a group that captures the control and drive students’ need to learn yet does not overtake what control the experts have over what to teach and how to teach it.

This participant's confusion highlights how complex the naming process is. This participant's statement also highlights that the act of naming is a symbolic act in that simply applying a single name does not capture the potential for many meanings for a group. Other types of name calling in the data referring to students include a necessary evil, raw material, kids, victims of the university, an ass warming a chair, and products of the university. Faculty were labeled as intellectual capital, assembly line workers, and things to be managed. Administrators were referred to as the enemy, people to give you pencils and pencil sharpeners, and shortsighted managers. These findings indicate that the practice of name calling is a symbolic practice that creates a subject/object relationship (I am this/I am not that) and highlights the meanings for what the subject is (a loyal faculty) and what the other is (an exploiting administrator).

Roleplaying

The previous section responded to the first half of the research question, *what symbolic assumptions guide the practices of university participants?* The name calling practice demonstrates how participants named "others" in order to both assign meaning to their experiences and to identify themselves (as right) and others (as wrong). These meaning assignments create symbolic divisions between groups. In addition, these assumptions guide the practices of participants. This roleplaying section explicitly responds to the second half of the research question one, *how does participant identification with these symbolic assumptions affect participation?* Participant observation uncovers that roleplaying practices were performances through which

participants illustrate the symbolic meanings they assumed were the “right” way to participate if from a particular group.

In one particular example, the professor of a class asked students to literally play the role of the other. In these performances, professor and students both played their role and demonstrated what they assumed the role of the other should be.

The professor states, ‘Today we have a presentation’ and sits down. Meanwhile two students, which I will call “C” and “B”, walk to the front of the room. The two students introduce the poem they are to present and give a brief history of the poem and its author. The two students switch off reading the poem. During this time, the others in the class are following along in their textbooks. Once finished reading the poem, student C asks, ‘Are there any vocabulary questions?’ No one responds so student B analyzes the structure of the poem. When B finishes analyzing her part of the poem, student C talks about the content of the poem and her interpretation as to what it means. Students C and B each take turns discussing different parts of the poem until they have covered all of it.

A student in the class talks to B and C about her interpretation of the poem. Student C disagrees with this student’s interpretation. Other students begin offering their own interpretations of the meaning of the poem. This discussion continues until the teacher congratulates those giving the presentation with ‘good job’ and the class claps as the presenters sit down.

In this example, participants fulfill dual roles as they go through the roleplaying process.

The presenting students played the role of professor teaching the class about material relevant to the course. However, the reason for doing this was it was an assignment from the professor, so they were still fulfilling the student role while acting as a professor.

Simultaneously, the professor played both student and professor, sitting in the class and listening as well as dictating participation to those students in the class who were not presenting. The professor required the students who were not presenting to ask questions to those who were.

Despite the overt roleplaying, more subtle roleplaying also emerges in the above observation. The students in the class were to act as students by sitting facing the front,

following the directions of the professor, having completed the reading and homework, and so forth. To be a student is to play a particular role in the presence of others. During the presentation, the professor reinforced the correct way to “act” out the role of the student also by sitting and facing the front, listening, etc. However, at the end of the presentation the professor broke from his student role stating “good job”, signaling that the roleplaying session was over, causing everyone else to go back to “normal.”

Roleplaying is an action that makes manifest assumptions about the right way to be a particular kind of person in a particular kind of group. For example, the students who gave the presentation were able to demonstrate what being a teacher should look like in practice. During the presentation, the teacher demonstrated what being a student should look like. Specifically, the actions of the presenting students demonstrated the assumptions of what being a teacher means and enacted them in specific practices including being in front of the class, reading material from a textbook, asking questions to others, being the expert in the room, and expressing ideas about the material. These actions demonstrate the assumption that to be a teacher is to be not only in control of knowledge, but to dictate the focus of students. Roleplaying also provided an opportunity for the professor to show students what being a student should look like in practice. During the presentation, the professor sat quietly, listened intently, and faced those presenting. The professor demonstrates the assumption of student passivity—a student should sit quietly, listen, and pay attention to the teacher unless directed to present in front of the class. In essence, students will obey. In addition, the students watching the presentation are also showing their peer teachers and professor what being a student

looks like as they sit quietly, following along in their books while the student presenters read the poem.

It should also be noted that roleplaying is an *interaction* that requires the interpretation of others who subtly agree that one is playing the role in the right way. There is no name calling here, students and professor “act” their performances in normed ways not only for themselves, but also explicitly for the benefit of the others in the room. Their actions demonstrate with what group they belong even when pretending to be of another group. To extend this idea, the roleplaying findings highlight symbolic assumptions of control and passivity manifest in the normal interactions of participants. To act as a professor represents a person with authority and power—an individual to emulate, not resist. This was seen as student participants followed the teaching methods described by the professor. By respecting and not resisting authority, students were rewarded verbally with a “good job” and eventually through the grading of their performances. The uniform actions of the students in the audience (listening, talking only when solicited to talk, and not resisting or opposing authority) demonstrates that uniformity in behavior and participation was valued. Order, control, submission, and authority emerge in these subtle interactions.

Roleplaying and name calling illustrate the actions through which participants express, interpret, and reproduce their symbolic assumptions regarding how they and others should participate in the university.

Research Question Two

Research question two asks *how participants negotiate dissonant symbolic assumptions and how this negotiation affects the constitution of the organization*. Again, this is a two-part question. The first portion of the question investigates what dissonant symbolic assumptions emerged in the negotiation of participants. The second portion of the question focuses upon how this negotiation affects the creation and recreation of MRU. The previous sections identify the symbolic assumptions of participants as they emerged in practices like name calling and roleplaying at the university. As demonstrated above, individuals interpreted and ontologized roles and groups and in doing so, both made sense of their own and others' university experience. However, in naming others and playing roles, the symbolic meanings are not unitary, but rather complicated and at times contradictory. Recall the faculty member who stated, "Are our students clients or are they customers? Or who are they?" In his account, he tries to make sense of when students should be treated as a customer and when (as in the classroom) a customer approach would be a disaster. Name calling and the role students are "supposed" to play becomes complicated, which in turn complicates how he, the faculty member, should interact with this group. The findings that respond to this research question explore how participants negotiated complicated interpretations of the actions and roles of other groups on campus. The data findings highlight two communication processes through which participants negotiated complicated interpretations of others: Prioritization and Objectification.

Prioritization

One way participants negotiate different symbolic meanings involved privileging one symbolic assumption over another. Participants' interviews demonstrate that there was a conscious awareness of the contradictions in their interpretations of others. It was this recognition that led to a verbal prioritization of the different interpretations of the self as a participant at the university. For example, a student participant stated:

Aside from the main point of getting a degree, so I can get a job. It's all about the paper, but I mean it is, but it's not that paper on the wall...I think the way they teach you, they hone your mind to be able to think logically.

In the above statement, the student prioritizes the main point of getting a degree for himself: "so I can get a job." He then demonstrates a prioritization when he stated "aside" from this main point, a secondary focus involves "hon[ing] your mind to be able to think logically." The participant verbally negotiates different interpretations of the purpose of a university education for individual students. Using the terms "aside" from the "main point" the participant demonstrates his primary interpretation of an education, to become employable. When he stated, "I mean it is, but it's not" about getting the paper, the act of negotiating and prioritizing becomes clear. This individual consciously and dynamically negotiates and prioritizes the meanings for or the purpose of pursuing a university education. Statements like this from participants demonstrate multiple meanings and reasons behind participation at MRU. Yet, symbolic assumptions regarding the purpose of an education would not need to be prioritized if they were not somehow dissonant from one another. As this participant prioritizes a vocational education, he minimizes an education that focuses upon teaching a student how to think in a diversity of ways in any

context. Thus, prioritizing assumptions become a means for participants to negotiate their identification with different ideals regarding education.

Interestingly, a relationship between the findings from research questions one and two emerges here. Specifically, the act of name calling and roleplaying makes manifest the different interpretations of self and other, whereas prioritization emerges as the communication processes through which participants negotiate and make sense of the complexity of these different interpretations of self. Below, objectification emerges as the communication process through which participants negotiate and make sense of the complexity of the different interpretations of the other.

Objectification

While the communication process of prioritization is a means through which participants negotiate different interpretations for the self or the individual, objectification is the communication process through which participants negotiate different interpretations for the other. Participants not only negotiated and ordered their differing interpretations, but they also negotiated and objectified the interpretation of others as morally right or wrong. The objectification of others or the marginalization of ideas was a prominent means of negotiating by administration, faculty, and students.

For example, one participant discussed the transition of MRU from a community college to a university. He related, “In my point of view, I came to a changing institution and it was one in which the culture was split between new faculty and then the faculty that was already here.” This participant discusses a kind of demarcation between new and old faculty. This demarcation and objectification of old guard and new guard also

emerges amongst participants in the administration. For example, a participant who had recently left administration related this experience:

The administration kept wanting us to add more courses and I fought with some about it but then I decided to covertly control the enrollment by the size of the classrooms I put a faculty in... we developed a division mission standard....I had a dean that told me I couldn't do it and I said, 'Well, I've done it with enrollment management. We got an upper division mission standards approved...' And he said, 'You can't do that.' I said, 'I can, I've got a new curriculum and you signed it so it's already been done.' He just wasn't paying attention when he signed it but he signed off on it....I didn't give a shit about the administration, whether they liked me. I was trying to do the best for the students and for the agencies that wanted to hire students. And so I felt that was my job. So I interpreted my job differently than most people did.

Interestingly, as the participant negotiates and prioritizes his interpretations for his role as faculty, he also objectifies the other, "*the* administration." In this process of objectification, the participant negotiates *the meanings* for himself and the other, but objectification then results in a *practice* of resistance or non-negotiation at MRU between "other" groups. When this individual initially confronted his superiors in administration and they disagreed with his ideas, he decided to do what he wanted anyway, to first covertly resist and then tell his supervisor how he did it. He prioritizes his meanings in that he dis-identifies with administration's desire to increase the course load and enrollment size because to him it represents both control and a reduced quality of education. He believes his interpretation of fulfilling his job as an educator is right because smaller class sizes symbolize a better education and the others were wrong and not in control of his actions. Therefore, he was not concerned about administration because he had the correct understanding of his job, which took precedence over the interpretation of his superiors. This statement demonstrates that he identified with protecting the learning environment from erosion due to larger class sizes and

overworked professors. He then objectified the administration position of wanting to produce more graduates more efficiently as wrong and covertly resisted this.

This objectification of others becomes a form of meaning negotiation that can result in a practice of non-negotiation and resistance. While the findings make clear that objectification occurs frequently at the university, *how* it happens as a communicative process also emerges in the findings. Objectification discourse in participant accounts highlighted a means of negotiating multiple assumptions. Objectification allows one to place meanings above the individual. By abstracting ambiguous meanings, the meanings become important evaluative standards that guide behavior. In this process, the individual becomes less important than a grand narrative or idea. Objectification creates a division or barrier between participants, or an “us” and “them” attitude. This symbolic barrier allows individuals to view others as less important or different and therefore easier to treat objectively. For example, a university participant related an experience in which her supervisor told her to implement a program. She responded to this request with, “I don’t think this should be an institutional priority.” To which his response was, “So what? It’s what the president wants, and that’s what I think is going to improve campus life.” This short dialogue demonstrates how prioritization of meanings and objectification of the other result in non-negotiation practices between groups at MRU. In other words, while participants internally negotiated meanings by prioritizing some meanings over others, in interaction the meanings they prioritize result in non-negotiation practices. As the university participant explains her assumptions of what should not be a priority her supervisor does not acknowledge her but uses the MRU President as backing to de-legitimize her ideas. She is not viewed by her supervisor as a person or an agent with

whom to negotiate. Rather the taken-for-granted interpretation of the authority of the president's desires become more meaningful and powerful resulting in the assumption that this employee is but a cog in the machine that must do what it is told. As this dialogue occurred, both the employee and supervisor's assumptions of authority and control were objectified and the meaning of authority legitimized the action of following orders. The meaning becomes more important than the agency of the organizational participants.

Ironically, prioritization and objectification created a culture of non-negotiation and resistance in the *practices* of members, but also created a culture of acceptance of grand narratives of authority and control that were not resisted. This contradiction highlighted a fundamental tension at MRU that needed more exploration. The findings from research question three help to deconstruct the contradictions and tensions at MRU.

Research Question Three

While research questions one and two focused on the symbolic assumptions participants exemplified in their accounts and practices, research question three asks, *what are the dominant ideologies in the university and how do they emerge in the discursive practices of participants?* This question focuses on how the various symbolic assumptions that emerge from questions one and two constituted ideologies operating at MRU. By focusing on *dominant* ideologies that emerge in the observable discursive practices of MRU participants, it becomes possible to explore the contradictions raised by questions one and two.

The transformation occurring at MRU became a central theme in participants' accounts of their experiences at MRU. In these accounts, participants described external and internal material pressures influencing the transformation of MRU as an institution. As participants discussed these pressures, their discourses illustrate similarities and differences between symbolic assumptions that, when combined, demonstrate two emergent ideologies at MRU: The Money Machine Ideology and The Citizenry Ideology. Below, the findings demonstrate how, through discourse about two change agents, symbolic assumptions constituted two different ideologies at MRU. Furthermore, these discourses also demonstrate that while both ideologies are reproduced by participants, the Money Machine ideology has become a powerful, seemingly unitary grand narrative at MRU.

As noted in chapter one, in 2005 MRU launched a strategic initiative with a vision that aimed not to change the direction of MRU but to recognize the evolution of the university that would challenge all of us to transform ourselves. Based on the findings, this was not only a challenge of transformation of purpose and focus, but also a challenge that shook up many taken for granted ideological assumptions. Change became the impetus for negotiating the taken for granted symbolic assumptions. Discussions of change by participants demonstrated a struggle for one ideological position over another. While interviewing participants, the researcher asked about the changes they had seen and then asked them to discuss the reasons for such changes. Specifically, the researcher wanted to know what participants noticed "evolving," how participants had been "challenged," and what kind of "transforming" had occurred. The accounts participants

provided about change highlight how they interpret the different ideologies at MRU. The researcher found there are two central change agents at MRU: growth and funding.

Growth and Funding

According to participants, one reason for the changes at MRU was the population increase in the geographical area surrounding MRU. MRU is located in the population center of the state. The population of this area has doubled in the past 30 years. This increase in population changed the needs of the community. The needs of the community and businesses were identified as an influence on MRU programs and curriculum at MRU. As an administrative participant stated:

But often times you have external pressures, you know that may come from the legislature, that may come from regional planners. MRU is trying to get through a masters of arts and regional planning which clearly makes a lot of sense. Well part of the pressure there is coming from local mayors, from downtown city government. In some instances like engineering, it might be a [corporate entity] that's saying, 'look you know it would be really valuable if you had a program in such and such, or our people could take, or we could just hire your people.' So that's one of the drivers.

This statement demonstrates that there are external pressures influencing which community needs the university should serve. Specifically, the meaning of community and those in it whose needs should be served are those of businesses. An administrative participant stated:

If we look at the kinds of new programs that we've started, they're really all geared around things that have a direct impact to the economy and well-being of [the state (changed for confidentiality)]. As opposed to that sort of ivory tower view that lots of institutions had in the past....Institutions of higher education are in competition, not necessarily with each other, but in competition to prove their value to lots of folks. So the competitive nature of things and the entrepreneurial nature of things is the times we live in. And therefore, you see lots of universities transforming themselves.

The new programs and curriculum at MRU focus on the economical needs of the local community. The economy emerges as a reason for and driver of the transformation of MRU. In addition, MRU is transforming to be competitive and prove itself. Along with competition, MRU is also shifting to be more entrepreneurial and respond to contemporary community issues.

These shifts represent certain assumptions of what the university should be. The overall idea of the statement is the university should be more responsive to the community needs. However, the language used and reasons behind this transformation favor economical and business oriented assumptions. The statement made by the participant reflects a kind of corporate university or university that focuses on meeting the needs of the economy, meeting the needs of those who want to participate (like customers), and meeting the needs of businesses by providing them with competitive products. Thus, the impetus for the transformation of the university is the response to the material, monetary needs of the local business community.

Participants interpreted growth as a response to the material, monetary needs in the business community, but they also interpreted growth as a material, or tangible increase in enrollment. Enrollment in 1979 was 10,000 at MRU. The 2008 Spring semester enrollment was more than 19,000 students. A participant discussed how this growth has changed MRU. He stated:

The university has become more bureaucratic, dramatically so....the University is in the process of becoming a bureaucratic organization that's run by forms and requisitions and formal rules, as opposed to the informal. Even when I got here, [University President] had been here as long as forever and now since I've been here, we're on our third president. They come, they stay five years and then they leave. And it becomes sort of a business.

According to this participant, the growth of participants resulted in a more bureaucratic organization in which formal rules organize people instead of informal policies. This material change thus resulted in the university becoming more of a business. But more of a business as compared to what?

In the participant's statement he identifies a change in not only the way the university is run, but a change in participation. The meaning behind how a university should be run began as an informal, familial kind of organization and shifted to a bureaucratic, business-like institution. The participant identifies how the President in the familial model was in his role "forever" but now the president only participates for a few years and then leaves. Issues of loyalty (how long one stays at the university) and informality are challenged as a bureaucratic structure and business-like participation are becoming more prevalent.

A third dimension of growth involves the response and interpretation of faculty to their role as a part of MRU as a business. A faculty participant stated:

As the university pushes for more and more research, which takes time, and there's only so many hours in the day and there's only so much mental energy one could muster, so where are you going to put your energy? It used to be you were devoted exclusively, almost exclusively, to students and teaching and now it's being more and more split.

This shift transforms the make up of time management between teaching and research. Now participation as a faculty means spending more time with research or at least an increase in expectation for faculty to do research. However, participants were clear to note that growing into a research institution was less about the knowledge that derives from research and more about the funding faculty could bring to MRU. It is not simply

that faculty need to find more time to do research, but that faculty should find the money to do the research. For example a faculty member stated:

I think economically there are reasons—being able to bring in more resources, external resources, to the university. Status wise, moving from a teaching to research is a huge jump in status. Last, a lot of expansion of other fronts.

According to this faculty member, economics, prestige, and expansion were the material changes brought on by growth.

According to participants, funding ultimately brings prestige and legitimacy to not only MRU, but also certain colleges at MRU. MRU is a public university. As a result, much of the funding for the institution comes from state appropriations. However, these appropriations are not enough to meet the needs of the growing university. A faculty member stated, "...departments basically close down over the summer... whether it's student services or the library or you name it, we're terribly impacted by the lack of funding from the state legislature." Participants discussed how MRU had funding issues and several things that occurred in order to make up for those problems. A few ways to deal with the funding issues mentioned in the data were to increase the tuition of students, have less qualified individuals (i.e. adjuncts) teach classes, and increase class sizes. Participants explained that the reason behind becoming a research institution was primarily financial. An administrative participant stated:

There are certain programs and units, departments on campuses that I think can more quickly raise the esteem and prestige of the university as well as turn around and raise more money. Those are big money things. You build the buildings for the scientists to do the research, you get the equipment, the scientists in turn get that 3 million dollar grant from whatever association or whatever group and that money comes back to the university.... I'd like to think that's the vision that its easier to take the high money programs and develop them, build them first to raise the prestige of the school.

According to this participant, the way to fix the money issues at MRU would be to build research facilities for scientists and develop high money programs first. Research brings money, prestige, and esteem to the university. The idea of growing the programs and units that are going to raise immediate capital, influences the colleges and departments grown at MRU. The departments that should be grown were identified by the participant:

Pour money into the sciences because the sciences will more quickly give money back because they raise grants, they get fellowships, I mean that's the way it is, I don't want to say a money machine but the humanities don't really pay things back too quickly.

The interpretation of how the university should be grown is identified; those parts that raise money. The departments that create a quick return on investment are the sciences. Humanities programs are not developed until after the sciences because they are not a money machine. According to this interpretation, the university should focus its efforts on generating capital. The type of research and projects that should be done are those that will give a big, quick return on investment. For example, an administrator stated:

Well, we've got to be strategic partners with business and industry in order for them to see us as being value added to what they are doing....If for nothing else, they're able to identify what the issues and problems are so they're able to say 'we've got a problem in the movement of materials and it's costing our industry a lot of money'....we're better off working together on mutually agreeable issues and working on them together so that we're not then delivering a solution that's just ours but a collective solution.

Those who can pay for such types of research projects are businesses. Thus, the university needs to collaborate with businesses in order to fix the money issues in the university *and* see how the university adds value to what businesses are doing. The university becomes a money machine, an organization that focuses on money creation or generating capital.

Yet, not all participants shared this money machine assumption. There were concerns by some that such a partnership of business and the university may be problematic.

Another faculty participant contended:

There's a trend, a move towards seeking private funding for various aspects of universities....that sort of move again is, on a gut level, is worrisome because I don't want some CEO deciding what gets taught because they've paid for something or what sort of research is performed because they've funded it. Again, it comes down to that's what undermines the whole notion of academic freedom at the university, the pursuit of knowledge without any barriers, artificially imposed barriers.

This statement demonstrates a different interpretation surrounding the purpose of conducting research and the purpose of the university as an institution. This participant worries a corporate funding relationship between the university and businesses may create artificially imposed barriers surrounding the kind of research and knowledge pursued at MRU. Those who are funding the university may dictate curriculum or programs and the types of knowledge developed. This is troublesome to the participant because it undermines the idea of academic freedom, or the ability to pursue knowledge without others dictating what you pursue. In this interpretation, those in the university should be allowed to research and teach ideas that do not generate quick returns or skills to help individuals generate capital.

By highlighting the discourses surrounding the pressures for change at MRU the interpretations of these changes began to coalesce into two emergent, yet seemingly contradictory ideologies at MRU. In other words, as participants explained what the university should and should not be, they highlighted which interpretations of change were the correct interpretations for change and which were not.

Research question three guided the interpretation of data in that while research questions one and two highlighted that as participants negotiated the meanings for the self and others at MRU, their practices of non-negotiation highlighted resistance to the interpretations of ‘others.’ Research question three highlights the two ideologies in tension with one another. Some participants interpreted material pressures as ontological forces that rendered participants at MRU as passive respondents to change. Other participants believed that MRU had a symbolic purpose, an intangible focus that required all participants to be active agents in creating their own knowledge at MRU. Ultimately, participants interpreted changes at MRU as a fight for the right way for the university to be run.

Money Machine Ideology

Research question three asks, *what are the dominant ideologies in the university and how do they emerge in the discursive practices of participants?* The accounts above described the interpretations of what changes the university is experiencing and why these changes are occurring. In those comments, it also became apparent which interpretations were understood as more correct. Moreover, as participants described their interpretations of change, these interpretations began to take shape as a dominant ideology, or the “money machine” ideology.

In this money machine ideology, the main purpose of the university is to produce money driven knowledge (knowledge whose focus is to generate capital) and individuals with skills relevant to making money. The university should focus on the economy, be a money machine, become more competitive, be strategic partners with business, and be

entrepreneurial. These ideas are all part of the larger corporate ideology. The focus on the external and internal pressures discussed by participants illustrated interpretations that represent this ideology. Two particular assumptions emerged as part of this money machine ideology: the university should become an extension of the market and the university should produce one kind of knowledge—technical skills in order to aid individuals in easily assimilating in the job market.

In the discourse about growth, participants not only assumed the university should have a relationship with business, but they also assumed this relationship meant they were a business or an extension of business. The assumption that this relationship was natural took on a variety of forms in the data including: the university was a business, was adopting business practices, and becoming an extension of businesses. For example, as stated above, whether research was to fund the sciences to add value to a university education or whether the university itself was becoming more bureaucratic and formal, this was an unmistakable reality. When participants described the meanings behind the growth and funding practices of MRU, their interpretations reinforced or raised issues surrounding money machine ideology. For example, one student stated,

I think [the university] is a business. You know, I think that is the problem with education in general, specifically at the college level, there is a lot of money in it...I don't think MRU is affiliated much, in my own opinion with the research or the learning aspect of students...I think education is sacrificed at times for money, for popularity, for sports, the things in the end that really aren't going to make a big difference....MRU is a business.

This student not only believed MRU was a business, but thought that education—as a process of learning—is sacrificed at the expense of this new business reality. This assumption of a business reality influenced the student's university experience negatively. MRU was not focusing on student learning but on other ideas he attributed to

business ideology. While there was variance regarding how the university/business relationship occurred, participants in all subgroups described the relationship as something that was the reality at MRU.

This university/business relationship also emerged as participants discussed how MRU should be run. A faculty participant stated:

You get people like the governor saying you need to run the university like a business model. With a penalty put on faculty, he shifts our healthcare burden more on us. It's a business model. You get this shift to running a university in a totally different way than it's usually run and if we do it somehow based on this profit notion, you're paid by what you produce, which is very difficult to do. Certain kinds of scholarship prosper under those conditions and certain other types are highly marginalized.

This business reality is partly attributed to external pressures and practices from influential people and organizations. The participant explained that a for-profit model of the university is emerging. The difficulty in applying this model to the university is that the university does not often produce tangible items easily translated into capital. In addition, the scholarship that does not focus on producing such capital is marginalized, nicely illustrating that this ideology and the business practices that illustrate this it dominate over other kinds of scholarship. The participant continued:

The business model is never going to fit an institution of higher learning. What are we producing that makes a profit in the short run? There's nothing there. Your money comes from taxpayers or it come from your research, funding institutions that are not, you know, buying products, it is a generation of knowledge. Knowledge is not immediately transferable to money. In that respect, it's a difficult fit but I think there's an effort to fit that square peg into the round hole because it is a very powerful, dominant ideology in our country.

This business model approach to running MRU influences the types of scholarship and knowledge to be pursued, that which focuses on producing capital. The prevalence of money machine ideology has been increasing over time. A faculty participant stated:

But in my experience, I've seen that increasing over the last five years or so....I mean just a sense that this is something that's going on and increasingly universities are, I mean it's not just the student to university interaction, it has sort of filtered throughout it to where universities are becoming businesses.

As this ideology increases, it is likely that more programs, curriculum, and practices will shift to fit and represent this ideology. Thus, this increase in the money machine ideology and the business/university practices is believed to constitute the university experience.

A second assumption that emerges as part of the money machine ideology involves how participants interpret the reason for attending MRU. Student participants identified their primary reason for getting a university education as a means to acquire a "legitimate" job, a "real" job. A student participant stated:

I think without this university education I don't think I could get a legitimate job....Just having a good job is important to me and that all starts with my education....I just have this image in my head of a businesswoman, rich, successful, and that image is me. So I just want to make that image come true.

What the participant refers to as a legitimate job is a job that makes her rich. An illegitimate job is one that does not pay well. Success then represents having money and education is simply a means to increase the ability to make money. The underlying assumption here is that the university exists to help create programs and curriculums that help individuals secure their financial future through high paying jobs. Thus, other reasons for the university and participation or even training individuals in occupations that do not pay well are marginalized. For example, jobs in education, social work, and non-profit organizations are not as legitimate because often they pay less than the private sector.

This connection between the university and securing individuals' financial futures via a high paying job continuously emerged. Another student participant put it this way,

When I get my bachelors in psychology or whatever I would take, I plan on doing more schooling and going farther. But I kind of got to decide if I want to go out and get a job and then work on my masters or if I want to just go and work on my masters. But I definitely am going to go on to more school after I get my bachelors because it's better for you. Better jobs are out there the higher you go.

The reason for obtaining higher education was to get a better job. When asked to explain what he meant by better the participant stated, "I mean financially better or higher paying jobs." Participation in the university for student participants focused on getting a high paying job. The assumption is that an educated individual or true education is that which helps people make money. Having money means an individual can have a more fulfilling life. Therefore, the focus of the individual in education, employment, and lifestyle should revolve around getting and spending money.

Some student participants did not subscribe to this ideology when they initially came to the university. Students had different reasons for coming to the university. Student participants explained different ways in which attending university helped them *be* more legitimate in their own and others' eyes. However, as students associated with university, this legitimate job assumption became their primary reason for participation at MRU. To demonstrate how participants' motivation behind attending the university shifted, I will refer to the statements of a student participant. He stated:

When I was 25, I just woke up and said, 'I want to get an education'....I wanted to get a degree. I kind of always thought that I was smart, I just wanted that paper to verify it, I guess. I hated telling people that all I had was a high school diploma. And at that point, I guess it wasn't even much of more just I wanted that paper. You know to say that I had a degree and not just a two-year degree but I guess a quote on quote a real degree....I mean, there's plenty of money to be made out there without a degree, you don't need a degree to make money, it's I guess just come back to that paper you know. A real university degree is really something that I wanted, you know.

Initially this student came to the university because he wanted to get a degree in order to symbolize he was smart to himself and to others. A degree was something physical that he could tell or show others. It was not to make money or getting the paper show an employer, he had the necessary skills. Rather, the paper represented hard work, discipline, and intelligence. Yet, his initial meaning for participating shifted while obtaining that hard-earned degree. He continued:

I finally got to college and I really started enjoying education and just learning, even classes I couldn't care less about. I just enjoyed learning, and as it's got to the end I guess you've been here long and you want to get it done, and it's gotten to the point where now I just want to get good grades....I still need to get good grades because I want to get accepted into a highly competitive program. It's changed, but I still enjoy learning but not nearly as much as I think I did at the beginning.

Once in the university, his reason for learning was enjoyment. Over time his enjoyment decreased. In addition, his focus for learning shifted from learning everything to getting good grades in order to get into a program. Grades were a way for him to validate his intelligence to others in order to get into a competitive program. Learning became secondary to grades. As the interview progressed, this student explained why he and other students come to the university, "...like I said, what we're (students) mostly here for is to get a job afterwards so you've got to look at what mister employer is going to want...." During his educational experience, his participation in the university shifted from a pursuit of knowledge, to a focus on learning those things that will make him desirable to "mister employer."

Other student participants identified their motivation for attending MRU was primarily job focused. The focus however was not only on getting job training skills but specifically to obtain skills necessary for high paying jobs. Even though other initial

reasons for participating emerged in the data, they were eventually marginalized as job training skills came to the forefront. Money machine ideology emerged as participants explained that the university and participation should follow the practices and needs of the market. The assumptions of the university/business relationship and the legitimate job demonstrate a few ways in which the ideology uniquely emerged in the statements and practices of participants at MRU.

The example of the student shifting his reasons for attending MRU illustrates how a money machine ideology subverts a different ideology, or the citizenry ideology described below. His original interpretations and meanings for pursuing an education were just as legitimate as the money machine assumptions. However, these initial assumptions became illegitimate and shifted to a job training focus.

Citizenry Ideology

Another prevalent ideology in the university, although not as dominant as money machine, is citizenry ideology. The main purpose of the university, according to this ideology, is to create a better community through preparing students to be informed citizens. Two assumptions make up this citizenry ideology and emerge from the data: first, a legitimate individual is one that engages in the community and second, resources should be used to improve communities.

The first sub-theme of citizenry ideology is that a legitimate individual is one trained to be a citizen. Being a citizen means being exposed to certain literature and principles that focus on creating an individual who participates in civic matters, community organizations, and government affairs. A fulfilled life in citizenry ideology is

one that centers on bettering the community. The more one works developing the community the more fulfilling their life will be.

These ideological assumptions emerged prominently in the data, especially in the faculty category. Faculty participants most often used the term “educated” to symbolize being trained to become a citizen. Specifically a liberal arts education was used to label the reasons for attending MRU. One purpose for the university was to provide a space to educate students about the larger community. A faculty participant stated:

For students, [the university] should educate them, it should create a space, a community in which they can learn about the world they live in, how to interact with that world, how to think critically, how to act ethically...and otherwise, create a space in which those things can happen.

The faculty member assumed that providing students with a space to understand the world and learn to act within it responsibly is a central function of the university.

However, participants identified what the important ideas in the world were. A faculty participant stated:

[The] university is about educating people critically to appreciate the diversity of other people, other cultures. To appreciate the diversity of different religions; to move in directions that enable us to understand things that are beyond our present view, at the moment; to delve deeper into the biology of human existence. That’s what we’re about. That’s what we’re here for and you know...if you do all those things, you become an educated person....We are not about job training.

The right kind of knowledge produced at MRU then should include critical thinking in order for citizens to appreciate and understand other people, cultures, religions, and diverse histories. In order to be educated, individuals must study these ideas. Other language used to describe an educated individual in the data were well-rounded, a whole person, and balanced, knowledgeable citizens. Exposing oneself to ideas in this ideology

creates an individual capable of understanding himself or herself and interact with others ethically in the world.

Once this education is obtained in the university, participants need to engage in their community as citizens. A faculty participant explains what a citizen means:

[T]o become critical thinkers, to think on their own, to understand the world is shades of gray and not black and white. To believe in human decency, to understand that each of us as individuals has something to contribute. To make the world a better place we have to be engaged civically. We have to vote, be a part of our community and contribute to society.

In this ideology, the university is to be a center of knowledge and learning for community members and humanity. Participation means to use knowledge to educate individuals. These educated individuals then use the knowledge obtained to engage civically, to contribute to the community and society.

Another assumption that constitutes the citizenry ideology is that money and resources should be spent on developing the community described by the ideology. Some university participants stated that money and resources were being used in non-academic ways. The meaning behind non-academic however is really about money being spent on things that are not legitimate in citizenry ideology. While this idea emerged in all the interview subgroups, students were by far the strongest believers in this assumption. Students did not think the money was going towards academic pursuits. As a student participant stated, "I think education is sacrificed at times for money, for popularity, for sports, the things in the end that really aren't going to make a big difference." Money, popularity, and sports are not considered legitimate educational pursuits in citizenry ideology. As a result, the resources used for them are considered wasted and other

legitimate uses of resources suffer. Another student participant explains his frustration with tuition as he identifies academic pursuits and non-academic pursuits. He stated:

Sometimes it feels like you're not paying for your schooling but you're paying for all the extra-curricular activities....I go to MRU to learn, not to watch the [football team]. I think that as a whole it's good, they have a lot of good academic programs but it would just be nice if I knew that most of my tuition was going toward academic programs, to maybe get more masters degrees or a doctorate degree, just making sure that MRU's academic program is being raised and not just their football team.

The participant explains that resources should be spent on things that affect his learning. Creating more programs and developing degrees are legitimate uses of his tuition money or resources. Legitimate uses of funding included the creation of new degree programs and graduate programs that would pursue academic research. What are not legitimate are the extra-curricular activities in the university. Both student participants believe that the resources of the university are being spent inappropriately.

These ideological assumptions about the use of resources and the purposes of education and educational institutions are part of citizenry ideology. The academic and non-academic uses of resources demonstrate an assumption of the university and the use of resources in general. Education and educational institutions are not about money, sports, or popularity. The university should focus on creating new knowledge through research and developing such knowledge to create new programs. The knowledge and programs developed should not be money driven, but should focus on making a big difference outside of the university.

Some university participants subscribed to a citizenry ideology. The above statements from students explain some of the assumptions of this ideology. However, earlier it was discussed how students initial reasons for participating were subverted by

the dominant money machine ideology. Specifically, the statements of one student were examined to see how his ideological assumptions shifted while in the university. He initially explains he came to the university primarily to learn and get a degree as a symbol to others that he was intelligent. Once in the university his reason for learning was enjoyment. During his educational experience, his participation in the university shifted from a pursuit of knowledge to a focus on learning those things that would legitimize him to “mister employer.” This student’s responses illustrate how a money machine ideology subverted citizenry ideology. Therefore, while citizenry ideology is prevalent in the university it is less privileged than the money machine ideology.

Legitimacy and the University

The results from research questions one, two, and three build upon each other until they create a clear picture of the culture of the university and how communication constitutes this culture. Name calling and roleplaying were practices that symbolized the demarcation of self and other. In particular, in name calling participants identified some people as representing one ideology or another and roleplaying became of means of demonstrating with whom individuals identified. Roleplaying also became a means of demonstrating the knowledge of organizational participants that they understood the right way to perform their role.

As participants negotiated different meanings and interpretations of the everyday routines of others, participants prioritized which ideological perspective they identified with and objectified others who identified with an alternative ideology. This objectification process also results in the dividing of groups, but more importantly

highlights the tension between two different ideological perspectives. This tension aids in understanding why participants are constantly negotiating meanings, but in practice they resist negotiating with people they deem as representatives of the “other” ideology.

By demarcating and resisting negotiation or interaction between groups from one ideological stance or another highlights that one ideology appears to be subverting the other. For example, when participants posit that the university *needs* to respond to the external material pressures in the local business environment, or when students begin their education with the desire to grow as an individual but somehow along the way “realize” they are here to obtain a degree in order to get a better job, it becomes clear there is a dominant focus the material over the symbolic ideal of knowledge for knowledge sake.

Ultimately, the resistance or tension between subgroups (faculty, staff, students, administration) at MRU appears to be, in part, the result of a fight for which perspective is more legitimate. The constitution of MRU emerged in the participant discourse about legitimacy and illustrated the ideologies that guide interaction within and between groups. In essence, the reconstitution of the university was driven from an overarching ideology that focused on proving the university’s legitimacy to those within *and* outside the university. Different interpretations of external and internal pressures at MRU illustrated the money machine and citizenry ideologies, yet both belief systems assumed the need to prove legitimacy. The money machine ideology sought to prove the value of the university to the market, while citizenry ideology focused on proving the university’s value to the community.

CHAPTER IV—DISCUSSION

Groups are powerful in influencing ideologies and patterns of interaction in society. Collectively, people both create and reinforce taken for granted belief systems assumed to be the “right” way of interacting. Yet, cooperatively people also have the power to resist and transform ideological systems that oppress or subvert one way of being over another. The suffrage and civil rights movement demonstrate how people, working together, can both resist and change dominant ways of thinking and acting. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. notes in the following quote, collective change occurs through negotiation and dialogue about the ideological tensions between groups. He states,

The purpose of our direct-action program is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue. (1963)

Dr. King’s statement highlights *creating* a “crisis-packed” situation that would “inevitably” open the door to negotiation. I would argue that the current changes in vision at MRU from a teaching institution to a research institution coupled with the meanings different subcultures construct for these changes creates a “crisis-packed” situation. Collectively, subgroups at MRU recognize that change is underway and interpret such changes as a crisis in that, as the findings accentuate, participants sense urgency in pushing for one belief system over another. While Dr. King argued a crisis-packed situation will inevitably open the door to negotiation, the situation at MRU actually creates a context where negotiation could happen, but instead people refuse to negotiate

with the ‘others’ they have named and objectified as representing either a money machine ideologue or a citizenry ideologue.

The findings made it clear that participants at MRU were grappling with the emerging dominance of one ideology over another. Practices emerged at MRU that privileged certain ideological assumptions. An example was the assumption that the university should produce knowledge, programs and individuals to fill the economic needs of community, specifically business institutions. This market driven university is privileged as resources are allocated to programs, research and individuals that align with these assumptions. Participants discussed certain programs that should be grown at MRU. The programs that should be grown were those that had the greatest capacity to generate capital.

As the findings also demonstrate, in order for participants to feel comfortable, one ideology needed to be interpreted as more legitimate than the other. Yet, a university, as an institution of learning, is a space that allows for a multiplicity of ideas, knowledge, programs, and research. If we view the university as a dynamic collectivity of people interacting, then together these individuals are powerful in influencing ideologies and patterns of interaction that constitute the organization. Despite the fact that different groups at MRU were participating in various monologues, Dr. King’s perspective above highlights that a dynamic collectivity of people interacting with one another can challenge social ideologies and patterns of societal interactions. I would argue the situation at MRU is ripe with potential for dialogue. This chapter explains how this dynamic collectivity approach to organizing pushes scholars’ understanding of the constitution of the university as an organization.

Summary of the Study

This study examined the communicative constitutions of the university. This study aimed to understand the contemporary forces influencing the constitution and transformation of the university by exploring the interpretations and assumptions of university participants. In order to address these interests, the author developed three investigative research questions:

RQ1: What symbolic assumptions guide the practices of university participants and how does participants' identification with these assumptions affect participation?

RQ2: How do participants negotiate dissonant symbolic assumptions and how does this negotiation affect the constitution of the university?

RQ3: What are the dominant ideologies in the university and how do they emerge in the discursive practices of participants?

In order to respond to the research questions, data was obtained through qualitative methods using semi-structured interviews, observation, and document collections. The research questions provided a framework to guide the data gathering process and data analysis process. The data was analyzed, coded, and categorized using grounded theory analytic methods. The research questions focused the researcher's attention upon specific elements in the data and made connections between the data categories and theory. In addition, new ideas and connections emerged in the data that clarified phenomena and identified theoretical and practical applications. Specifically, the university emerged as a site of conflict and tension that socialized individuals to buy into one ideological perspective as more legitimate than another. The following sections explain how these

findings have theoretical and practical implications for understanding the constitution of the university experience.

Contributions to Scholarship

What emerged in the data pushed the understanding of the constitution of the university in two ways. First, in order to understand its constitution, researchers need to look both “inside” and “outside” the university. Second, this study pushed an understanding of how the university was developed as participants accounted for their actions in the university. Both of these contributions will be explored in more depth below.

Fluidity of Organizational Boundaries

The interpretation and meanings of the university are understood largely via business metaphors. External forces such as an economic structure do influence the changes in the university. However, administration, faculty, and students assume that MRU *must* respond to business needs, train students to be skilled employees, and obtain a degree in order to obtain a *legitimate*, high paying job. This is not to say that the university should not do these things. Yet, as the data highlights, this perspective is becoming taken for granted as the only way for the university, the faculty, and the students to be considered legitimate. As these findings highlight, the external pressures from the community influence the transformation of the university. This external pressure only influences changes at MRU through the interpretations and interactions of participants. The university is not simply an object to be described, but a discursive

process which highlights that the boundaries between external and internal pressures are fluid. This thesis demonstrates the fluidity of organizational boundaries and exemplifies the discursive processes that constitute what people understand and interpret as the university.

Because of the fluidity of boundaries, the university is susceptible to the ideology of dominant institutions of the time. The current dominant institution and ideology in society is corporate. The corporation has eclipsed the state, family, residential community and moral community” (Deetz, 2005). This dominance has suppressed the conflict among competing institutional ideologies and practices (Deetz, 1992). The “power” of the modern corporation functions using disciplinary structures (Mumby, 1997). Power is a force emergent through individual agents’ interactions. As individuals interact in patterned ways, together they construct what counts as knowledge. This knowledge is then embodied in practices reproduced by agents disciplined into a particular way of thinking. Thus, when corporate agents interact with university agents in taken for granted ways that perpetuate a “common sense” vocational education, corporate ideological assumptions are privileged in the university.

For example, based on this logic the under funding of the humanities represents corporate ideological assumptions because humanities knowledge is assumed to be less “valuable” to both students, administration, and the community at large. It is expected that the humanities will be under funded or “disciplined” because they do not follow the assumptions of corporate ideology.

On an individual level, this was demonstrated at MRU by the student participant who reasons for attending the university shifted over time. His initial motivation for

participating in the university was not about getting a job to make money but rather, to prove his intelligence to himself and others. However, his reason for participation changed to focus on knowledge and skills that a potential employer wants. He stated that students primarily attend the university to get a job. This example illustrates how corporate ideological assumptions become the norm on an individual and organizational level. Recognizing that the boundaries of the organization are fluid makes individuals more aware of how “outside” relationships influence not only the constitution of the organization but also their deeply held assumptions. This raised awareness by individuals is necessary for participants to resist dominant ideologies and limit their influence in the university.

In the 1600s, dogmatic ideas and oppressive institutions controlled the university (Ross, 1976). The result was a 350-year period of stagnation (Ross, 1976). Ross (1976) proposed that the university must remain “open” and create spaces for diverse ideas if it is to flourish. The structure of domination used in the 1600s is different than it is today because of disciplinary power. The irony here is that at MRU’s “openness” both reinforces a larger corporate ideology and opens MRU to a diversity of meanings that may lead to other ideological assumptions and practices. However, as the findings highlight, both individuals external to and within the university are discursively working through everyday practices such as name calling, roleplaying, and objectifying, to silence the diversity of ideas that such openness creates. Instead, participants attempt to promote the money machine ideology as more legitimate than citizenry ideology, which is met by resistance by those who buy into the citizenry ideology. Not only does the university

need to be “open,” but MRU stakeholders must also be aware of the legitimacy of both ideologies.

How is this possible? Disciplinary power structures function subtly via discursive closure practices (Deetz, 1992). These practices are present whenever potential conflict is suppressed, unity is assumed, and reasons behind practices appeal to origins (Deetz, 1992, p. 187). An example of discursive closure discourse at MRU was the email sent out by administration to faculty, staff, and students regarding the shift from a teaching to a research institution. In the letter it states, “Our planning effort is not about changing the direction of the university, but rather recognizing that we have been constantly evolving...it [the plan] will represent shared goals and agreed upon definitions of success.” Using Deetz’s (1992) explanation of discursive closure, we can see how these statements illustrate an appeal for unity in order to make this plan seem to be almost natural step. Other common practices used in discursive closure include excluding certain people from participating (disqualification), using terms such as normal or natural to identify organizational practices (naturalization), rationalizing decisions/practices based on hierarchal order, and privileging certain discourses (Deetz, 1992). As was addressed above, certain discourses are being privileged in this transition time at MRU.

However, in order for MRU to be truly open, university stakeholders need to build in discursive practices of negotiation and acceptance. A university can be a welcome context for dialogue as it is an institution of learning. It is structured specifically to enable many voices to convey different, sometimes conflicting messages. The trick is how to engage university participants in a dialogue and move out of the monologic state in which different subcultures at MRU currently find themselves. The author believes this

is possible by using discursive opening practices. These practices can lead to open formations and/or divert, distort, or block open development (Deetz, 1992). This dialectic approach requires certain opening practices to respond to closing practices. Such a process can start on an individual level. Practices, norms, and unquestioned ideas need to be unpacked and revisited. At MRU, change identified spaces where this was occurring. It was an indicator of discursive practices. These changes, however, were often motivated by the work of a few individuals. To create more representative practices, university agents need to be more responsive to what is occurring around them. This means individuals and groups look for discursive closure practices in the university and create opening responses to them. Finding these practices is difficult as they are hidden in day-to-day routines. Possible questions to start this process: Where is conflict suppressed in the university and how am I participating in that? What do I assume are natural or normal processes? Where are there spaces that exclude participants? What practices do I participate in that follow hierarchal assumptions? What is keeping me away from interacting with others? Developing questions like these that are specific to the institution can help organizational members identify discursive closure practices and create opening practices as a response. Questions also allow individuals to re-examine organizational ideas that have become taken for granted.

A specific idea in the academic community that needs to be re-examined is the “professional” professor. This academic life mimics corporate practices and emphasizes traveling, recognition, fame, and sipping wine at conferences; a life full of administration, committees, organizing conferences, and overseeing journals (Jacoby, 1999). Professionalization withdraws academics from the larger public and research done is a

narrow kind of scholarship (Jacoby, 1987). It keeps professors from participating in larger discourses outside of the academic community.

The intellectual's task in this process is to not only identify and respond to these practices but also to provide insight and critique to others. There is a need to engage others in this engage in this critical process in the classroom, seminars, and community forums. Research should function to give voice to those things that are hidden or not easily visible so they can be seen and dealt with. All discourses need to be checked and re-checked periodically in order to understand what is occurring (Deetz, 1992).

Object Orientation and Objectification

The second way this study pushed an understanding of the constitution of the university developed as participants accounted for their actions in the university. Collectively, the meanings participants interpreted in practices emerged as ideological assumptions. Participants' identification with these assumptions sometimes conflicted with one another. Objectification was a means to reduce the complexities of these conflicts into binary or dichotomous choices. Individuals demonstrated these ideological assumptions when they discussed the "right and wrong" ways of participating at MRU. This right and wrong approach allowed them to stabilize their own and others' identities through division. An example was a former administrator who resisted administrations' desire to increase course enrollment. He stated:

I didn't give a shit about the administration, whether they liked me. I was trying to do the best for the students and for the agencies that wanted to hire students. And so I felt that was my job. So I interpreted my job differently than most people did.

The participant did not negotiate with the administrators, but rather objectified them as in opposition to himself even though he fulfilled an administrative role. He negotiated a divisive ideological position in that he interpreted pieces of a corporate ideology as right (“doing the best for ...the agencies”) and other pieces as wrong (administration wanting to add more courses and increase class size to produce more efficiently). In addition, he described “administration” as if it was an object or one person rather than a name given to a group of individuals in the university, including him. The individual interpreted his role as an administrator and identified himself in that role, but then objectified other individuals in administration as a way to simplify and stabilize his identification with the university.

Objectification is a type of discursive closure practice as it simplifies complex conflict or tension into an either/or approach. This simplification hides the complexities of the negotiation process, homogenizes practices, and limits possible outcomes. For example, a university participant related an experience in which her supervisor told her to implement a program. She responded, “I don’t think this should be an institutional priority.” To which his response was, “So what? It’s what the president wants, and that’s what I think is going to improve campus life.” The supervisor appealed to authority assumptions (the wants of the president) as a way to justify his response. He assumed this reason was a legitimate response and sufficient for his subordinate to do what she is told. A response specific to the individual was not necessary, one should do what she or he is told because her or his ideas are wrong and authority is right. This binary approach closes other forms and practices of negotiation, and limits other possible outcomes. It hides the ways in which certain groups are privileged by such practices and the power structures

operating. Rather than opening the university to a multiplicity of approaches, it creates division among multiple perspectives, an “us” and “them” attitude among participants, and limits possible outcomes to an either/or system. In short, it closes off the university.

The university is not an object to be described but a set of complex relationships of power, knowledge, and discourse produced by individuals and groups as they struggle with one another (Taylor, 2005). Communication creates stability and instability among university participants. In other words, communication is the means through which seemingly fixed discourses and shared meanings emerge. Yet, through communication, participants can introduce new ways to act and “other” possible interactions and interpretations (Mumby, 1997, p. 16). Communicative practices allow for the university and other organizations to remain open.

A critical organizational communication perspective provides an analytical lens, that assists the researcher in exploring the university and generating ways of viewing current issues, debates, and contestation regarding the constitution of the university. For example, rather than focusing on what interpretations are right or wrong (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004), researchers can look for whose rights emerge as dominant and which wrong actions or meanings are marginalized (Taylor, 2005). Researchers shift from focusing on the ontology of the university to the epistemology of participants. The university is no longer an object to be described, but a political site with many actors creating its constitution. The “truths” of the organization are political constructions. As a political site, researchers focus on the communicative development of truth and its link to identity, power, and knowledge (Mumby, 1997, p. 16). Power, knowledge, and discourse become central ideas for researchers studying the university. This shift allows for

exploration of other conceptions of the university instead of a right or wrong university. Because truths are political, the question becomes “whose truths” rather than “what truths” are operating in the organization. Researchers are not trying to identify the truth but understand what other truths are being disciplined and silenced through the dominant practices of participants in the organization. Researchers can use disciplinary power as explained by Deetz (1992) and Mumby (1997) to find discursive closure practices and develop opening practices in the university.

Contributions to Practice

By challenging the current assumptions of what a university should be, this study provides individuals with a new understanding of their own organizational experiences, the role of communication as a powerful process, and the accountability of each individual in creating, recreating, and transforming organizations. A specific individual from the data that could provide insight for the practical application involves comments by the student participant who shifted his reasons for attending the university. His initial reasons for participating in the organization change during the course of his studies until they conform to corporate ideology. This example shows the subtle shift of ideological assumptions in the individual. This is just one example from which individuals now have a point of reference or understanding of what a shift in ideology “looks like” and can compare the student’s experience to their own. It allows participants to be more aware of how ideological assumptions shape the way we think and act. Such awareness can unpack the hidden or subtle influences on their organizational experience. Individuals can

critically examine organizational communicative practices and better identify their underlying assumptions.

An“Other” Way to Respond

This study also allows participants to have a way of responding to conflict other than objectification. In this study, participants identified themselves through division. Instead of recognizing the other as an important part of their identity, they objectified others. An objectification discourse is problematic for two reasons. First, objectifying another individual makes it easier to treat them as an object rather than a person. Second, participants assume a passive role and limit their ability to recognize their interdependence with others. Difference and conflict at MRU were often perceived as negative ideas. Objectification hides the necessary role “the other” fulfills.

A postmodern perspective examines these contradictions and hidden ideas. From this perspective, individuals view other participants as people who help them understand and create their identity. Others are not a threat to identity but a way to understand the differences and similarities between themselves and the other. Communication in this process emerges as a means of constructing the identity of individuals by building relationships between the self and the other. This perspective allows individuals to view others not as objects but as being necessary to understand and create their own identities. This mutually constitutive identity/discourse allows a new appreciation and understanding for others as organizational participants negotiate with one another.

Limitations

This is not a comprehensive study of what constitutes the university, nor does it fully investigate all the components of its constitution. The study, however, does provide insight into what constitutes participation in one institution, MRU. A limitation of this study was the lack of observation of participants and access to first-hand routines of students, faculty, and administration. Observation occurred within the classroom, which is just one component in understanding the constitution of the university. Another limitation is the documents collected were used to discuss the changes occurring but were not analyzed in conjunction with the observation and accounts of participants. However, the information contained in this study can help future research to detect discourses in higher institutions of learning. Although this is not a comprehensive study, the data elicits rich information into understanding how participants view the roles, ideas, language, power, discourse, and ideologies influencing the university. Future studies on the university may include observation of the daily practices and routines of university participants, identifying objectification discourse, identifying discursive closure practices and developing responses to them.

Conclusion

In revisiting a few words Dr. King wrote while in a Birmingham Jail, we find he discusses a concept in his letter to local clergymen who wanted “unity” through “proper” means. Dr. King describes an individual he calls the white moderate. He stated:

I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more

devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice. (1963)

This study is a call to action to those individuals who are moderates in their organization; to help them understand how their interpretations, actions, relationships, and negotiation (or non-negotiation) influences not only the immediate organization in which they participate but also influence larger collectivities. This study is a tool for researchers and individuals who are interested in eliminating monologues and creating dialogues in organizations and society. It is my hope that it will re-open closed discourses. I will conclude with the words of Dr. King. He explains what participation of this kind does:

Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. (1963)

It is my hope that this study may bring to the surface hidden and suppressed tensions to create more representative and participatory practices, organizations, and societies.

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APPENDIX A

Scripts

Scripts

Email Script

I am a master's student in the Department of Communication doing research at MRU. I am working with Dr. _____ right now and as I discussed my research, s/he told me that you would be a person that would have great insights explaining how the University experience has changed within the past few years and the influences creating that change. I would like to meet you in person and explain my research project in 5-10 minutes and see if you would be interested in participating. I can meet you when and wherever is most convenient. Please let me know if you have a few minutes. My schedule is flexible: On M & F 9-6, T-Th 1-6. If none of those times work or you are too busy please let me know. Thank you for your time.

Script for Face-to-Face Asking for an Interview

I am doing my thesis work on influences on the education process at MRU. I am examining how different ideologies influence education at MRU. Because of your important role as a participant in the university, I would like to interview you about your role and experiences at MRU. I will ask you a series of open ended questions regarding your role and participation in the education process. The interview would last approximately 30-60 minutes and take place in a location and time that is convenient for you. I will keep your answers confidential and will not use anything that could identify your responses in my study. Would you be willing to allow me to interview you?

- (if yes) Great , what time looks good for you in your schedule.

- (if no) No problem, thank you for considering it. Do you know of other administrators and faculty who might be interested in participating?

Script for Interview Conclusion

Is there anyone you know who might be interested in the research I am doing who you think would like to participate in an interview?

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions for Students

Interview Questions for Students

Introductory/Demographic Questions

Where are you in your schooling process?

How long have you been a part of MRU?

Have you attended other universities?

Probe: Were there differences between your experiences there?

Role and Participation

Describe your role is at MRU?

Probe: What do you do on a daily basis as part of this role or describe what it looks like?

Probe: Why is your role valuable to MRU and to you?

How do you feel that MRU as an organization operates?

What do you think about how MRU runs as an organization?

How do you think it functions as an educational institution?

Motivation/Choices

What motivated you to get a university education?

Why did you choose MRU?

What was your motivation to pick your major?

Why are you pursuing the degree that you are pursuing?

What are your plans after graduating?

What are your plans in the next five years?

Why did you pick you're the general classes that you chose?

Interpretive/Analysis

What does it mean to get a university education?

What is knowledge and why is it important to you?

What is learning is what motivates you to learn?

What significance of grading?

What is the significance of a degree?

What is the purpose of MRU?

Do you feel that your experiences at MRU are meeting the criteria for a university education?

What do you think the university experience should be or look like ideally?

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions for Faculty

Interview Questions for Faculty

Introductory/Demographic Questions

How long have you been a part of MRU?

Have you worked at other universities?

Probe: Were there differences between your experiences there?

Role and Participation

Describe your role is at MRU?

Probe: What do you do on a daily basis as part of this role or describe what it looks like?

Probe: Why is your role valuable to MRU and to you?

What do you feel the role of MRU is in the education process?

How do you feel that MRU as an organization operates?

What do you think about how MRU runs as an organization?

How do you think it functions as an educational institution?

Motivation/Choices

What motivated you to become an educator in the university?

Why did you choose MRU?

What was your motivation to pick your major?

Why did you pick to stay in academics?

What are your career plans?

Why do choose the courses you get to teach?

Probe: What is educational Philosophy?

Probe: What method do you use to teach and why?

What kind of research do you do or are interesting in doing?

Probe: What helps or hinders that work?

Interpretive/Analysis

What does it mean to get a university education?

What is knowledge and why is it important to you?

What is learning is what motivates you to learn?

What is the significance of grading?

What is the significance of a degree?

What is the purpose of MRU?

Do you feel that your experiences at MRU are meeting the criteria for a university education?

What do you think the university experience should be or look like ideally?

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions for Administrators

Interview Questions for Administrators

Introductory/Demographic Questions

How long have you been a part of MRU?

Have you worked at other universities?

Probe: Were there differences between your experiences there?

Role and Participation

Describe your role is at MRU?

Probe: What do you do on a daily basis as part of this role or describe what it looks like?

Probe: Why is your role valuable to MRU and to you?

What do you feel the role of MRU is in the education process?

How do you feel that MRU as an organization operates?

What do you think about how MRU runs as an organization?

How do you think it functions as an educational institution?

Motivation/Choices

What motivated you to become an educator/administrator in the university?

Why did you choose MRU?

What was your motivation to pick your major?

Why did you pick to work in academics?

What are your career plans?

What kind of research do you do or are interesting in doing?

Probe: What helps or hinders that work?

Interpretive/Analysis

What does it mean to get a university education?

What is knowledge and why is it important to you?

What is learning is what motivates you to learn?

What is the significance of a degree?

What is the purpose of MRU?

Do you feel that your experiences at MRU are meeting the criteria for a university education?

What do you think the university experience should be or look like ideally?