ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN ACTION

A Cultural Analysis Workbook

GERALD W. C. DRISKILL

Organizational Culture in Action

Offering students and practitioners an applied approach to the subject, *Organizational Culture in Action* (OCA) walks them through a six-step model for analyzing an organization's culture to provide insight into positive communication practices to improve organizational ethics and effectiveness.

The authors review relevant theory while integrating a constitutive approach to studying organizational culture and communication. Practical guides for multiple data collection methods are provided, and the workbook format is full of interactive tools that engage students and reinforce learning. The revised OCA cultural analysis model in this edition provides the below elements.

- The revised first step in the model – "articulating the value of cultural analysis" includes connections to public relations and crisis management.
- A definition of communication and the analysis process that foregrounds ethics throughout the book is included.
- Recent research on organizational moral learning is integrated in the ethics chapter, and throughout the book.
- The Communicative Constitutive of Organizations is now foregrounded throughout the book, and reflected in a table capturing variable and metaphor approaches to culture.
- The latest applied research is integrated in units on diversity, change, leadership, and effectiveness in relation to positive organizational communication.
- Enriched guides on multiple data collection methods now include surveys.
- Cases, examples, and applications relevant to crisis, employee engagement, virutal organizations, conflict management, and public relations are provided.

Professionals come away equipped to apply cultural insights into fostering inclusiveness in relation to diversity, supporting organizational change, making leadership more dynamic, understanding the link between ethics and culture, and achieving personal and professional growth.

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Third Edition

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Preface to the Third Edition

In 1984, Angi Brenton, Ph.D. introduced a course on organizational culture to the graduate students in the Masters of Interpersonal and Organizational Communication at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Her students came from a wide array of organizations (high tech to medical to industry) and positions in those organizations (management to HRD to entry-level employees). This same array of students continued to participate in this course when Gerald Driskill, Ph.D., began to teach the course in 1994. Over time, our approach to working with these students resulted in this application-focused workbook.

Fast forward to 2018. Dr. Brenton, a colleague and friend, died at the age of 60 on May 8, 2013 after a courageous but brief battle with cancer. Her passion for ideas, for life, for serving, and difference making continue to motivate me and other colleagues to engage in the education setting. This passion finds its way into this book. In revision, I sought to maintain our shared voice through the use of "we" with the belief that Angi's ideas and passion and presence continue to be part of this book. As a way to honor her dedication, former students and colleagues established the Angie Laird Brenton Memorial Scholarship.

Students continue to comment on the practical and powerful nature of the approach outlined in this workbook. In this third edition, I have maintained the original hands-on approach to learning to "read" organizational cultures, and using that cultural knowledge in change leadership, training, supporting diversity, improving ethics, and unleashing creativity. It also serves as an introduction to qualitative research methods, introducing students to field observation, interviewing, qualitative surveys, content analysis, and other methods of textual analysis. This third edition also provides guides and examples for developing quantitative surveys.

What has changed? One primary change along with additional responses to students, reviewers, and trends in the field.

- A shift to focus on a constitutive model for analysis. Why this shift? A greater focus on communication and ethics is the short answer. The long answer is that over the years I have increasingly integrated constructivist theories into my class on cultural analysis, as well as in my research. Then, in a serendipity, Dr. Ryan Bisel, pointed me to the phrase "grounded in action" as referenced by Dr. Linda Putnam in an article on organizations constituted in communication. Dr. Putnam then provided further guidance to make this shift. Prior editions introduced two widely held perspectives on culture and organization—"culture as a variable" and "culture as a root metaphor". In this edition, a third perspective, "culture as a discursive construction", is introduced due to its focus on communication processes and ethics.
- Revision to the model. A minor change was made to include "articulating the value of the cultural analysis process" as a first step. We find that in practice, anyone engaged in an analysis will need to explain the benefit.
- Beyond this added step, and based on the above change, the model in the book is now affectionately labeled as the "Organizational Culture in Action" (OCA) model for cultural analysis. As such, you will notice efforts, though at times incomplete, to encourage the study of culture from a constitutive framework. For instance, rather than maintain static language more fitting for "culture as root metaphor," changes were made to reflect a more dynamic, process focus (e.g., from elements to enacted elements, from themes to thematic action).

These changes answer two central questions heard most often from students and professionals: "How can I understand the intangible culture that is so important to working in an organization?" and "How can I use this cultural information once I understand it?"

- Dr. Bisel's model of "Organizational Moral Learning" in integrated ethics is now treated in a more substantive way from the opening chapter, where ethics is part of the definition of organizational communication, to the closing chapter. Bisel's model not only foregrounds ethics but provides practical insights for countering the findings from research that indicate the failure of training and education to have a significant, positive impact on ethical decision making.
- Framing the process in three practical questions (inspired by Barnett and Kim Pearce). These three questions are carried throughout the book a way to foreground communication in terms of guiding questions: (a) What are we co-creating here? (b) What do we want to co-create? (c) What forms of communication will co-create the culture we want? Students have found these questions practical and meaningful not only for moving through the analysis process but also for professional and personal application.
- A positive communication focus. We refer to trends in and outside of the communication field on positive organization scholarship. Thus, for instance, based on Dr. Mirivel's model of positive communication and Dr. Lyon's work on courageous communication, I suggest ways to integrate these practices at appropriate times in the application process.
- Updated research, examples, and activities, on such topics as: virtual organizations, work-life balance, engagement, external communication (public relations), and crisis communication, including readiness for renewal.

We are convinced that the application of this text can help leaders shorten their learning curves and avoid costly mistakes, while understanding the power of co-creating engagement, and identification through positive and ethical communicative practices. It could help the new graduate choose a company consistent with her values rather than realizing after 6 months she "just doesn't fit there." It will reinforce, to the training and development director, the role of storytelling and ritual in organizational socialization and engagement. It will equip those seeking organizational change to understand ways in which change is actually constituted in communicative practices. For those with an interest in public relations, including crisis communication, the insights can improve the connection between ethical internal practices with external communication, with the goal of organizational learning.

We all participate in multiple organizations, and that participation demands the art and skill of determining the communicative practices that shape more ethical and effective organizations and organizing practices. May you find yourself reading, interacting with others, and completing various activities designed to equip you to lead with confidence, purpose, and to see yourself as co-creating not only better organizations but communities and social worlds.

Acknowledgments

Those who made this workbook a reality easily come to mind. For any names we omitted, we accept the blame and ask your forgiveness.

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Part I

Cultural Analysis Planning

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Introduction
Setting the Stage

Organizations are more than the places we work. They include places that carry humans from the cradle to the grave. The "Organizational Culture in Action" (OCA) model is introduced as a valuable tool grounded in constitutive theories of communication. As such it promises to provide insight of significance to organizations such as diversity, change, engagement, leadership, and ethics. Frequently asked questions are covered in relation to the value and goals of the cultural analysis process, the significance of how we define organizational communication and culture, the continued relevance and value of using a drama/theater metaphor, as well as criteria for selecting an organization for analysis.

> I was backstage. Not as an actor, but as an observer. I looked up in awe at the myriad of lights and ropes. I glanced at the various props and backdrops anticipating a performance. All was silent. I looked at the deep purple folds of the still drawn curtain. A single unbidden thought entered my mind. A sense of panic grew as this thought took hold of my imagination: What if the curtains were opened and I was really on stage? Right now, this instant! What if I were on stage for real?
>
> Gerald Driskill

Objectives

- Reflect on the pervasiveness of organizations in our lives.
- State the goal of cultural analysis.
- Apply guides for selecting an organization for analysis.

Stage Terms

- Organizations.
- Organizational communication.
- Organizational culture.
- Cultural analysis.
- Dramatism.
- Organizational performance.

Cradle to Grave

When asked to name and describe an organization, like us you may often first think of a workplace. However, by focusing on workplaces we miss the shaping force of other organizations. Our first experiences in organizations were like many of yours: bright lights and masked strangers welcomed us into a hospital birthing room. Since that time, we have lived, breathed, laughed and cried, worked or consulted with, and dreamed and been bored in a wide array of organizations including daycares, schools, businesses, non-profits,

prisons, churches, universities, and nursing homes. These varied experiences have inspired us, and at times left us broken by the dysfunction and unethical practices experienced. These highs and lows have created expectations and perceptions that follow us throughout life. Beyond the myriad examples of tragic and comic tales we could each tell from our experiences as employees, we also have countless stories from our experiences as customers, volunteers, members, and patients. The point is clear—we cannot escape an inextricable connection with organizations. Yet we easily take for granted the impact of organizations, the very stages on which we live out our lives.

Like you, we know something of the moments of panic when called on to perform: lead a meeting, confront or admit to an ethical failure, make a presentation, have a difficult conversation; yet, in such moments we may not be aware of the way the lights, the props, and our assumptions about our audience shape and constrain our performances. We know when to show up, we may or may not notice when know when something goes right or wrong with a piece of equipment or a relationship, but we rarely see the big picture of how all the various aspects of the stage impact us. We continue to develop ideas in this book with students and colleagues as a way to equip us to create more competent, more meaningful, purposeful, and ethical organizational performances. Such performances are grounded in learning the way our communication shapes and is shaped by the culture of the organization as well.

Organizations are places that carry us from cradle to grave by shaping our sense of ethics, identity, role, and meaning in life.

In the years that have passed since the startling birth experience, we have come to believe that organizations are no more and no less than a significant stage for human drama. Our research on cultures in hospitals, engineering firms, churches, banks, airlines, phone companies, schools, and day care centers and our service experiences in hospitals, prisons, multinationals, and nursing homes have all underscored our conviction that organizations are far more than the places where we work and make money. They are places that carry us from "the cradle to the grave" by shaping our sense of ethics, identity, role, and meaning in life.

Thus, while our motivation to study organizations began with a pragmatic sense that our livelihoods depended on being able to work in organizations, a deeper, more fundamental concern has emerged. We want to improve our ability to shape and direct organizations in ways that are more humane and ethical. We believe such an effort to be fundamental to practitioners, scholars, teachers, and students, but more importantly as participants in the human drama. The goal of this workbook, therefore, is not simply to teach you how to conduct a cultural analysis, but it has implications for your role as a leader within an organization and within your community. In short, the workbook is designed to help you do better what you do almost every day—make decisions about the best ways to lead ethically, to create meaning, value and purpose along with others in your organization(s). Our approach is inherently concerned with ethics. Rather than relegating ethics to an individual chapter or side bar as Dr. Meisenbach (2017), an organizational scholar and professor, laments is often the case, ethics is a thread woven into our thinking about communication and each stage of the analysis process outlined in the coming chapters. The assumption is that ethics are embedded in our individual intentional and unintentional decision-making as well as the organizing practices in organizations. The process of conducting a cultural analysis holds promise for surfacing practices that may clarify or distort, accurately represent or misrepresent, fully involve or marginalize interests of various groups.

In this first section, "Cultural Analysis Planning", we offer two chapters. This opening chapter is focused on FAQs aimed at introducing you to terms, concepts, and the overall process of cultural analysis. The second chapter moves us into the first of six cultural analysis steps, articulating the value of the cultural analysis process.

FAQs on Cultural Analysis

This chapter sets the stage by clarifying our approach. While the remaining chapters provide greater depth on the "how to" of conducting an analysis, our goal here is to respond to common questions. As you review our responses to these questions you should gain a clearer sense of our approach, as well as options for purposes for conducting an analysis and criteria to consider in selecting an organization.

1. What Is the Value of the Cultural Analysis Process?

Chapter 2 focuses on the first formal phase or step of the cultural analysis process, developing your ability to articulate the value of this process. Still, a prelude is merited before exploring this question in depth. While the focus on culture" first emerged in the early 1980's it continues to surface not only academic disciplines, but in the media and popular press. Even new trends or focus areas, such as "employee engagement" ultimately are about attending to culture. Comments from students and practitioners capture the value of this process at both the formal level and informal. The following are a few statements made by those who found value in conducting a formal analysis using the process outlined in this book.

- I now see the connections between culture and employee engagement.
- My analysis helped guide me to create a communication plan related to diversity.
- I used this process to improve recruitment and retention practices.
- I can now use cultural data to gain insight for change leadership and overall effectiveness.
- The cultural data helped me reflect on organizational ethics and leadership.

At the informal level, example comments included the following.

- I have learned that in any organization, change must start with me.
- I now have the ability to see situations from different perspectives.
- I got my last job because the interviewer was intrigued by my answers about organizational culture and how quickly I could "read" the organization.
- I have improved my ability to apply theory to the real world.
- I saved myself a lot of time and energy by deciding during an interview process that I didn't fit the culture. Even though the salary was great, I would have become frustrated quickly.

While you may not experience all of these specific learning insights, we are confident that anyone completing this process, either at a formal or informal level, will benefit. Regardless of your goals, we are confident that as a result of learning this process, you can become a more competent and assured actor in your organization, better able to understand and question, and improve basic organizational assumptions and practices. Furthermore, as we will stress again in the final chapters, this process is not about finding problems, but describing the culture and then discerning positive communication applications. We have found again and again that this process is a way of seeing our organizational communication and our own communication in a different light. While other cultural analysis tools (e.g., Dennison and Gallop) are available and discussed in the Introduction to Part III on "Cultural Data Collection and Interpretation", we maintain the value of the OCA model introduced here rests in the focus on the way organizations are created and recreated or constituted in communicative practices. This interdisciplinary application of established communication theories, discussed further in Chapters 2 and 3, promises insight to communicative practices relevant to such topics as organizational engagement, leadership, diversity, ethics, and change. This communication perspective is explored further in our response to the next question.

2. What Is an Organization (and Organizational Communication)?

We all know what organizations are, right? Textbooks tend to introduce definitions and then move on, leaving them buried in the opening chapter. We contend that more is at stake with definitions than an academic exercise. Definitions involve our thinking and assumptions about the nature of organizations and communication. Therefore, before you review the definitions of organization found below, take a minute to write your own. Pause now. Write your own. Ok, continue reading. As you read the following definitions of organization and organizational communication, see what they share in common with and/or how they differ with your own. First, organizations, as you might anticipate, have been defined in various ways:

- They involve ". . . five critical features—namely, the existence of a social collectivity, organizational and individual goals, coordinating activity, organizational structure, and the embedding of the organization with an environment of other organizations" (Miller & Barbour, 2015, p. 11).
- a "dynamic system of organizational members, influenced by external stakeholders, who communicate within and across organizational structures in a purposeful and ordered way to achieve a superordinate goal" (Keyton, 2005, p. 10).
- "a social interaction system, influenced by prevailing economic and legal institutional practices, and including coordinated action and interaction within and across a socially constructed system boundary, manifestly directed toward a privileged set of outcomes" (McPhee & Zaug, 2009, p. 28)

As you review these definitions of organization in light of your own, what emerges? The natural tendency is to carry an image of some group of people, perhaps working in a building toward some shared goals. This image does aid our thinking about a particular group and perhaps the role of communication in helping us reach shared goals. Yet, the building or container image misses key ideas that we will explore throughout the analysis process. Consider the extent to which your definition was inclusive of a few key ideas found in those given definitions with a focus on the final definition from McPhee and Zaug (2009): (a) communication and coordination-organizations or organizing processes are created or constituted in communication; (b) inter-connectedness and boundaries–organizations or organizing processes are not limited to a building or place, thus a focus on intertwined networks is important; (c) goals and outcomes vary at individual and group levels, but are never neutral, that is, decisions are influenced by certain goals being honored over others. We return in Chapter 8 to McPhee and Zaug's (2009) "Four Flows" model, which can be helpful in interpreting your data.

The three major components of their definition undergird our cultural analysis model, OCA. This model flows from an interdisciplinary, widely held perspective known as social constructivism. This perspective holds that organizations are created in and through our interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Since the first version of the OCA model in 2005, the process underlying this model continues to be developed as organizational communication theories evolve to focus more on the way organizations are constituted in communication. For instance, a major theoretic lens that informs our current analytic model, "Communicative Constitutive of Organization" (CCO), will be explained further in Chapter 2. This theory is finding increased application internationally and across disciplines as a way of "understanding how organizations are produced in communication" (Boivin, Brummans, & Barker, 2017, p. 332). Our thinking about the centrality of communication held by this and other theories influence how we define and think not only about organizations, but also about organizational communication.

In same way as above, take time now to pause and jot down your definition of organizational communication before reviewing the following ones:

- "the interaction required to direct a group toward a shared goal" (Eisenberg, Trethewey, LeGreco, & Goodall, 2017, p. 4);
- the "collective and interactive process of generating and interpreting messages" (Stohl, 1995, p. 4);
- the co-creation of intertwined relational networks through symbolic actions that create and constrain ethical and effective processes and goals (Driskill, n.d.).

Over the years, when we have asked professionals in formal classrooms or in training settings to define communication, or organizational communication, the dominant thread across their definitions has focused on information sending and receiving or message exchange. In fact, notice how the first two definitions given focus on interaction and messages. We contend that we need to go further in our thinking about communication. No, not because we need to memorize a new definition, but rather because our thinking about communication or our implicit assumptions about communication and the ways we interact are connected (Barbour, Jacocks, & Wesner, 2013; Edwards & Shepherd, 2007; O'Keefe, 1988). Thus, we contend that a shift in thinking is needed to improve not only our communicative action, but the cultural analysis process. Thus, the final definition was developed to foreground four foundational ideas to the analysis process and to improving or shared experiences in organizations.

First, this definition foregrounds the central idea that organizations are co-created in and through communication. Our understanding of organizations is inextricably linked to our view of organizational communication as more than sharing information to reach a goal, more than strategy, and thus more than generating and interpreting messages. While these are all aspects of organizational communication, we argue that communication creates, and recreates our identities, relationships, organizations, and cultures. In turn, these organizations (and identities, relationships, and cultures) shape communication. For example, as we will explore in Chapter 9 on Diversity, and in Chapter 10 on ethics, upward and direct communication tends to be discouraged in organizations situated in collectivistic cultures that shape and are shaped by less direct communication. For instance, in the context of KAL flight disasters, researchers found that first officers would tend to avoid direct, upward communication to the pilot, even when there was imminent danger. Communication training was introduced that embedded new interaction rules in this context that co-created a different cultural pattern that drastically reduced airline crashes (Helmreich & Merritt, 2000).

Second, this definition foregrounds the significance of ethics. This focus entails more than individual decision-making about what is right and wrong. Communication from a CCO perspective entails a concern for ethics in that our attention is drawn "to the ways ethics are constituted in communication (McClellan & Sanders, 2013, p. 259). As such, our individual choices, both intentional and unintentional make and shape organizations and in turn are shaped by implicit and explicit organizing practices. This approach provides a way to discern the way everyday communication creates patterns of ethical and/or unethical actions. For instance, Kuhn and Ashcraft (2003) highlight the constitutive, or meaning making, role of organizational practices that create justifications for unethical behaviors. They highlight the ironic practices at Enron where stated values of "respect, integrity, and communication" for instance were marginalized due to a "rank and yank" system of employee evaluation that meant winning the game of profits was primary (2003, p. 44). On a subtler level, any of us might unconsciously pick up on phrases such as "well, that is how we do things around here" and find ourselves using these same words when engaged in false reporting behaviors. Thus, our role throughout the cultural analysis process should therefore involve discerning ways to co-create positive and ethical practices and structures.

Third, organizational boundaries are not clear-cut, thus a focus on the way communication creates and recreates relational networks constituting organizational boundaries is significant. Boundaries are not set or pre-determined distinctions between collectives. Communication is the way we define and constitute both the "what" and "where" of these boundaries. For instance, we are part of, as already stressed, multiple organizations (civic, social, religious, corporations, etc.). These organizations and thus our interactions in and between organizations function in complex ways: multinational hybrids, virtual organizations, global out-sourcing, and inter-organizational collaborations.

Finally, this definition challenges us to reflect on *who* to count as members of a particular organization. Membership, like boundaries, is not always cut and dried. For example, who counts as a member of a professional sports team? Only the athletes, cheerleaders, and coaches? Team physicians who may be members of a medical practice but travel with the team on weekends? What about the die-hard fans who come to every game and may have a 50-year history of following a team? These same questions could be asked of a multinational in terms of their interactions with other organizations and their respective communities. A significant decision you will face is who "counts" as an organization member and where you want to draw the boundaries of the organization.

In summary, viewing organizational communication as relational networks co-created and recreated in and through communication reminds us of the challenges faced as we seek to analyze the organizational culture. Organizations are multi-layered and multi-faceted, consisting of individuals and groups with both common and competing interests.

3. What Is Organizational Culture?

We provide several definitions in Chapter 3. Yet, before reviewing our favorite one below, it is important to realize two challenges. First, popular or jargon terms may at times be used by working professionals more often than the term "culture". Terms such as "engagement," "resilience", or "empowerment" often draw attention to some new initiative from popular consulting literature. One alumni of our course on organizational culture and communication now holds the position of Director of Human Resources and Talent Development for a large, diverse insurance company. She explained to Gerald's students that members in her organization rarely referred to the concept of "culture". Instead, they focused on "employee engagement", yet as she noted, such a focus was about understanding and improving the culture (c.f., Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014).

Second, the meaning of the term "culture" is complicated by the tendency to focus only on culture as a variable to be manipulated to improve organizational performance. We will return to a concern we have with this focus in Chapter 3, yet it is important to know our position from the outset–organizational culture is not a variable to be manipulated. We explore the ethical challenges related to changing culture in Chapter 10, but suffice to say, we encourage caution in "jumping on the bandwagon" of simple approaches to improve or change culture.

Our favorite definition of culture is from Geertz (1973). As an anthropologist he viewed culture as the webs of significance that we have spun for ourselves. As such, culture consists of meanings constructed through interaction, yet to add to Geerz, these webs then also influence our interactions. Thus, the study of organizational culture is inevitably a focus on communicative and organizing practices. This web, the study of this web is not about simply what we are saying, but rather what is being created between us. Each of these webs or cultures has a unique way of doing things; yet there is a commonality in forms. Just as each national culture is comprised of a unique language, artifacts, values, celebrations, heroes, history, and norms, each culture is unique. Yet, organizational cultures have in common the way they are constituted, that is shaped and are shaped by these elements of culture (e.g., values, heroes, place, history, etc.) At a deeper level, organization members create and/or are indoctrinated into unique beliefs and assumptions that form the basis for acting together. Some beliefs and assumptions may operate at a conscious level. However, basic assumptions such as those about human nature and ethics often operate at the unconscious level. For example, you might assume that supervisors make decisions and employees carry them out without ever consciously questioning that assumption. This assumed way of interacting shapes other organizing processes such as the way new members are integrated into the organization (McPhee, 2015). In contrast, we believe we can become more mindful and learn to understand and consciously identify and then engage in co-creating history, norms, and values of an organization. Such a shift holds out the possibility that together we can become a true ensemble cast by coordinating our actions more effectively and we would hope, ethically with others. Together we can also understand the symbolic significance of events and actions in a more thorough way. This practical knowledge can then aid us in being ethical and responsible in our varied organizational roles.

4. What Is a Cultural Analysis?

We define the cultural analysis process as *capturing the unique qualities of an organization as constituted in elements of culture such as rituals, stories, and history that both shape and are shaped by communication that has significance for organizational ethics, effectiveness, and professional development*. We will first attend to this focus on process and then explore the reason we stress the significance of this process. This process of "capturing unique qualities of an organization" is about formally or informally attending to the constitutive nature of organizing and organizations. At a formal level, just as anthropologists immerse themselves in a foreign culture to understand

it, we use many of the same methods to understand an organizational culture. For example, we might systematically observe artifacts and interactions, analyze written documents, participate in rites and rituals, and interview members about the meanings they attach to organizational objects and events. We might focus on communicative practices related to a particular concern, a leadership change or a diversity initiative, or we may have a broader interest in describing the overall culture of the organization. At an informal level, we might observe meeting norms and how newer members engage (or don't engage), and sort out through other various means (conversations with others, reading company policies, etc.) the process of becoming part of an organization. Interestingly, actors use many of the same techniques of observation, interviewing, and analyzing scripts in the process of crafting a credible and compelling performance on the stage or in film. Regardless of the level of formality or focus, we must attend to the constitutive nature of the organizing process. This means, as we will explore further in the methods sections, that a credible and ethical interpretation of the culture must attend to more than a single element and in particular to both micro or interpersonal interactions as well as macro or structural realities such as rituals and place. The intent of this focus, congruent with CCO, is that we need to attend to communicative processes that constitute the culture. For instance, it is not uncommon for an analysis process to focuses on values, but in the process, what is missed are the various communicative processes that actually constitute the organization. A powerful employee evaluation ritual, as in the example provided above on Enron, co-creates organizing processes that supersede espoused values.

We also stress in our definition that this analysis process has "significance for organizational effectiveness, ethics, and the development of members". We do not believe this point can be overstated. The concern and passion for exploring organizational culture is grounded in the awareness that not only do we spend significant time in organizations, but we also shape and are shaped by those experiences. Furthermore, our organizations, are more than just places we work. They also represent the places we carry out our aspirations, ideals, and hopes for bettering our world. In these organizations, relationships matter. As you engage in using the OCA model, consistent with CCO theorizing, a focus on the presence or absence of ethical discourse will be foregrounded. More specifically, we encourage reflection on micro practices, or aspects of day to day relational interactions, often taken for granted, such as greetings, questions, disclosure, and affirmation (c.f., Mirivel, 2014). The significance of these interactions is also substantiated by applied organizational communication research ranging from identifying communication practices that encourage ethical dialogue (Anderson, Baxter, & Cissna, 2009), engaging in participatory decision-making (Deetz & Brown, 2004) and democratizing practices (Gergen, Gergen, & Barrett, 2004) and applying a model of organizational moral learning to co-create highly ethical organizations (Bisel, 2018).

In order to guide this analysis process, we will rely on three questions to keep our approach focused not simply on analysis, but on our role in co-creation. These questions, informed by the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory (Pearce, 2007), frame our process: (a) "What kind of culture is being co-created?" Here the goal is to enhance our ability to ethically collect and interpret data. Part Three explores the data collection and interpretation process. (b) "What kind of culture do we want to co-create?" The goal is to determine and co-create ethical communication goals based on the data you have collected. Part Four focuses on five different application contexts. (c) "What forms of communication will co-create the culture we want?" The goal here is to discern ways to ethically influence organizational discourse and culture. Part Four also provides a final chapter on co-creating an ethical action plan grounded in positive communication practices. Each question includes the term "co-create" rather than simply "create" for a reason. We want to stress that the culture creation and change process does not happen in isolation. The intent then is to view the cultural analysis process as more than understanding or describing culture, but also a way to identify specific communicative actions to positively shape our organizations.

In order to better understand the cultural analysis process, we turn to several comparisons. These three analogies provide a way to gain clarity about the overall organizational cultural analysis process. Our hope is at least one of these analogies will connect with you so that you might gain a big picture of the analysis process.

Perhaps, as you engage in this process you can identify a different, more meaningful analogy that helps you grasp the overall process. We begin with one a student offered us in the process of conducting an analysis.

A Student Analogy: The Wheel of Fortune

In this television game, participants have to fill in the missing letters of a phrase based on a clue from the moderator. Participants lose a turn if they guess too soon or incorrectly. And of course, if they guess too late, they risk losing to other contestants willing to take a risk. The challenge is to have enough information about the word puzzle to make a credible interpretation. In the same way, if you attempt a definitive interpretation of a culture too early in the process, you may pay the price of misunderstanding the culture. We also recognize that, at some point, you have enough data for a realistic (although not perfect) cultural interpretation, and you need to move ahead to application. We agree with the need to balance thoroughness with timely application, and you will learn in this workbook a process of cultural analysis that emphasizes careful reflection on cultural data combined with application. We have identified two different analogies as a way to clarify the process and to encourage you to move systematically through the five cultural analysis steps outlined in this workbook.

Gerald's Analogy: Paint by Numbers

We have a painting in our home of a wolf. The dark eyes and menacing face peer out from behind the white bark of aspens. The painting was our son, Eli's, first time to paint by numbers. Not true art you might say. Imagine, however, if Eli did not have a color and number code. He would have to determine colors that seemed best together. He would need to create a convincing palette that made the wolf come to life.

   A cultural analysis is like painting with numbers and colors without the code for three reasons. First, the cultural analysis process does not begin with a blank canvas. The paint by numbers box comes with a canvas with lines and numbers on it; the colors are in the box. In the same way, organizations come with a barrage of colors and numbers. In Chapter 4 we label these colors as elements of culture (e.g., values, stories, rituals). You do not have to create these cultural elements; you do have to identify them. You will have to find a corresponding, convincing match for the color with a number in the culture. In short, you will be called on to create a credible interpretation of "what is being created here?" Second, the analysis process requires an awareness of how your background and assumptions color the process. Eli has seen pictures of wolves (and a few at the zoo). He has ideas of acceptable hues. In the same way, our experiences literally *color* the process. Thus, no two analyses are going to be the same. However, for the picture to be convincing to those who view it, one must discern how previous experiences influence the interpretation process. Chapter 5 introduces the process of "bracketing" which involves recognizing our reactions and responses that color our interpretation. Finally, the analysis process influences the researcher and the organization. Eli completes a paint by numbers and in the process, he is more aware of how a wolf might appear in nature. His painting also influences others who view it. In a similar way, the cultural analysis process influences our experience with life in organizations. You will attend to communication in ways that will be new to you. Our hope is that you will become more adept and responsible in your communication based on this analysis. Furthermore, the questions you ask during interviews and the formal or informal report you provide the organization will prompt reflection on and possible changes in communication practices. The potential impact of your analysis indicates the importance of maintaining high ethical standards in the process.

Angi's Analogy: A Jigsaw Puzzle

The cultural analysis is similar to putting together a complex jigsaw puzzle without having a picture on the box to guide your efforts. The point of this analogy is to understand the tensions between seeing parts versus the whole, and to appreciate the impact the process has on the person doing the analysis. This metaphor applies in several ways: First, it is often difficult to get a sense of the big picture when you are looking at individual pieces. Only after you have assembled a number of segments can you start to get an idea of the

picture the puzzle will create. Second, it takes both dark and bright pieces in most cases to assemble a complete puzzle. I recently read a story of a young girl who secretly stole pieces of a puzzle her family was assembling and hid them under the sofa cushion because they were so ugly. In frustration, her family began to despair of ever being able to put the puzzle together because so many pieces were missing. Only when the girl provided the dark pieces could the entire picture be revealed. Sometimes in our cultural analysis it is tempting to linger on the positive stories and upbeat images. They rarely form the complete picture. Sometimes you must provide the dark elements to understand the complete culture. Critical theorists such as Mumby (1993), Deetz (1992), and Deetz, Tracy, and Simpson (2000) have encouraged this phase of analysis. Finally, the process of putting together the puzzle is often as important as the finished product. The mental exercise of seeing connections, of developing creativity, and of growing in patience and discipline will develop the puzzle builder even if the particular puzzle is not a particularly useful one. Chapter 8 guides you through this process of interpretation of cultural data.

Unlike puzzles, which have a set order and only one way for all of the parts to fit together, cultural analysis is a complex and interpretive pursuit. Four different people sitting around a table would see the picture from different perspectives and develop similar but varying pictures, and each of those constructions would have degrees of validity and usefulness for understanding the organization.

5. Why Use a Dramatic/Theater Metaphor in This Text?

We find students and professionals vary in the extent they easily connect with the metaphor of drama or theater used in this book. Some have had experiences like the opening one—the idea of being on stage only produced anxiety, and perhaps a moment of insight. Few of us have done more than seen or read a theatrical performance. So, why maintain this image? We will introduce other metaphors or analogies, as those just reviewed above, as well as others connected to theory in the coming chapter. Thus, if you are not connecting with the idea of "theater", consider these other images, but more importantly, focus on the main thrust of the steps used to guide the analysis process. We would hope everyone grasps the role metaphors play in providing insight into organizations. Morgan's (2006) seminal work on metaphor, *Images of Organization*, captures metaphors that guide the way we see organizations. His main premise is that metaphors provide a way to see. Nonetheless, we recognize the limits of metaphor. We will address these limits (Putnam & Boys, 2006), such as imprecision and the tendency to focus on similarities metaphors, in Chapter 8 when we discuss the interpretation process in greater depth (c.f., Örtenblad, Trehan, & Putnam, 2017).

In the context of a cultural analysis, we argue that organizational communication viewed through the lens of dramatism has much to offer. The use of this metaphor has a long history, from Aristotle to Kenneth Burke (1972) and Erving Goffman (1959, 1974) to more contemporary writers. Boje, Luhman, and Cunliffe (2003) point out that the theater metaphor is used to describe organizations in two ways: organizations described as "like theater" (Goffman) and those who treat organizations as being theater (Burke, 1972). We see value for all of us in understanding organizations through a drama/theater lens, whether through Goffman's metaphor or Burke's literal approach.

The lens of theater or drama illuminates organizational life in at least three ways. First, this lens foregrounds members as actors who coordinate their actions in performances—some tightly scripted and traditional; others, improvised and informal. Like dramatic genres, organizational performances sometimes can be categorized by themes or archetypes. Some organizations are highly controlled with the emphasis on directors or stars, while others are ensemble casts. Some organizational performances by leaders have employees as intended audiences, while other performances involve all organizational members with consumers or policy makers as audience. Second, the drama metaphor foregrounds the "ventriloquistic" nature of communication (Cooren, Matte, Benoit-Barné, & Brummans, 2013). Like the ventriloquist, we give voice to certain ideas, make requests, claims, as we interact with others. At first, it might seem like the ventriloquist is in charge—he is doing the talking for the puppet. We too may sense that the ventriloquist is the one making decisions about how his puppet communicates. Yet, the identity or type of puppet shapes what the ventriloquist is allowed to say. For example, in the Broadway production of "The Lion King", the actor holding the puppet depicting the character of *Timon* had to stay true to the character of this light hearted

"meerkat". In the same way, we may think of ourselves as doing or saying what we choose to say. Yet, the nature of our requests, the ideas we present, who we speak with and how we speak, as well as the ethical claims we make in our interactions are shaped by the "puppet" or in the case of a cultural analysis, the various elements of culture. Put differently, in Chapter 4, when we attend to elements of culture (rituals, rules, humor, symbols, etc.), we will note how "who" is doing the acting is not limited to what people say and do. An element of culture like a ritual, metaphor, or artifact (i.e., the type of puppet) is also co-creating the organization (Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011). For example, in one organization, office cubicles, a significant non-verbal symbol, were installed with lower walls that in turn reduced privacy. In addition, no one was given a permanent cubicle. Thus, an implicit norm meant that no one displayed personal artifacts such as pictures. This use of non-verbal space impacted who talked to whom as well as when and how they interacted. The "puppet" or the cubicles shaped the employees who had voice as ventriloquists but were constrained as well. Third, the drama metaphor enriches and complicates our under-standing of our communicative performances in organizations. Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1982) write about organizational communication as performance and note that organizational performances have four character-istics: they are interactive, contextual, episodic and improvisational. Some performances are episodic on an interpersonal level—with two employees enacting an episode to determine power or credibility in their relationship. Others are larger organizational performances with a company trying to recover credibility after a crisis. As you conduct a cultural analysis, you will be challenged to listen in on performances. For instance, you might hear an employee story (episode) about what one co-worker said to another (interactive) about recent layoffs (contextual) as they discussed the various ways organizational members are responding (improvisational) to management mandates. In summary, if asked why we encourage the use of the drama or theater metaphor, our response is that this metaphor not only carries a rich history from Aristotle to the present, but more importantly, it provides a valuable way for us to see ourselves and our organizations. This metaphor foregrounds members as actors, introduces the ventriloquistic nature of communication, and enriches and complicates our understanding of our communicative performances in organizations. Rehearsal 1.1 provides an opportunity for reflection on the drama metaphor.

Rehearsal 1.1 Applying the Drama Metaphor

Purpose: Identify the value and limits of the theater metaphor.

1. What value do you see in using the theater/drama metaphor to reflect on organizational life and communication?
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. What limits or possible cautions should we consider in using this metaphor?
   _____
   _____
   _____

---

6. How Do I Select an Organization for a Cultural Analysis?

There are a variety of factors to consider in selecting an organization. First and foremost, much depends on your goals for a cultural analysis. Use Rehearsal 1.2 to determine your goals or purposes.

Rehearsal 1.2 Your Purposes for a Cultural Analysis

Purpose: Reflect on and identify possible purposes of the analysis you will conduct.

Check any of the following purposes that describe your reasons for conducting an organizational cultural analysis:

_____ Learn cultural analysis skills for work as a consultant
_____ Gain insight into another type of organization for career development
_____ Develop insight as a new employee to move up in your organization
_____ Learn to use cultural data to be a more effective leader in your own organization
_____ Identify ways to serve community organizations through knowledge of their respective cultures
_____ Learn about a different culture in an organization similar to your own to compare and contrast
_____ Other reason: _____

   Your answers to these questions should influence your decision to do an analysis or audit as an "insider", a person who works for the organization you analyze, or as an "outsider", one who comes to the organization as a stranger. To facilitate your decision, we have outlined the pros and cons associated with each role.

As you reflect on your goals, also give consideration to the relative advantages and disadvantages of insider/outsider roles (Table 1.1). These options may be viewed more as a continuum. Your relative knowledge and experience with an organization should be weighed. For example, in your own workplace, you may be new to the organization and/or industry, thus your knowledge of the culture and ability to work with the culture are far different from someone with extensive knowledge or experience. On the other hand, outside of the workplace, you may be a relative insider as a volunteer for the Arthritis Foundation or a church organization. You may also be somewhat of an insider due to weekly visits to a favorite restaurant or health club. Farther down the continuum toward being an outsider, you may have never worked for GM but you have worked for another major auto company, and thus know something of the basic aspects of this industry. You may have read widely about a given industry but have yet to visit an actual site. And then

Table 1.1 As an Insider or Outsider in the Organization

Insider Advantages	Insider Disadvantages
Ease of access	Lack of perceived freedom for analysis
Personal communication insights	Bias due to being enmeshed in the culture; start
Potential value to your own organization	with hidden assumptions
Time—ease of data collection	Too familiar, thus "see less", ask fewer questions
	People don't explain things to you the same way
	they would to an outsider
Outsider Advantages	**Outsider Disadvantages**
Insights for career development	May misinterpret some cultural data
Skills for "newcomer"	Access to the organization
socialization	Time outside of job to collect data
Less familiar, thus "see more"	
See the more obvious layers of the culture	

there are organizations that are completely alien to your world—you have heard of high-tech companies but have not read about, visited, or studied one.

The key in examining the pros and cons of the "insider" versus "outsider" perspective is more complex, and perhaps your decision ultimately comes down to your immediate and/or long-range goals for developing this skill set. We have found value, as have our students and workshop participants, in engaging in a cultural analysis with goals ranging from "becoming a consultant", to "learning the ropes as a newcomer", to "enhancing the way one serves in the community". Regardless of your decision, the steps we outline will guide you in gaining valuable experience in conducting an analysis.

Other considerations (in addition to outsider/insider) might guide your choice of organization as well. What contacts do you have that might provide access to an organization to analyze? What organizations might provide especially interesting sites to study for your personal or professional development? Organizations are particularly interesting sites at some stages, such as start-up of new organizations at which culture is being formed, or major organizational transitions such as downsizing or leadership changes at which culture is being modified (see Rehearsal 1.3).

Rehearsal 1.3 Identifying an Organization

Purpose: Identify organizations that you might make the focus of an analysis.

Steps:

1. Review the pluses and minuses of being an insider versus an outsider in the cultural analysis process in Table 1.1.

2. Consider an organization you might serve as an outsider/consultant and then list the top three reasons it would be advantageous to the organization for you to serve in this role.

Organization: _____
_____
_____
_____

3. Consider an organization you might serve as an insider and then list the top three reasons it would be advantageous to the organization for you to serve in this role.

Organization: _____
_____
_____
_____

Once you have determined an organization, you should have confidence in proposing a cultural analysis to a potential organization (see in Rehearsal 2.3). The final report has significant value to the organization (see Rehearsal 14.2). If hired to conduct this this type of study for an organization, it would involve a major fee. In addition, as we will explore throughout this process, the benefits to the one conducting the analysis are also significant (see Rehearsal 14.1).

7. How Is This Workbook Structured?

The workbook is organized around six major steps or processes for the conduct of a cultural analysis. These steps are reviewed at the start of each chapter beginning with Chapter 2. The major chapters share in common the following features:

- *Stage Terms*: At the start of each chapter we list important terms and concepts covered in the chapter. The reader may want to pay special attention to definitions and explanations of these terms contained in the chapter.
- *Connections*: In sections labeled "Connections" we assist the reader in making connections between theories and constructs and organizational practice by extended examples.
- *Rehearsals*: Case studies and other activities are designed for hands-on experience with concepts. We incorporated activities that we have found enriching for workshop participants and students. You will find these activities in Rehearsal boxes in the workbook as well as at the ends of most chapters.

Each of the chapters prepares you to conduct a cultural analysis. Regardless of the organization you study, you will have the option of exploring your data in light of one or more of the five application chapters: diversity, ethics, change, leadership, and effectiveness. To that end, the next section provides your first "Connection" with Rehearsal 1.4 designed to prompt further reflection.

Connections: Reflection

The opening lines described a moment when Gerald was conducting a workshop. The workshop was being held back stage when the above thought struck him. "What if I was literally about to be on stage?" Like the majority reading this book, being back stage is perhaps a rare experience but being on an actual stage, even rarer. The thought of being on stage is not one most of us entertains as an option. If we do, we perhaps wonder as Gerald did: What if I forget my lines? Can I really pull off this character? Will the show even mean anything to others? These questions, we contend, should also compel us to be more reflective as daily participants in varied organizations.

This workbook will have the greatest value to professionals willing to shift from going through the motions of acting on stage to active reflection. We contend that effective and ethical leadership requires space and time for such reflection. In our work, we have learned again and again of the need to spend regular, if not daily times, in which we pause to reflect on the larger questions. Earlier in this chapter, we introduced three big questions to guide such reflection: (a) "What kind of culture is being co-created?" (b) "What kind of culture do we want to co-create?" (c) "What forms of communication will co-create the culture we want?" These questions assume both interpretive and critical approaches to studying and reflecting on organizations. By interpretive, we mean a focus on exploring meaning making processes, and thus a focus not simply on upper management viewpoints, but on the perspective of organizational members. The critical approach has an inherent concern for ethics in everyday communication by attending to "marginalization, misrepresentation, or distortion of some interests over others (McClellan & Sanders, 2013, p. 255). As such, we have stressed that ethics concerns or what we are creating on the stage, matter, not just in the analysis process, but in our daily application. We find Bisel's (2018) claim compelling—ethics training and education tends to focus more on some past event or imagined future ("there and then" talk) rather than the present, "here and now" talk, which is "more personal, emotional, messy, and context-sensitive" with "real consequences for those involved in the conversation" (Bisel, 2018, p. 102). As such, our hope is this analysis approach will aid us in becoming more mindful of the "here and now".

These three questions encourage us then to not just move through our lives reacting to others, carrying on with business as usual, perhaps talking about the past or future, but to reflect and then participate in co-creating more ethical and effective organizations now. Competent leadership in organizations involves going backstage; that is, active reflection on the cultural forces that shape communication practices, and the way our

communication practices shape culture. The steps previewed in the next chapter reflect a process that we all participate in each day. For instance, we consciously or often unconsciously decide what, and how, and when to communicate in our organizations; we decide what changes in organizational practices we can and/or should encourage or discourage; and we determine what changes we believe we are empowered or powerless to introduce. Perhaps most critical of all, we make decisions whether to reflect on our communication or remain somewhat unconscious of our influence in an organization. In all, we share in common the fact that our communication behavior is based on interpretive processes that we take for granted.

We can always improve both the quality of the data we collect as well as our communication performances in response to these data.

These day-in and day-out taken-for-granted interpretive processes are based on our informal "data collection" about our organizations (e.g., norms, what is allowed, what is expected, how to communicate, with whom to communicate). Based on our interpretations of these data, we act and react. Before reading this book, you may never have considered yourself someone who collected and used cultural data or thought of yourself as an actor on an organizational stage. However, you may have heard a story about a recent firing and wondered if all the details were true. You may have been hired as a minority employee and now wonder how to move forward in an organization. You may have read a staff development handbook and been left wondering why no one seemed to engage in the practices outlined. You may have heard during a performance evaluation that no one else was having trouble with clients like you are, and found yourself wondering about the norm: "Am I really that bad?" When faced with the mysteries or uncertainties embedded in these types of questions, we may become more aware of unspoken or unwritten rules and values in an organization. Rehearsal 1.4 provides a place to reflect on our past experiences, and ways to enhance your current efforts at conducting a cultural analysis.

This workbook assumes that we can always improve the quality of the data we collect and the accuracy of our interpretations, as well as our organizational communication performances in response to these data. As you move through the cultural analysis process, we hope you will be reminded of what we observe each time we cover this material in the classroom, in a training, or consultation—how and why we communicate in our organizations matters. To extend Shakespeare's well-worn analogy, "All the world's a stage," (Shakespeare, 1954, p. 42) our challenge is to be on the stage not merely as players or actors, but also as co–directors and producers of the communication practices that shape the culture of our organizations.

Rehearsal 1.4 Method Acting and Getting Real

Purpose: Reflect on your expectations concerning the process of conducting a cultural analysis in order to identify beliefs that may help or hinder your progress.

Overview: Method acting is a term that captures a major approach to training actors (Vineberg, 1991). At the core of this method is active observation of the real and genuine emotion (or mining the real experiences of the actor or actress). Strasberg (1987), the major proponent of this method in the United States, notes that the procedures for developing an actor's capacity are "equally, if not more, necessary for the layman" (p. 201). This activity is designed to apply *method acting* concepts to the cultural analysis process. In short, the more you are real with your own reactions and emotions concerning the process, the more you will be able to overcome hurdles to making it a valuable experience.

Steps:

1. Briefly list two or three of your own initial reactions to this first chapter. What was clear? Unclear? What appeared promising for your own application? What emotions, if any, did this chapter evoke in you?
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Have you had a previous positive experience with cultural analysis in which you gained insight into what "made an organization tick" or how to be more effective in an organization? What happened? What was your reaction?
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Have you had a previous negative or confusing experience with cultural analysis? Perhaps you discovered information about an organization that was disappointing. Or perhaps you were baffled by why something happened in an organization. What happened? What was your reaction?
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. What will need to happen for you to have a positive, fulfilling experience in learning about conducting a cultural analysis? In particular, what concerns do you have? Questions?
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Summary

1. An organizational culture involves the unique ways of doing things in an organization that are best captured by such elements of culture as the history, norms, and values of a group.
2. This cultural analysis process, Organizational Communication in Action (OCA) attempts to apply constructivist theories, such as Communicative Constitutive of Organization (CCO).

3. The intent is to improve on methods we use each day in our organizations—we observe, ask questions for understanding, and read various documents such as newsletters. In the process of analysis, we not only gain insight about the organization, but may also improve our ability for ethical and effective communication.
4. How we define an organization is based on the boundaries of the membership. You will need to make a decision in the organization you analyze about who is considered a member, which may entail a narrow (employees, management) or a broad (customers, stakeholders, etc.) definition.
5. The end goal of the process is to learn how to conduct a cultural analysis and make application of this analysis to critical aspects of organizational life such as ethics, change, and diversity.
6. This workbook will help you understand the concept of culture as well as the basics of data collection, interpretation, and application. Pay attention to the key organizing features of the book: *Stage Terms*, to introduce relevant theories and concepts; *Connections*, to aid your understanding of concepts; and *Rehearsals*, both within the chapters and at the end of chapters to aid you in application.
7. You should have a clear sense of how to select an organization for a cultural analysis based on your purposes for conducting the analysis as well as the pros and cons of being an insider versus an outsider.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the broad array of organizations of which you are a member.
2. What impacts do organizations have on your life?
3. What do you see as benefits of a cultural analysis?
4. How are organizations like theater? Brainstorm some ways.
5. Reflect on the way a cultural analysis is defined. What do you understand about this process based on the definition?
6. As you reflect on the goals discussed in the chapter, what are your goals for performing a cultural analysis?

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The Significance of the Stage
The Value of Cultural Analysis

The hope and promise of a cultural analysis is grounded in its potential for insight for meaningful change. A thought experiment is introduced as a way to understand theory as a way of seeing. Three theories that inform the OCA model are introduced with corresponding metaphors or ways of seeing organizations. Reflecting on the Google CEO's cornerstone of "culture eats strategy for breakfast", five primary benefits of the culture analysis process are introduced: (a) prompt reflection on diversity practices (Chapter 9); (b) improve the change (Chapter 10) leadership process by uncovering cultural strengths and potential areas for growth; (c) empower members to integrate ethical practices (Chapter 11) into organizational structures while also becoming aware of unconsciously supported unethical structures; (d) equip formal and informal leaders (Chapter 12) to ethically co-construct symbolic resources such as stories and rituals; and (e) provide insight to cultural practices relevant for overall organizational effectiveness (Chapter 13) such as public relations, hiring, conflict management, engagement, orientation, development, crisis management, and training.

Step One: Articulate the Value of a Cultural Analysis

1. Articulate the value of a cultural analysis
2. Understand the concept of culture
3. Describe cultural elements
4. Use multiple data collection methods
5. Interpret constitutive processes
6. Co-create positive communication applications

Most anyone entering an unfamiliar work setting knows the feeling of being an outsider. Real wisdom in such situations means recognizing that the unspoken is more powerful than what can be conveyed through speaking. One gradually gains a sense of the feel, the smell, the personality of a workplace, a way of working, or a kind of work—though it may be difficult to translate all of this into words that an outsider could grasp.
(Louis, "Perspectives on Organizational Culture", 1985, p. 27)

Objectives

- State various ways a cultural analysis adds value to an organization.
- Explain the "Communicative Constitutive of Organization" as a framework for a cultural analysis.
- Review the six major steps in the cultural analysis process.

Stage Terms

- Construct.
- Culture.
- Constitutive.
- Structuration.
- Social constructionism.
- Coordinated Management of Meaning.

The Tales We Could Tell

We all have stories about a wide array of experiences in organizations. These organizations range from small business and community service organizations to large multinational corporations and non-profits and religions organizations with global impact. These tales reveal the good, the bad, and the ugly about life in organizations. These stories prompt laughter and tears, meaning and confusion, love and hate, hope and fear. We have all been told and listened to stories mirroring these ranges of experiences. From mundane frustrations over time schedules, to anguish in dealing with a difficult boss, co-worker, employee, and/or customer, to fears over a change, one theme common in organizational stories relates to the challenges placed on our communication abilities.

In order to gain a new perspective on our experiences in organizations, to shed light on the good, bad, and ugly found in our stories, this workbook takes you through a six step model of conducting an analysis. In this chapter, we focus on the first step of the OCA model, "Articulate the Value of the Cultural Analysis Process". We will first introduce our personal hopes for you in this process. Then, as a way to encourage reflection on the value of a cultural analysis, we provide a brief history of the study of organizational culture and major theories that enrich and ground claims about the value of this process. We then provide a brief discussion of each step or phase of this process as well as Rehearsals aimed at practicing this first step.

Any Hope of Change?

We turn in a few pages to a brief history of cultural analysis and then review key theories. Yet, before turning to history and theory, it is fair to acknowledge a potential obstacle. Our experiences with theory, research, and analysis have often not assisted us with the difficulties listed above. It is not uncommon to hear the following complaint against theory: "I don't see how this theory helps my life now!" In the midst of reading, reflecting, and theorizing about organizational communication and cultural analysis, we have been asked fair and challenging questions such as the the following.

- Is all of this work of analysis really worth it?
- How can I apply the cultural information I'm learning?
- Can a cultural analysis really help me bring change to my organization?
- Is it realistic to expect change in myself or in the organization?

Our reply to such questions reveals our educator's bias. If we were to say no, then we would see the need to give up not only on the teaching enterprise but on the human experience as well. As educators and as human beings, we hold a positive view of the human condition, that we are all capable of change and growth. We accept that such change and growth does not always happen; nor is it always easy. Nonetheless, as far as personal and organizational changes go, we have had the good fortune and blessing of witnessing changes not only in our communication behavior but also in others, and in organizations as a result of courses and workshops that use the approach presented here. However, for this workbook to work, for any

development in our communication abilities to happen, we have to play 100%. Change requires more than right information, it also requires a value set-an openness and commitment to change as well as support. Such a commitment is also required for organizational change. Change efforts may fail because they are undertaken without sufficient commitment to gaining understanding of organizational culture.

While we affirm that change is possible, it is often difficult and uncomfortable. We have developed habitual ways of acting and reacting. Changing ingrained habits in any area, whether it is nail biting, reactions in conflict, a golf slice or tennis serve, is not easy. Often in the change process we get worse before we get better because the new behavior seems unnatural. Our old response was unconscious, and in contrast we must think constantly about the new behavior. Only in time does the new behavior fade into the comfortable, taken-for-granted. Strasberg (1987) comments on the basic premise of method acting—that to create a performance that seems natural and unpracticed takes many hours of practice and preparation. He writes, "The preparation of every art must be conscious—you must know how and what you are going to do. Don't trust your inspiration. … Then being trained in the method do it to the best of your ability. Conscious preparation, unconscious result" (p. 79). So, while this workbook will provide the tools for change, ultimately, we realize that it takes a longer period for the new behaviors and habits of interpreting and developing messages, and organizational change strategies to take root. Reflecting on and understanding the significance of the construct called "organizational culture" can aid in this change process.

We provide a number of application chapters (see Part IV) including one on change. Chapters on leadership, diversity, ethics, and organizational effectiveness are also included. In addition to these applications, cultural knowledge can help you choose the right job, navigate the socialization process, enhance public relations, and discern what counts as productive and effective communication. In fact, in order to provide context for a more complete reflection on the value of a cultural analysis, we turn now to provide a brief history of the use of this term.

A Bit of History

Culture is a construct—a term or concept used to explain events or various phenomena. A construct is "a theoretical creation that is based on observation but cannot be observed directly or indirectly" (Babbie, 2001, p. 21). Culture, like other constructs (e.g., personality, intelligence, motivation, climate, attitude), has value if it helps us make sense of our world. Thus, as we discuss this construct, it is important to understand that the term has its own story to tell. This brief history of this construct in also suggests the enduring value of the study of culture to organizational life.

"Organizational culture" became a buzzword in the late 1970s and the 1980s. Popular books, such as Deal and Kennedy's (1982) *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life*. Schein's (2004) *Organizational Culture and Leadership* introduced the general public to the concept. About the same time, Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1982) introduced communication scholars to the concept of organizational culture, although the notion of interpretive studies emerged in the social sciences in the 1970s. Their basic premise was that organizations needed to be studied as cultures of interest for their own sake: as places where we "gossip, joke, knife one another, initiate romantic involvements, cue new employees to ways of doing the least amount of work that still avoids hassles from a supervisor, talk sports, arrange picnics" (p. 116). Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) recognized the explicit link between cultural competence and the metaphor of acting in their article, "Organizational Communication as Cultural Performance".

Over time, a variety of approaches to studying organizational culture emerged. We discuss these approaches in the next chapter. In brief, some organizational consultants see culture as a variable that can be manipulated in organizations to achieve more positive outcomes, and talk about pragmatic uses of cultural information. Other researchers operate from an interpretive and constructive framework, questioning whether culture can be manipulated, and are more interested in in-depth studies of how culture is created,

maintained, and changed through social interaction. Still others, known as critical theorists, contend that the use of cultural data can too easily solely focus on serving managerial interests. They believe a cultural analysis should focus on hidden, taken for granted, and potentially abusive uses of power (Deetz, 1991). Whether you take one of these contrasting approaches or a blended position, a few instances are provided below about ways cultural knowledge has important implications, and thus value, to organizations.

First, a cultural analysis has value for external communication or public relations. Hatch and Schultz (1997), for instance, assert that cultural meanings represented in member language, stories, and humor are critical to effective external communication related to image, vision, and strategy. Second, insight into socialization processes can be gained. For example, Mary Helen Brown (1990) described a typology of stories told by employees to socialize new employees in a nursing home. That typology might be used to determine the effectiveness of various narrative techniques in socialization. Third, an analysis may surface unethical practices or patterns. For instance, researchers have captured employee stories of mistreatment in the workplace and illuminated how some voices were privileged over others (Meares, Oetzel, Torres, Derkacs, & Ginossar, 2004). Their study provided implications for organizational strategies to treat all employees with respect and dignity. In addition, the researchers suggest strategies for employees to "gain voice" to resist unjust treatment.

Fourth, a cultural analysis may provide insight into communication patterns that have proven frustrating due to contradictory practices. Most of us could tell stories of dealing with a management dictate that makes little sense. We may feel trapped by a culture and constrained in our communication choices. For example, Patrice Buzzanell and colleagues (2017) explored the way in which women communicated, in relation to maternity leave, in light of organizational policy. Their analysis revealed contradictory and at times ironic discourse that resulted in securing their leave while at the same time undermining their image as a competent employee. In a related area of study, Boren and Johnson (2013) describe the negative impact a culture may have on employees when message norms on using family leave policies focus on resentment.

These frustrating and unjust cultural patterns are captured by the ironic statements made by Scott Adams (1996), the creator of the *Dilbert* cartoon. As he illustrates, a business plan has two steps: (a) "gather information" and (b) "ignore it" (p. 162). While we may find humor in frustrated *Dilbert* characters dealing with meaningless (or harmful) business practices, none of us likes to be in those roles. The power of analyzing a culture is that new options might emerge that had not been seen. In fact, we will explore the role of irony in introducing change in Chapter 10. Organizational members might also find that a cultural ritual has become so ingrained and unconscious that it now blinds them to more effective interaction options. Rehearsal 2.1 provides an opportunity to reflect on varied interaction patterns.

Rehearsal 2.1 Creativity and Constraint

Purpose: Discern how communication behaviors involve novel or creative responses to inherent tensions as well as more stable or constrained responses.

1. Describe a "taken-for-granted" practice in your organization.
2. How was/is this practice created through interaction?
3. How does it constrain future interaction?

Example: In most classrooms, teachers are in an authoritarian role. They direct interaction in the classroom setting, and the students (for the most part) sit passively in attention and obey directions given by the instructor. This pattern of authority is created through interaction. Each class that the teacher and students have enacted over their educational careers has reinforced the authoritarian role of the teacher

and the submissive role of students to the point that most students wouldn't think of violating the expectations or enacting a different kind of role. This pattern, present in varying degrees depending on larger national culture norms, constraints more egalitarian roles in the classroom. Many students would resist behavior by a teacher asking them to take a more active role in setting their own educational goals, and taking responsibility for their own learning. Conversely, certain questions or more assertive student behavior is often constrained by patterns of teacher authority.

In summary, culture, as a construct, continues to appear in the popular (Goodpasture, 2007; Taylor, 2015; Vick, 2013) and research literature (Daher, 2016; Gailliard & Davis, 2017; Gardner, Reithel, Cogliser, Walumbwa, & Foley, 2012; Walker & Aritz, 2015). In popular literature, while the term culture may not be in the title of a newly released book or organizational development initiative, it is integrated throughout the pages and the processes of both. For instance, Laslo Bock (2015), the CEO of Google, in his book, *Work Rules*, consistently refers to culture. He tells his story of being hired by Google. The person scheduled to interview him stressed that he should not show up in a suit, "or they will think you do not understand their culture if you show up in one". (p. 4). He speaks of the tens of thousands who visit Google headquarters asking, "What is the culture all about?" (p. 8). Bock goes onto to devote a chapter to three Google cultural cornerstones entitled, "Culture Eats Strategy for Breakfast". The continued use of this construct means it is not merely a fad. Culture, though not always foregrounded in the jargon of an organization, is something organizational members recognize as important. Our goal is to refine our understanding of this construct so that we can best use it in the conduct of an organizational cultural analysis. This refinement process is aided by theory. We turn now to explore the theoretic perspectives underpinning the OCA model. Understanding the role of theory will further aid us in articulating the value of this process.

Theory as Seeing

Join us in a brief "Gedankenexperiment" (German for "thought experiment"). Experiment by thinking with us about the words "organizational communication". What image or images first come to you mind? What did you see? A building? A matrix? A prison? A machine? A chart? These images belie an implicit theory or way of seeing organizations (Morgan, 2006). For example, a chart image focuses on structures and hierarchy whereas a machine image suggests the importance of interrelated functions and processes. A prison may suggest power relationships that have turned negative. These varied images may be considered implicit images or "ways of seeing". As ways of seeing, theories are part of normal, everyday human activity. While some theories are more formal, and developed than others, we are all enabled and constrained by our images of organization or the implicit theories we hold. In fact, a key idea we explore later is how the term "culture" is itself a metaphor, a way of seeing organizations. First, though, we overview several social constructivist theories that captures certain images—images that underscore the value and process of a cultural analysis.

Communicative Constitutive of Organization

The "Communicative Constitutive of Organization" (CCO) is a phrase used to capture a collection of theories and approaches to the study of organizational communication (Novak, 2016). While differences exist across these theories, they share in common the assumption that communication is not peripheral, but the primary mode for explaining social reality (Schoeneborn et al., 2014). In addition, and particularly important to cultural analysis, they share a common premise that "who or what is acting is always open to question" (Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011, p. 1152). Put differently, an analysis should not only focus on micro processes such as interactions between people but also attend to

macro processes such as artifacts, architecture, rituals, and the role of figures, mission statements, and metaphors in the way they constitute the organization. In Chapter 4 we introduce varied "elements of culture" as our way of attending to both micro and macro constitutive processes. In addition, CCO theorists encourage a foregrounding of ethics or "the ways ethics are constituted in communication" (McClellan & Sanders, 2013, p. 259). This foregrounding of ethics involves an exploration or communicative routines and practices, for instance, that would place a value of profit over the well-being of people or the environment.

What specifically is meant by the term "constitutive"? This term is used not only in the communication field, but also in politics, chemistry, and genetics. These varied usages present an array of images: (a) what makes a "thing what it is", (e.g., a physical property determined by the arrangement of atoms; (b) having the power to "institute, establish or enact" (e.g., political power to appoint a position or enact a policy); and (c) a controlling mechanism (e.g. DNA controlling the synthesis of a protein regardless of the organism) (American Heritage Dictionary, 2017). These varied meanings can aid us in seeing the relationship between communication and organizations in new ways. The theories or "schools" falling under CCO "address how complex communication processes constitute both organizing and organization, and how these processes and outcomes reflexively shape communication" (Putnam & Nicotera, 2010, p. 159). For instance, McPhee and Zaug (2009), from a CCO framework, claim the need to attend to "four flows: membership negotiation, organizational self-structuring, activity coordination, and institutional positioning (p. 22). Each of these communicative processes are central to organizing and organizations. Indeed, from this perspective, organizations as we know them come into social existence through two or more of these flows. Two major theories that reflect the constructivist assumptions held by CCO perspective provide additional metaphors or ways of seeing the value of engaging in a cultural analysis.

Structuration

A major theoretic framework called "structuration" explains the grassroots nature of culture, how members shape culture, but also how culture constrains their actions (Giddens, 1979). Structuration assumes that both choice and constraint are simultaneously present in our communicative behaviors (Poole, Seibold, & McPhee, 1986). As we briefly review this theory, discern the images that come to your mind. These images become practical ways to think about organization and the organizing process.

The term "structuration" captures two ideas: (a) we are constrained by structures (i.e., social norms, organizational decision-making hierarchies), and (b) we participate in maintaining, changing, and defending these structures in an ongoing process (Poole, 1992; Poole et al., 1986). For example, each time I follow a management directive, while I may feel constrained by the directive, my submission to the directive adds to the power of such directives in the future. I may also have the choice to disobey the directive, which may then result in weakening or changing future directives (or being fired!). One research project found that employees in a federal organization communicated about work-family policies in ways that created expectations (structures) that made employees hesitant to act on available policies (Kirby & Krone, 2002). In a related way, research on networks found that rules for interaction embedded in prior history were more influential than the those external to the network (Whitbred, Fonti, Steglich, & Contractor, 2011). Structures are thus reproduced through our collective action because their constraint on our actions is often not at the level of our consciousness.

For another example, consider a religious organization. Do members accept and/or question how to celebrate a ritual, such as communion, or the leader selection process or how to conduct worship assembly? Is upward communication allowed related to taken-for-granted norms such as the lack of ethnic diversity or a dearth of service-based collaboration with other denominations or religions? If you are like most of us, you simply take certain practices or structures for granted as the way things are done. A cultural analysis may surface structure changing stories related to diversity (Driskill, Arjannikova, & Meyer, 2014) or communicative practices that promote an ethic of collaborative service (Driskill, Meyer, & Mirivel, 2012; Fogg-Rogers,

Sardo, & Boushel, 2017). Such changes occur in part when the unconscious structure moves to conscious questioning, and a time when a new structuration process, over the years, may create a new taken-for-granted reality. In other words, as humans, we actively participate in creating and re-creating the determinative power of our communication structures.

The process of structuration is part of what we seek to understand in the study of culture. We study how organization members co-create constraining and enabling structures through such elements of culture as values, communication norms, rituals, and metaphors. We also consider the process of cultural change at periods in which members challenge existing structures. For instance, a new supervisor might walk into a structure, such as performance review, with the process already in place. She might notice communication norms that fail to have the employee reflecting and self-assessing. As a newcomer, then, she would be faced with the challenge of introducing a change. Yet, such a change would be constrained by the extent the current practices have become strongly embedded in the culture.

What image or images have occurred to you as you read about structuration? One image might be that of a river. A river is constrained by the banks in terms of width and direction of flow; yet at the same time the river influences width and direction through processes as erosion. A cultural analysis provides insights into communicative structures (e.g., norms, rules, rituals) that guide the flow of the organization; as well as potential ways to influence the flow.

Coordinated Management of Meaning

The Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) is a communication theory grounded in the Social Constructionism (SC) assumption that our interactions with one another create our most basic understandings of life (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2016). CMM tools are intended to improve the quality of our lives in and outside of organizations. Consistent with a CCO framework, they consider organizations and cultures as co-created by people in conversation and then in turn shaped by what they create (Pearce, 2007). This idea of co-construction, as introduced in Chapter 1, foregrounds the assumption that communication is substantial, weighty, and consequential. For instance, in a consulting context, Hedman and Gesch-Karamanli-dis (2015) report their use of CMM tools in aiding an organization reporting low participation and unclear decision-making in team meetings. In their intervention they focused on CMM questions that foregrounded the role of speech acts in constructing their culture. For example, in light of varied meaning levels such as episodes or culture, they asked questions such as: "How does this speech act reflect your typical meetings?" "What cultural stories does the speech act invite?" "What kind of organizational culture do they construct?" Their approach seeks to encourage dialogue and conversations in the context of change.

Story telling may also provide key insights to the co-construction process. For instance, creative risks in an organization are more likely to occur in the context of members telling stories about being rewarded for such risks. In contrast, unethical or potentially harmful organizational practices may become taken-for-granted. For instance, Lyon (2008) studied communication patterns at Enron and concluded that language used and communication styles in the culture created social capital for individuals who talked about the "new economy", engaged in combative communication tactics, and possessed a non-industry brand of "smartness". The culture led to these behaviors being interpreted more positively within the company than they subsequently were judged by objective outsiders who saw them as keys to the company's collapse. His study reflects the importance of the reflexive questions encouraged by CMM practitioners: (a) What are we creating in our communication? (b) What do we want to create? (c) What forms of communication will create what we want to create? These questions flow from a constructivist perspective and are at the heart of the cultural analysis process.

As before, we wonder what images came to your mind as your read about CMM? If "Structuration" conjures an image of a river constrained by the banks but able to make changes through such processes as erosion, CMM might be imaged as Lego people coming together to build something out of Legos. The Lego blocks represent various symbolic resources we share in common (language, rules, etc.) that in turn shape our identity, relationships, organizations, and cultures. We will be limited by what is in our "Lego

box" and perhaps by the instructions included, yet at the same time language resources, such as reflexive questions, may aid us in locating additional Legos and directions outside of the box that may aid us in re-creating or changing identities, relationships, organizations, and cultures.

In summary, this review of theories and associated images provide another way to reflect on the value of a cultural analysis. Theories provide a way to see or imagine an organization. If asked then, what is the value of an analysis, this review of theories and images could prompt such responses as, "a powerful way to understand the DNA that defines or makes this organization", (CCO) "insight into communicative processes that are like the shaping force of a river flowing that is also constrained by its banks" (Structuration); and/or "improved awareness of the what we are creating together and both the resources and constraints we see in our cultural lego box" (CMM).

Connections: Benefits of Studying Organizational Culture

Theories such as CCO, Structuration, and CMM all foreground the importance of paying close attention to the reflexive relationship between culture and communication. The study of culture should, therefore, focus on symbolic processes because "cultures are communicative creations, they emerge and are sustained by the communicative acts of all employees, not just the conscious persuasive strategies of upper management" (Conrad & Poole, 1998, p. 116). This relationship between communication and culture suggests multiple benefits of a cultural analysis. Below, we have listed several benefits and in particular, we highlight the five contexts covered in Part IV-Application. As you review this list, we encourage you in Rehearsal 2.2 to capture these and/or other benefits most relevant to your organization. Furthermore, for some, this list may provide a way to focus your analysis. For instance, if a leadership transition is underway or if recent diversity initiatives are of interest, then a cultural analysis may focus on those concerns. In general, a cultural analysis is beneficial to:

- prompt reflection on "diversity" (Chapter 9) practices, including an understanding of the relationship between ethnic and national culture in light of organizational communication patterns and norms;
- improve the "change" (Chapter 10) leadership process by uncovering cultural strengths and potential areas for growth, conflict management, and external communication;
- empower members to integrate "ethical" (Chapter 11) practices into organizational processes relevant to internal and external communication in relation to short versus long-term sustainability, power and decision-making, and concerns for the environment;
- equip formal and informal "leaders" (Chapter 12) to ethically co-construct symbolic resources such as stories and rituals which shape meaning and purpose, what is valued, ethical practices, and readiness to grow through crisis events;
- provide insight into cultural practices relevant for overall "organizational effectiveness" (Chapter 13) such as hiring, orientation, public relations, development, crisis management, and training

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Rehearsal 2.2 The Value of a Cultural Analysis

Purpose: Identify what you believe would be the primary values or benefits of an analysis for your organization or the organization you have decided to study.

Steps:

1. Review the bulleted points above.
2. Write down the language you would use to capture *three potential values* of an analysis of your own organization or of the organization you are considering as a focus for an analysis.

3. You might consider possible problems you currently perceive in the organization and describe how a cultural analysis would help you better identify solutions to these problems. Or you might reflect on current changes being considered or implemented and ways a cultural analysis would help in the process of change management.

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Cultural Analysis in Action

This workbook introduces a six-step process for conducting a cultural analysis. This first step, the ability to articulate the value of the process, equips you on an informal and formal level. You may, for instance, see the value of moving forward in an informal way to aid you in adjusting to a new organization or engaging in leading change. Or, on a formal level, as part of a class activity or a professional development commitment, engage in an analysis to hone your ability to gather credible cultural data for application. In either case, when you complete the process, you will have a set of tools for understanding the communication norms, the resources and obstacles for change leadership, as well as insights for developing your own communication practices. These steps, however, will often not occur in a linear fashion. For instance, you may gain insights in the early phases that prove to be "on target" for "communication applications" (Step 6). You will then be challenged to check the validity of those insights as you reflect on data. If you are studying an organization as an insider, you will have already collected data (Step 4) as you have interacted and made observations about communication. In such a situation, we will be asking you to slow down. The process outlined in this workbook will aid you in slowing down in order to draw applications based on ethical and credible data. In review, the six major steps of the OCA model are as follows:

1. Articulate the Value of the Analysis Process

Both at the informal and formal level, a cultural analysis has value. The application chapters on diversity, ethics, change, leadership, and effectiveness capture significant ways to introduce positive benefits.

2. Understand the Concept of Culture

The concept of culture needs to be understood beyond the popular business literature on improving corporate culture. Understanding the richness of this concept will further enrich your ability to clearly articulate the value of a cultural analysis as well as enhance your ability to navigate the remaining four steps.

3. Describe Major Cultural Elements

We review research on and examples of elements such as stories, rules, and heroes. The importance of being aware of these elements is that each one provides a different vantage point on the often-hidden aspects of

discursive and organizing practices that constitute culture. Too often an analysis will focus on one element to the exclusion of others.

4. Use Multiple Data Collection Methods to Identify Elements of Culture

We demonstrate the importance of using multiple methods, whether gathering data at a formal or informal level. Observations and systematic analysis of organizational texts are described as two of three ways to gain a rich data set. Surveys and interviews will also be introduced as alternative, but more obtrusive methods, for both insiders and outsiders. "Obtrusive" means how obvious the research method is to organizational members, thus how likely to alter their behavior.

5. Interpret Constitutive Processes

You will engage in developing a credible interpretation of the culture. The notion of an interpretation is important in that a culture analysis does not claim to be an objective and neutral video recording. Instead, the analogy we use throughout this book is that of a dramatic performance, like a play. Two directors may take the same play and stage two very different productions based on different interpretations of the written word. Indeed, the assumption with a cultural analysis is that an objective and neutral cultural recording is impossible. Instead, the individual (or team) works to provide a credible interpretation this is compelling, meaningful, valuable, and valid. You will be guided to explore varied elements to discern patterns of thematic action (i.e. organizing processes) and an overall characterization that constitute the culture.

6. Identify Positive Communication Applications

Like any good dramatic interpretation and presentation, an effective cultural analysis should inspire new insights. These insights, as we encourage in the closing chapters, will focus on positive communication applications (c.f., Brown, Morris, & Lee, 2012). The focus on "positive communication" will be explored in the closing chapter, yet from the outset it is important to resist the idea that the goal of the analysis is to find problems nor is it about ignoring problems. Instead, the focus on "positive" is first about discerning what communication practices are creating the desired culture. Organizations benefit from seeing and hearing what is working. And, then from a positive orientation, we will also work on capturing communicative processes that will aid in co-creating even more ethical and effective organizations. since this process is not linear, these insights may occur before you have worded your final interpretation. In the final section of the text, we return full circle. The value of an analysis is tied back to various application arenas including organizational effectiveness, diversity, change management, leadership, and ethics. We encourage you to develop your ability to write to the organization you would study about the value of this process in Rehearsal 2.3.

Summary

The following key ideas were introduced:

1. Change in communication behaviors is enhanced by knowledge of culture.
2. A "construct" is a term, or a concept used to explain events or various phenomena—as a construct, culture was popularized in the 1970s and early 1980s.
3. Theories, whether formal or informal, provide a way of seeing, an image of an organization. Thus, we need to be aware of the images we hold. At the same time, formal theories can challenge us to make the best use of a cultural analysis since they provide new ways of seeing.

4. The OCA model used in this book is grounded in constructivist theories: CCO, Structuration, and CMM. Each of these theories foreground communication in terms of the organizing process, and on organizations as created in and through communication that then shaped communication.

5. CMM suggests three big questions to guide our analysis process: "What are we creating?" "What do we want to create?" "What forms of communication will create what we want to create?"

6. Six major benefits of studying organizational culture include the following:

   • prompt reflection on diversity practices (Chapter 9), including an understanding of the relationship between national and organizational communication patterns and norms;
   • improve the change (Chapter 10) leadership process by uncovering cultural strengths and potential problem areas;
   • empower members to integrate ethical (Chapter 11) practices into organizational structures and practices while also becoming aware of unconsciously supported unethical structures;
   • equip formal and informal leaders (Chapter 12) to tap into symbolic resources such as stories and rituals;
   • provide insight to cultural practices relevant for overall organizational effectiveness (Chapter 13) such as hiring, orientation, development, public relations, crisis management, and training.

Rehearsal 2.3 Writing about the Value of a Cultural Analysis

Purpose: Develop a convincing newsletter style article that conveys the value of conducting a cultural analysis.

Overview: Depending on your role as an insider or an outsider as well as on your relationship with the organization you analyze, you might find it helpful to take a step beyond the brainstorming activity on describing the value of a cultural analysis. We encourage you to take initiative and actually write an article that would argue for the merits of a cultural analysis. Such an article would have the pragmatic benefit of introducing your organization to the concept of cultural analysis.

Whether you propose to study your own organization, or you make a request to study a different organization, you will need to provide an explanation and rationale for the cultural analysis process. Why should a company want to do it? What benefits could they expect? This Rehearsal might yield information surprising to you. Furthermore it might yield information of value for publication in a company newsletter.

Steps:

1. Read a research article (i.e. it should include methods, results, etc.) on the topic of organizational culture. As a research article it should be in an academic journal as opposed to a popular press magazine. A research journal, if recent, will sometimes contain information about organizational culture studies that have not been picked up in the popular press.

2. Determine from the article two or three specific benefits of understanding the culture of an organization. You may want to add additional benefits discussed in Chapter 2 or that you identified in your brainstorming activity.

3. Summarize these values of the cultural analysis process in a one- to two-page article (length will ultimately be determined by your organization/publication outlet) that uses language that would be welcomed by members of your organization.

4. Use a format that would be appealing, like a newsletter style (i.e. catchy title, headers, bulleted points, relevant examples from your organization and the article, etc.).

Discussion Questions

1. How does human interaction create organizational culture?
2. What does it mean to say organization and organizing are "constituted" in communication?
3. How does organizational culture constrain or shape human interaction within it?
4. How does culture affect ethical decision-making in organizations? Reflect on what you know about cases in the news such as Enron, AIG, and BP. How did organizational culture of these organizations affect how decisions were made?
5. What would you say to a CEO about the benefits of letting you study the culture of his/her organization? What benefit would an analysis provide for improving internal as well as external communication?
6. What kind of culture are you looking for as you decide on a place to work?
7. What is clear about the six major phases of the cultural analysis process? What would you like clarified?

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Part II

Cultural Analysis Basics

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Constructing the Set
The Concept of Culture

The second step of the OCA model, "understanding the concept of culture", captures three dominant ways of studying organizational culture. These approaches, "culture as a variable", "culture as a root metaphor", and "culture as discursive construction" each provide insight into organizational culture. However, the "culture as discursive construction" is foregrounded as beneficial due to the way communication is viewed as constitutive of organizing and organizations. The OCA framework is formally defined as a process which focuses on capturing the unique qualities of an organization as constituted in elements of culture such as rituals, stories, and history that both shape, and are shaped by, communication that has significance for organizational and interpersonal ethics, effectiveness, and development. We hold five assumptions about culture and communication in advocating this frame-work. The concepts of "levels of culture" and "images of organization" are introduced as ways to further understanding the construct of culture. Guidelines are provided for writing a cultural analysis proposal.

Step Two: Understanding the Concept of Culture

1. Articulate the value of a cultural analysis
2. Understand the concept of culture
3. Describe cultural elements
4. Use multiple data collection methods
5. Interpret constitutive processes
6. Co-create positive communication applications

> Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs.
> (Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 1973, p. 5)

Objectives

- Explain the concept of culture in light of three approaches.
- Discuss the value of using a "culture as discursive construction" approach.
- Differentiate between the different images and metaphors for understanding organizations.
- Explain the implications of understanding the three "levels" of organizational culture for your analysis.
- Define the OCA framework.

Stage Terms

- Culture as a variable.
- Levels of culture.
- Culture as a root metaphor.
- Culture as discursive construction.
- Metaphors of organizing.

Good News, Bad News

To enhance our performances on the stage, we have to be clear about what play we are performing. Yet, set construction will be determined not only by the play but also by the director's, as well as the actor's, interpretation of the work. In the world of cultural analysis, a number of options exist for what we may attempt in a cultural analysis in terms of focus, scope, and purpose. Thus, in this section on "Cultural Analysis Basics" we provide two chapters. In the chapter that follows, we move to the second step of the process, "Understanding the concept of culture", and then in Chapter 4, we cover the third step related to "element of culture". Combined, these chapters will prepare you for moving toward the next section on moving from informal data collection processes to more formal ones that will ensure more ethical and effective efforts at co-creating the cultures we want to create.

Thus, in this second step, we argue that order to construct the set, we need to define the term "culture". The good news is that culture can be defined. The bad news is that different ways of defining the term can sometimes lead to confusion. The examples below are just a few of these differing takes on the term "culture" and "organizational culture".

- Culture is the way things are done in the organization (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, 2000)
- Culture is "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems" (Schein, 2004, p. 17)
- "Culture is a system of shared symbols" (Geertz, 1973)
- "Organizational culture is the set(s) of artifacts, values, and assumptions that emerge from the interactions of organizational members". (Keyton, 2005)

The differences in definitions betray important assumptions about what to study when analyzing culture. Each definition may produce different but useful views of organizational culture. Popular literature on organizational culture may not make the differences clear, and consultants and managers may not realize the importance of these differences. For example, if culture is just one more facet of an organization, then it may be changed as easily as a strategic plan or office layout. If culture is something an organization is, then it may be harder to change and has an implicit influence in all we do, even our efforts to change it. Finally, if culture is something created by communication, and then in turn also shaped by communicative action, then we need an analytic approach that is attentive to the process.

The Concept of Culture

Over time three major approaches to understanding and researching culture have emerged. Initially, Smircich (1983) defined culture by raising a key question concerning organizations and culture: Does the organization have a culture or is it a culture? This question indicates that culture can been studied in organizations: as a variable or as a root metaphor. A third approach, and one that forms the basis of the model used in this book, views culture as "discursive constructions" (Putnam & Fairhurst, 2015, p. 386). Nonetheless, we concur with others who see value in each approach and in understanding their relative merits (Bisel, Messersmith, & Keyton, 2010).

Understanding these approaches will aid you when you pick up other books or articles on the topic of organizational culture in that you will better understand their focus and assumptions. We begin by exploring the "culture as a variable" approach before turning to the "culture as root metaphor" followed by "culture as discursive construction". We conclude this chapter by providing "Connections" focused on our approach to cultural analysis. Our approach involves capturing cultural elements to interpret thematic action and an overall characterization of the culture in order to develop practical and positive communication implications.

Culture as a Variable

The culture-as-a-variable approach focuses on causality. Culture is thought to be able to predict and thus cause certain outcomes. You might view culture as variable "X" (values, norms, etc.) that is influencing variable "Y" (productivity, for example). This focus on culture as an "object" assumes "(a) culture is measurable, (b) culture produces discourse, (c) cultures can be managed, (d) changes in the culture will result in changes to communicative activities" (Bisel et al., 2010, p. 349).

The relationship between culture and communication is complex due to the fact that culture is not an easily defined variable. For example, try to answer the question: "What make a culture 'good' or 'strong?'" and you will find that the answers are not easily placed in a formula. Based on the variable approach, a manager who does not have a clear understanding of the complexity of the culture variable might say something like: "If we could just get our culture stronger, our productivity would go up". The challenge or potential problems arise when this same manager attempts to strengthen the culture without a clear sense of what is to be strengthened and how culture influences productivity. Are values to be changed or strengthened? History to be heightened? Setting to be enhanced? This approach also begs the larger question about whether it is possible for management to change culture, or whether culture is a deeper phenomenon that emerges out of the interaction of employees over long periods of time. Pepper (2008) offers the interesting example of PLH Technologies, an organization that spent millions to build a new corporate headquarters that would reinforce and display an organizational culture of openness, modernity, and fun. The new structure with its open floor plan, walking tracks, picnic areas and glass walls was perceived and used by employees much differently from the executives' plan. It actually inhibited open communication and was seen as counter to organization values.

In the above example, the complexity of the variable of culture is evident. Within the variable approach, however, there are two lines of inquiry: internal variable and external variable. The variable approach may focus on internal variables thought to influence culture. In this instance, organizations are viewed as producing culture as evidenced in such cultural artifacts as rituals, heroes, and norms. Consultants and researchers are therefore interested in exploring aspects of culture (e.g., leadership values, norms, structures) that predict organizational survival and effectiveness (Collins, 2001; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Peters & Waterman, 1982).

The variable approach is also evidenced in comparative or cross-cultural management research that takes into account culture as an external variable. As an external variable, culture is seen as a map for navigating differences across organizations and differences in national cultures. This approach tends to focus on ways to tap into national cultural differences to improve productivity or competitiveness (Harris, Moran, & Moran, 2007; Ouchi, 1981). For example, Mexican organizations have been compared with U.S.-based organizations in their orientation to time and relationships (Condon, 1997). In this comparison, the variable of national culture is used to explain, why for example, Mexicans tend to give priority to talk surrounding relationships whereas the U.S. norm is to have a greater task focus. Hofstede (2003), in a similar vein, has done extensive research on five underlying value assumptions that differentiate workers in one national culture from another. He considers these value assumptions, these ways of thinking, feeling, and acting as a "software of the mind" and thus central to exploring communication behaviors (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p. 5). A web based resource has been developed that provides country scores from over 50 countries and 3 regions (Hofstede, n.d.). For example, cross cultural comparisons depict the US culture as highly individualistic in comparison to countries in South America and in the East. Given the widespread recognition of international economic

interdependence, the importance of understanding national cultural influences will only increase. In fact, "over three-quarters of all U.S. companies conduct business internationally, ..." (Eisenberg, Trethewey, LeGreco, & Goodall, 2017, p. 8).

Understanding the influence of national culture on organizational culture is an important, and often overlooked, aspect of organizational culture analysis. For instance, more recently, research has explored value dimensions to explain the U.S. role in the 2008 global financial crisis. His findings will be explored further in the chapter on ethics (Hofstede, 2009). There is no doubt that many of the deepest unconscious assumptions we bring to our work life are often rooted in our cultural socialization. As Figure 3.1 summarizes, some researchers have focused on cross-cultural organizational studies. This approach, when considering its merits, focuses on the controlling and static features of culture that shape communication and thus helps visualize their impact. On the other hand, a focus on variables may tend to shift attention away from ethics and individual responsibility as well as the role of communication shaping culture (Bisel et al., 2010). Furthermore, treating culture as a variable may tempt us to believe that it can be easily manipulated or changed to produce certain outcomes. These strengths and weaknesses should now be considered in the context of two other approaches.

Culture as a Root Metaphor

This second major approach to the study of culture focuses on understanding how organizational members create cultures and how the culture affects the members who are a part of it. It is more about culture as process than as product or variable. The core idea of this approach is that culture is something an organization "is" versus culture as something an organization "has". Thus, for example, if someone were researching or consulting with a Wall Street investment firm, consultants using the variable approach might determine how cultural practices led to organizational problems, and seek to modify those practices. In contrast, a scholar or consultant operating from a root metaphor concept of culture might attempt to develop a deeper understanding about how cultural values and assumptions led to some of the surface practices. The goal would be a deeper understanding of the influence of culture, not necessarily modification. Yet as you might infer from this example, both see the pragmatic value of understanding culture. There are three major research traditions within the root metaphor approach. Researchers in these traditions formulate or focus on different aspects of culture.

1. Culture as Shared Cognition

In this tradition, the beliefs or assumptions of the members of the culture are the focus on the inquiry (Schall, 1983). Researchers examine how employees think and what patterns of logic are shared among organization members.
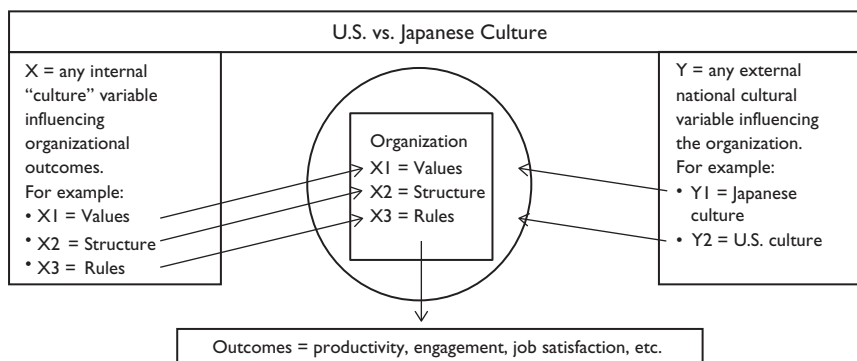

Figure 3.1 Culture as a Variable

Researchers, for example, might describe assumptive differences between members of the same organization who come from different national cultures (Auer-Rizzi & Berry, 2000; Driskill & Downs, 1995; Maroccia, 2012).

2. Culture as Systems of Shared Symbols

This research places a focus on the actual language, non-verbal, and other organizational symbols (Eisenberg & Riley, 1988; Geertz, 1973; Smircich, 1983). A consultant or researcher using this approach might observe and record interaction patterns to understand and describe the way members use language to manage conflicts or build friendships (Jameson, 2001). In addition, such an approach may focus on discourses or underlying scripts that members may not always consciously enact. For example, in a helping organization, one study revealed how language embedded in rituals tended to minimize the experiences of lower class participants in favor of middle class (Lawless, 2015).

3. Culture as the Expression of Unconscious Processes

This focus involves an exploration of the way symbols reflect underlying beliefs and assumptions of the members. Such research might explore the deeper unconscious meaning of a common metaphor used in the organization or on the underlying archetype that predominates the lives of the members (Jung, 1964; Levi-Strauss, 1967). For instance, Forbes (2002) explores the way women's discourse reveals dominant masculine values.

A visual depiction of the metaphor approach (Figure 3.2) captures the contrast with the variable approach (Figure 3.1). The internal variable approach assumes that culture is one element of an organization that can be studied and used to make predictions about organizational effectiveness. In the same vein, the external variable approach addresses culture as a force outside the organization, such as the norms of the larger national culture (e.g., Japanese vs. U.S. culture). In contrast, the root metaphor approach assumes that the organization is the culture and therefore, depending on how culture is defined, various aspects of the culture may be explored. Thus, the root metaphor approach sees the role of communication in shaping the culture, and does not treat culture as static but dynamic and present. As such, individual choice and attentiveness to ethics may be more appreciated. On the other hand, present, rather than past communication may be stressed along with a tendency to overlook the impact of such material constraints as place and structure (Bisel et al., 2010). As we turn to the final approach, it may be useful to capture the variable approach as viewing culture as an "object", whereas the metaphor approach focuses on culture as "in process" or "becoming". The final approach introduces the notion of culture as "grounded in action" (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004).
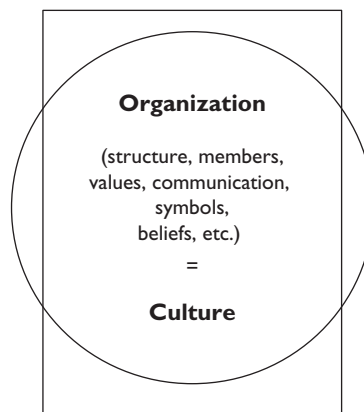

Organization

(structure, members,
values, communication,
symbols,
beliefs, etc.)

=

Culture

Figure 3.2 Culture as a Root Metaphor

Culture as Discursive Construction

While we see merits in the above approaches. In fact, in previous editions of this book, we focused more on an analysis process that favored the "culture as root metaphor" approach. Our current work introduces a third option that is more consistent with the constructivist approaches introduced in prior editions and in Chapter 2 (i.e. Structuration, CMM, CCO). This third approach, "culture as discursive construction", challenges the assumptions of the other perspectives in relation to communication and culture. This approach views culture as "grounded in action" by treating communicative action and structure as mutually constitutive (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004). Put differently, past interactions create culture that then shape present interactions. This notion of "grounded in action" is consistent with the CCO framework introduced in Chapters 1 and 2. Recall the idea of "constitutive" from Chapter 2 with varied images of political power to institute, the role of DNA in controlling synthesis, or the determinative role of how atoms are structured. Each image is meant to convey that communication is more than information sharing. Culture then is more than a variable shaped by communication and is more than the organization itself (metaphor). It is continually shaped by and shaping communicative action. As such, this approach challenges us to attend to both individual choice in shaping culture as well as the controlling or constraining influence of culture. There may, however, be a tendency to overemphasize the power of past interactions and then give too much attention to communication over culture (Bisel et al., 2010).

In our effort to apply the constitutive approach, we need to be aware of these relative strengths and weaknesses. Nonetheless, this approach shapes the definition of our model for cultural analysis. The OCA model focuses on capturing the unique qualities of an organization as constituted in elements of culture such as rituals, stories, and history that both shape and are shaped by communication that has significance for organizational and interpersonal ethics, effectiveness, and development. We summarize five assumptions that seek to draw on strengths while attending to limits.

- Culture and communication are inextricably constitutive of one another. The tendency, especially with a variable approach, may be to think in terms of using communication to shape a culture. Or, we might think in terms of certain types of cultures as shaping communication. Instead, consistent with CCO, we concur with Shepherd's (1999) statement about how a constitutive view "demands that we reverse the causal direction typical in our theories: Individuals don't make communication so much as individuals are made by communication; goals don't drive discourse so much as discourse drives goals" (p. 163). To this we would add, the individuals (and organization and culture) "made by communication" are then shaped by communication patterns and the goals driven by "discourse" then in turn shape the discourse, and thus the organization and culture.
- Culture creation, maintenance and modification, is both top down and bottom up. Leaders cannot unilaterally create or enforce organizational values and artifacts; however, they can be quite influential in influencing the overall climate and values of the organization by what they focus on, what they reward, and how they model organizational life. Organization members must buy-in, and be genuinely involved, for cultural change to occur. Any member of the organization may serve as an impetus for change.
- Cultural knowledge empowers organization members to counter managerial manipulation. Critical theorists have often characterized culture as "unobtrusive control" of employees (Deetz, 1992; Lyon, 2008; Mumby, 1997, 2015). For example, one might argue that gaining employee identification with corporate values or other related efforts aimed at "employee engagement" may actually undermine employee best interests by encouraging over-commitment through unconsciously accepted norms of working overtime. Promoting conscious awareness of cultural processes and influences among all organization members equips them to enact in ethical ways for overall organizational effectiveness. While cultures can be constraining, as we discussed in the previous chapter in describing structuration theory, they can also be the means of creativity and change.

- Thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of organizational culture provide practical implications for organizational and interpersonal ethics, learning, and change. The process of "thick description" will be discussed in Chapters 5–7. The challenge is this process is to improve our everyday ways of gathering cultural data. We all, for instance, draw conclusions about culture based on our reading various texts (emails, newsletters), making observations (in meetings, at business lunches), and from conversations with others. The goal with thick description is to improve the quality of this process by attending to context, and a larger array of cultural data in our collection and subsequent interpretation process. In particular, we seek to follow the assumptions of the CCO framework by attending to both micro (interpersonal) and macro (structural) elements of culture (Putnam & Nicotera, 2010). As such, the goal is to discern to avoid a tendency to overemphasize communication over culture.
- Organizational cultures are both enduring and dynamic. While organizational change is not easy or fast, it is possible. This framework foregrounds the idea that cultures are created in communication and then in turn these same cultures both create and constrain our ability to introduce change. Thus, the analysis process, as indicated in point four above, is about gaining insight to the ethical change processes while recognizing the complexity of this process.

This complexity of this approach is hard to capture in an image. As referenced earlier, we might visualize at an abstract level as the role of a DNA in a cell, or perhaps Lego people building with Legos. Also, consider reading Bisel et al. (2010) to see these contrasting approaches in terms of a gyroscope metaphor. Here, consistent with the other images using simple line drawing, notice how the half arrows of culture and communication are reflexively connected and thus constitute varied organizing processes, which in turn construct and are constructed by what we experience as the organization. See Figure 3.3.

The culture as discursive construction approach is carried throughout the remaining chapters as we guide you through the process of conducting a cultural analysis. At times, you might pick up on language that suggests other approaches, yet our goal is to move in the direction of discerning organizing processes by attending to communication and culture. In Chapter 4 we introduce cultural elements that are foundational to the study of a culture. We believe that studying multiple elements encourages a valid and credible analysis as opposed to an exploration of a single feature of the culture. The focus on multiple and mixed data collection methods (i.e. observation, systematic analysis of organizational texts such as newsletters, and in-depth interviews and open-ended surveys) does not preclude you from using other
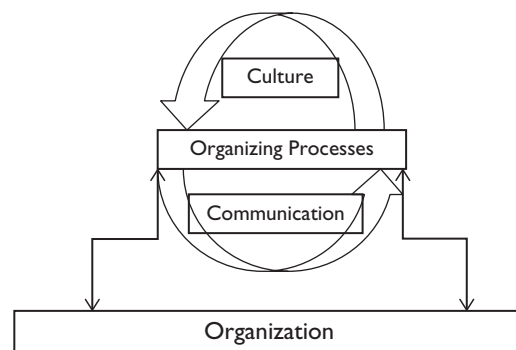

Figure 3.3 Culture as Discursive Construction

types of quantitative data (e.g. a standardized survey on job satisfaction). It does suggest that culture is not a concept that can be easily captured through brief or easily constructed surveys. Beginning in Chapter 5 we review various research skills aimed to sharpen what you do throughout your day—observe, read, talk to others, ask questions.

Our approach has a bottom line of enhancing your performance as well as that of your organization. We will do this by enhancing your awareness of various cultural elements (Chapter 4), sharpening your ability to collect and interpret data about these elements (Chapters 5–8), and then guiding you in developing communication application of insights from the cultural analysis (Chapters 9–14). This process has been proven valuable, in our experience and that of our students and clients, for improving our understanding of organizations and our ability to lead and serve. Our hope is that the cultural analysis process will assist all of us in our efforts to be better observers, interpreters, and thus leaders and managers who not only survive but thrive in the organizations that greet us at birth and carry us to the grave.

Connections: Definitions, Levels, and Metaphors

These contrasting approaches to the study of culture suggest three practical connections: (a) first, definitions matter; (b) definitions guide analysis; (c) definitions determine what we pay attention to and ignore. Therefore, it is important to reflect on how two basic questions are answered based on these approaches. In particular, these questions and example answers should be kept in mind as you discern the assumptions the organization holds about your analysis process.

1. How will you define culture?

    - As a variable?
      - Internal? External?
    - As root metaphor?
      - Shared beliefs? Shared symbols? Unconscious processes?
    - As a discursive construction?
      - How are rules, rituals, symbols, history constituting organizing processes?

2. How will the results be used? For example:

    - Change culture by manipulating certain elements of culture? (internal variable)
    - Assist multinationals via cross-cultural comparisons? (external variable)
    - Determine the way surface elements (i.e. rituals, roles) play in revealing values or assumptions? (root metaphor)
    - Make unconscious processes part of our conscious? (root metaphor)
    - Learn how varied communicative practices are creating the culture? (discursive construction)

These basic questions, if bypassed, can lead to misunderstandings and frustrations. For example, imagine if a consultant held a root metaphor approach to culture and thus sought to surface values or cultural assumptions based on identifying rituals or rules. Then, imagine a disappointed organizational leader who unconsciously held a variable approach and thus expected recommendations based on identifying elements as variables that would impact productivity. The OCA model is based on a "culture as discursive construction" approach. In this approach, as noted earlier, we focus on capturing cultural elements that constitute the culture in order to interpret thematic action, and an overall characterization of the culture in order to develop practical and positive communication implications. Thus, as you engage in discussions with a representative from the organization, find ways to learn about their expectations. At the same time, you can present the value of an approach with the focus on