
Theories of Organizational Culture

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Abstract

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The notion that organizations may have specific cultures is found sprinkled in a vast array of publications on strategy and business policy, on organizational behaviour and theory. Although the absence of a solid theoretical grounding for the concept of organizational culture has been frequently lamented, little effort has been exerted to bring within the perimeter of the management and organizational field the relevant concepts found in cultural anthropology.

The purpose of this paper is therefore three-fold:

First, to provide a typology of schools of thought in cultural anthropology in order to understand the diverse and complex theories of culture advanced in this field;

Second, to relate these different points of view to the emerging notions of organizational culture found explicitly or implicitly in the management and organization literature;

Third, to pull together the insights and findings derived from this enquiry in order to propose an integrative concept of organizational culture as a useful metaphor for studying the processes of decay, adaptation and radical change in complex organizations.

Introduction

The discourse on organizations is laced with analogies of a distinct biomorphic, anthromorphic or sociomorphic flavour. In the first instance, organizations have purpose and survival goals (e.g., Barnard 1938; Rice 1963), go through life cycles (Haire 1959; Kimberly and Miles 1980), are plagued with problematic health (Bennis 1966), and subjected to implacable selection processes (Hannan and Freeman 1977; Aldrich 1979). The anthropomorphic metaphor endows organizations with personality, needs and character (Selznick 1957; Rhenman 1973; Harrison 1972) or with typically human cognitive processes (Argyris and Schön 1978; Heirs and Pehrson 1972; Hedberg 1979). However, in a prevalent and persistent analogy, organizations are conceived of as *societies writ small* (Silverman 1970).

A large and varied cohort of writers have made use of the metaphor of organizations as 'little societies', as social systems equipped with socialization processes, social norms and structures. It is within this very broad metaphor that the concept of culture in organizations takes its significance. If organizations are miniature societies, then they should show evidence of distinct cultural traits: 'While the uniqueness of individuals is expressed in their *personality*, the individuality of organizations may be expressed in terms of

their differing cultures' (Eldridge and Crombie 1974:88). That may well be, but it begs the questions of what is meant by 'culture' and what the relevance of this concept is in a field where that motley, Protean notion appears under various guises and pseudonyms.

In the organization theory literature, culture is often treated as an undefined, immanent characteristic of any society, as yet another *contingency factor* with a varying and little understood incidence on the functioning of organizations (Crozier 1964; Crozier and Friedberg 1977; Meyer and Associates 1978; Child 1981). As different societies presumably have different cultures, considerable research efforts were and are still expended in search of culture's influence on the structures and processes of organizations and on the attitudes, needs and motivations of managers (e.g., Weinshall 1977; Kraut 1975; Roberts 1970; Haire, Ghiselli and Porter 1966). This preoccupation led to an interesting debate between 'universalists' and 'particularists' with respect to the permeability of national cultures to universal organizational principles, structures and processes (Lammers and Hickson 1979; Child 1981). However, in these studies, the focus is on society's culture and its impact on organizations, *not*, to any extent, on the 'cultural properties' of the organization itself.

The notion that organizations as such have *cultures* has been proposed fairly frequently in the last ten years, even before the recent surge of interest in the subject. Turner (1971), Eldridge and Crombie (1974), Handy (1976), Pettigrew (1979) and Hofstede (1980, 1981) provided remarkably good treatments of that concept. Silverzweig and Allen (1976), Ouchi (1981), Henderson (1979), Baker (1980), Schwartz and Davis (1981) have also written on the subject.

The publication in 1980 of a *Business Week* article on corporate cultures has aroused considerable interest and a number of books on that topic (Deal and Kennedy 1982; Allen and Kraft 1982; Peters and Waterman 1982). Indeed, the proposition that organizations have cultural properties, that they breed meanings, values and beliefs, that they nurture legends, myths and stories, and are festooned with rites, rituals and ceremonies has been gaining rapidly in popularity. However, this notoriety may turn a complex, difficult but seminal concept into a superficial fad, reduce it to an empty, if entertaining, catch-all construct explaining everything and nothing! Indeed, with a few notable exceptions, invocations of culture are not followed by any elaboration. It is presumed that the word 'culture' is a stenographic cue for 'values, norms, beliefs, customs' or any other such string of convenient identifiers chosen among the vast assortment of definitions available in a random pick of texts from cultural anthropology.

Of course, a common justification for this eclecticism rests with Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952)'s identification of 164 definitions of culture. It is therefore pointless, the argument goes, to attempt to make sense and order out of such divergent views; and one may therefore feel free to choose a convenient definition according to one's particular needs and sensitivities.

We believe this stance reflects the insufficient effort made to bring within the perimeter of the management and organization field the sophisticated scholarship of cultural anthropology. As we shall demonstrate in this paper, there are well demarcated schools of thought on culture and adopting a particular definition of culture is a commitment to specific conceptual assumptions and ways of studying culture.

This article will show furthermore how these main schools of thought in cultural anthropology translate in different but compelling views of organizations. We shall examine and sort out these concepts of culture and trace their equivalence in the management and organization literature (referred to as the M/O literature in the rest of this article). We shall conclude by proposing a definition of organizational culture that is informed by the findings of this enquiry.

Concepts of Culture

Cultural anthropologists have proposed diverse and complex theories of culture that may be characterized by their particular assumptions, slants and emphases. The following typology (Figure 1) of schools of thought, inspired by Keesing (1974)'s justly celebrated article, provides a useful tool for understanding these different points of view and relating them to notions of culture found, explicitly or implicitly, in the M/O literature.

A first and critical distinction is drawn between those theorists who view culture as meshed into the social system and those who conceive of it as a conceptually separate, ideational system. In the former view, the cultural and social realms are integrated into a *sociocultural system*, postulating harmony, consonance and isomorphism between these two realms. The cultural is swallowed into the social and vice versa; manifest behaviour is the product of this sociocultural system.

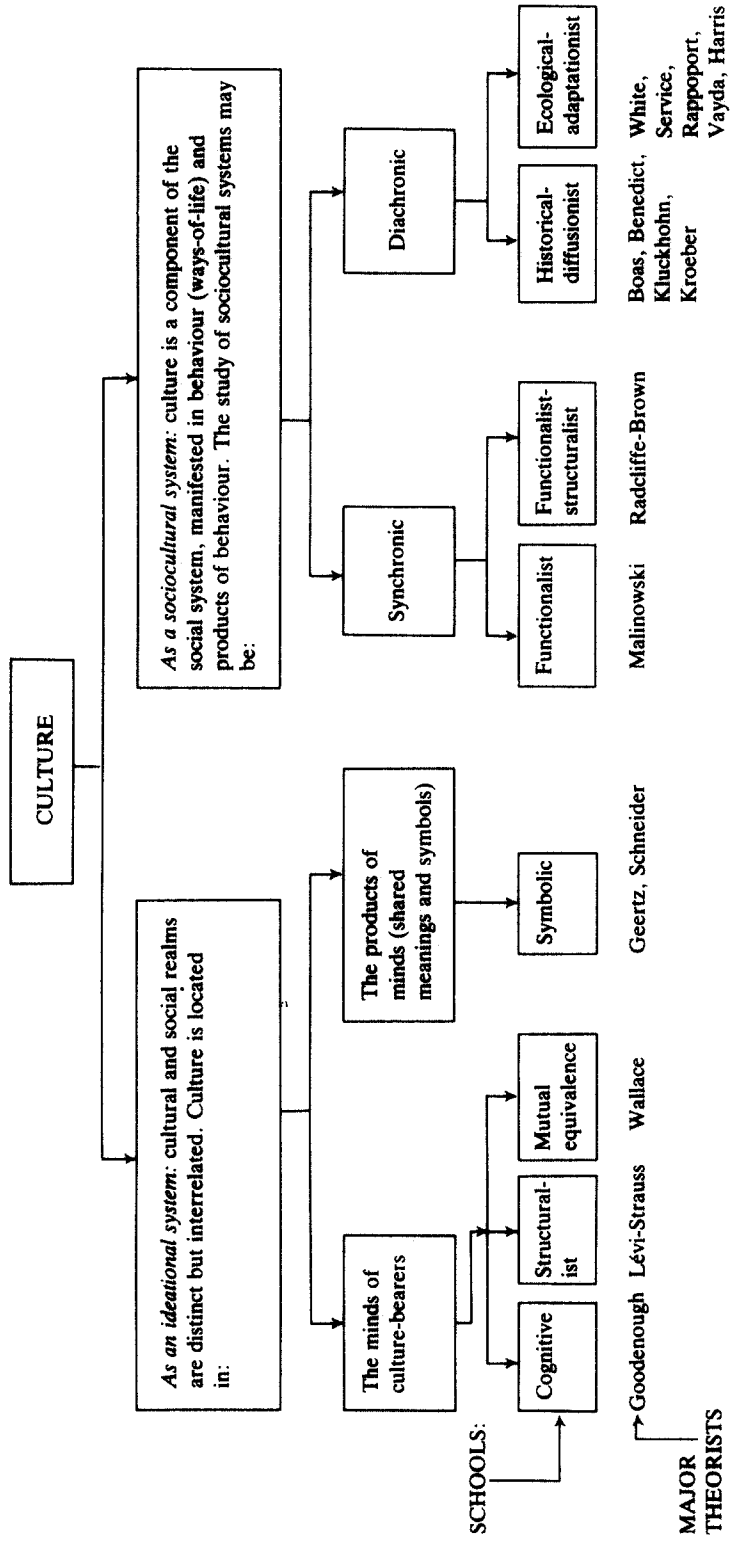
Disagreeing with this view, Kroeber and Parsons (1958) proposed a conceptual and analytical distinction between social systems and cultural systems.

'The social-system focus is on the conditions involved in the interaction of actual human individuals who constitute concrete collectivities with determinate membership. The cultural-system focus, on the other hand, is on "patterns" of meaning, e.g., of values, of norms, of organized knowledge and beliefs, of expressive form.' (Parsons et al. 1961:34)

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz has been an eloquent proponent of this view:

'Though separable only conceptually, culture and social structure will then be seen to be capable of a wide range of modes of integration with one another, of which the simple isomorphic mode is but a limiting case — a case common only in societies which have been stable over such an extended time as to make possible a close adjustment between social and cultural aspects. In most societies, where change is characteristic rather than an

Figure 1
A Typology of the Concepts of Culture



abnormal occurrence, we shall expect to find more or less radical discontinuities between the two. . . .’ (Geertz 1973:144, emphasis added.)

This distinction led to a conceptualization of culture, *as a system of ideas*, or as ‘inferred ideational codes lying behind the realm of observable events’ (Keesing 1974) and to important theoretical refinements and untangling over the last 25 years.

Sociocultural Systems

Culture as a sociocultural system was the prevailing view of anthropologists of an earlier period, with the notable exception of the very contemporary Marvin Harris. These scholars may, with considerable effrontery, be divided into four schools grouped according to their notion of time. Two schools, the functional and the functional-structuralist, focus on the study of culture at particular points in time and space and have been termed ‘*synchronic*’. In a contrasting view of culture, the *diachronic* schools specifically encompass the time dimension and focus on the processes involved in the development of particular cultures (the historical-diffusionist and the ecological-adaptionist schools).

In the *functionalist* conception of Malinowski, culture is an instrumental apparatus by which a person is put in a better position to cope with the concrete specific problems faced in the course of need satisfaction. Manifestations of culture such as institutions and myths are explained by their functional necessity for the satisfaction of basic human needs.

For a *structural-functionalist*, such as Radcliffe-Brown, culture is an adaptive mechanism by which a certain number of human beings are enabled to live a social life as an ordered community in a given environment. Culture is a component of an integrated social system which also includes a social structure component, to maintain an orderly social life, and adaptation mechanisms, to maintain society’s equilibrium with its physical environments.

The *ecological-adaptationist* school sees culture as a system of socially transmitted behaviour patterns that serve to relate human communities to their ecological settings. Sociocultural systems and their environments are involved in dialectic interplay, in a process of reciprocal, or feedback, causality. Neither environment nor culture is a ‘given’, but each is defined in terms of the other; the environment is not merely a set of contextual factors that limit or constrain the development of culture; it has an active, selective role in channelling the evolution of culture which, in turn, influences environmental characteristics.

The *historical-diffusionist* school regards culture as consisting of temporal, interactive, superorganic and autonomous configurations or forms produced by historical circumstances and processes. Anthropologists in this tradition are concerned with migrations of cultural traits from system to system and from place to place (through diffusion processes) and with changes taking place in a system as a result of acculturation and assimilation processes.

Culture as Systems of Ideas

Culture as an ideational system subsumes four very different concepts of culture which, nevertheless, share the postulate of a distinct cultural realm manifested in cognitive structures, processes or products.

For three of those schools of thought, culture is located in the minds of culture-bearers. The *cognitive* school (sometimes referred to as the ethnographic school), views culture as a system of knowledge, of learned standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting.

'A society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members.' (Goodenough 1957:167)

'Cultures then are not material phenomena; they are cognitive organizations of material phenomena.' (Tyler 1969:3)

For Lévi-Strauss and the *structuralist* school, culture is made up of shared symbolic systems that are cumulative products of mind, a reflection of unconscious processes of mind that underlie cultural manifestations. The variety of cultural elaborations and artefacts results from transformations or permutations of *formally* similar processes and structures. Of course, in a superficial sense, the products of culture are enormously different, but since all cultures are the product of the human brain, which is assumed to use the same mechanisms for thinking, there must be features that are common to all cultures. Therefore, Lévi-Strauss believes there are universals in human culture which will be found only at the level of unconscious *structure*, never at the level of manifest act. In a rare synthetic statement, he writes that:

'... *kinship systems* are elaborated by the mind at the level of unconscious thought; and the reappearance, in distant regions and in deeply different societies, of kinship forms, marriage roles and similar attitudes towards kins, etc., leads to believe that, in all cases, the observed phenomena result from the interplay of general but hidden laws.' (Lévi-Strauss 1973:41)

In the *mutual equivalence* version, culture becomes a set of standardized cognitive processes which create the general framework for the mutual prediction of behaviour among individuals interacting in a social setting. Culture makes possible the organization of very diverse cognitions and motivations with minimal or no sharing of goals and little overlap in individual cognitive structures. Culture is made of policies 'tacitly and gradually concocted by groups of people for the furtherance of their interests, and contracts established by practice between and among individuals to organize their strivings into mutually facilitating equivalence structures' (Wallace 1970). A fourth concept of culture within the ideational system proposes an interpretive view of culture as a system of shared meanings and symbols. For the *symbolic* or semiotic school, culture should not be looked for in people's heads but in the 'meanings' and 'thinkings' shared by social actors. 'Man',

writes Geertz, 'is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun; I take culture to be those webs' (1973:5). Those significant symbols, or products of mind, constitute the raw materials for the interpretation of the ordered system of meaning in terms of which social interaction takes place.

Culture in Organizations

This brief classification of concepts from cultural anthropology provides a variety of different notions with which to examine and position the concepts of culture found in the organization theory or management literature. Using this typology as a guide, we sought out the *implicit or explicit* concepts of organizational culture contained in the M/O literature. Table 1 (presented as an appendix to this article) summarizes the results of this analysis by providing for each school of culture sketched above a succinct definition, the body of work in the M/O field that is the closest equivalent to such a concept, and the main theorists or schools in the M/O field associated with that corpus of research.

Organizations as Sociocultural Systems

A first and striking observation is that the large body of literature, including many of the classics on organization theory, tacitly assumes that the social and structural components are (must be) fully integrated, synchronized and consonant with the ideational, symbolic dimensions of the organization.

In views very reminiscent of earlier anthropological concepts of culture, organizations are conceived more or less explicitly as *sociocultural systems*. Their ideational components (i.e. pattern of shared meanings and values, systems of knowledge and beliefs) are meshed with the social structure component in a holistic concept of organizations. In this tradition, research and theories tend to centre on the structures, functioning and evolutionary processes of these sociocultural systems, and on the development of typologies to explain the large variety of forms and processes observed. Obviously, as the symbolic and formal aspects of organizations are assumed to be attuned and mutually supportive at all times, little attention is paid to the possible dissonance or incongruency between the cultural and sociostructural aspects of organizations or to the study of their distinct, ideational, realm.

The following section of the paper will attempt to retrieve from the M/O literature the various concepts of *sociocultural systems* posited, sometimes implicitly or unwittingly by researchers in this field, and relate them to the specific schools of cultural anthropology presented above.

The Functionalist School

In Malinowski's postulate of universal functionalism, social institutions and cultural manifestations either ultimately serve the interests and needs of

individual members of society, or disappear. For Malinowski, there is a universal nature to human beings grounded in a fundamental set of needs; myths, institutions and other cultural products owe their perennity to the functional servicing of these needs.

We find a striking echo to this functionalist, need-grounded theory of culture in the vast body of literature on human needs and their impact on organizations. In the Human Relations tradition and in the social and self-achieving concept of Man, organizations as sociocultural systems *ought to* reflect in their forms, structures, policies and processes, Man's quest for need satisfaction through work and organizational participation. Organizations are theatres for the playing out of man's needs. Either the organization adapts its structure and functioning to allow the 'whole man' to satisfy his needs through organizational membership, or it will suffer severe dysfunctions and attrition.

This body of research clearly implies that, in order to function and thrive, organizations should accommodate in their structures and processes the desiderata of members' need satisfaction. This accommodation will result in varied organizational forms because of the particular needs dominant at any juncture of time, place and people within the organization. 'What would happen if people who aspire for psychological success populated organizations . . .' asks Argyris (1964:36). It does raise an interesting question. *To what extent are organization structures and management processes, social enactments of the participants' need structures?* Underneath the multiplicity of observable forms of organization may lurk some universal, immanent structure corresponding to the need structure of members, or, perhaps, of those members more able to influence the nature and shape of the organization. For instance, in the business policy tradition (Learned et al. 1965; Andrews 1971; Henderson 1979), organizations come to reflect in their goals and strategies the 'values, needs and preferences' of their founders, chief executives or key managers.

The various authors or schools listed as 'functionalist' in Table 1 propose different (and familiar) prescriptions to achieve a more harmonious fit between an organization and its members' needs. However, they all share the view — although it is never stated in quite this manner — that organizations are sociocultural systems which will, or should, reflect their members' needs in their structures and processes. As a result, these systems will, to a considerable extent, become social enactments of (all or some) members' quest for need satisfaction. This is a view Malinowski would find moderately sympathetic.

The Structural-Functionalist School

A most direct lineage between anthropology and organization theory is found in the influence of Malinowski and, more particularly, of Radcliffe-Brown on the development of the structural-functionalist strain of organization theory. Organizations are systems with goals (Parsons), purpose (Barnard), needs (Selznick, Bennis), in functional interaction with their environment. Therefore, as 'functional' sociocultural systems, organizations are not conceived as

having a cultural system that may be different from, discontinuous with, its social system, nor can organizations have a 'culture' very different from that of the ambient society. In what must be a *locus classicus* of structural-functionalism, Parsons writes that the organization's value system '... must by definition be a subvalue system of a higher-order one, since the organization is always defined as a subsystem of a more comprehensive social system' (1960:20).

At the limit of such a process, organizations may become, in Meyer and Rowan's cogent expression, 'dramatic enactments of rationalized myths pervading modern societies' (1977:346). Therefore, according to this point of view, organizations are deeply permeated by the values of ambient society and this close integration is necessary to the legitimation of the organization's goals and activities.

However, for some theorists (Selznick, Rhenman) who share a structural-functionalist perspective, basic acceptance of the more generalized values of society does not preclude the emergence of different value systems, ideologies or characters in different organizations functioning in the same 'superordinate system', as a result of the organization's history and past leadership. What has come to be identified as the Institutional school (Perrow 1979) was very instrumental in the development of a concept of organizations with widely different and influential 'affective' dimensions. This school will be considered again when discussing the symbolic concept of culture.

The Ecological-Adaptationist School

The concept of culture as a system of socially transmitted behaviour patterns that serve to relate human communities to their ecological settings finds a close parallel in the contingency theories of various hues and in the recent population ecology theory of organizational survival and attrition.

Organizations are sociocultural systems that take on varied forms, as they adapt to environmental characteristics (Lawrence and Lorsch, etc.) including the social and political ones (Meyer and Associates), act upon their enacted environments (Pfeffer and Salancik), or are selected in or out of existence by ecological circumstances (Hannan and Freeman; Aldrich). In that perspective, *a society's culture is but another contingency factor which may influence the structures and processes of organizations*, a notion which has been thoroughly tested in a score of 'cross-cultural' studies of organizations.

As the products of dialectic interplay with their environment, organizations will reflect to a varying degree the values and culture of society. If the influence of contingency factors, other than society's values and culture, is strong, the organization's values, beliefs and meaning systems may diverge substantially from those of the society that begot it (Child 1981). This is a conceptual position that differs from the structural-functionalist perspective in which society's values are a determining factor; for the ecologist-adaptationist theorists, it is one of many possible sources of influence on the organization. Organizations as sociocultural systems may therefore function with a value or

cultural subsystem substantially different from that of the surrounding society to the point of constituting a subculture within that society; but in all cases, it is assumed that the organization's cultural system will be synchronized and consonant with the social structure of the organization.

The Historical-Diffusionist School

With this school, historical factors rather than adaptation processes explain cultural transformation. This school focuses on the study of dynamic cultural configurations and on the charting of acculturation and diffusion processes. No direct equivalent is found in the M/O field. However, a number of disparate authors have studied organizations as historically produced sociocultural systems. The forms, structures and processes particular to these systems are thought to reflect their particular genesis and the historical circumstances of their development. Chandler (1962, 1977), Stinchcombe (1965) and Filley and House (1969) provide examples of this research genre.

From the historical-diffusionist vantage point, many questions about the emergence, mutation and diffusion of organizational forms across time and space are left begging for answers. Rumelt (1974)'s wry observation that 'structures follow fashion' indicates, for instance, that diffusion processes might profitably be employed to study the spread of organizational forms.

But what notions of organizational culture, if any, are implied by this type of research? No direct mention of culture is ever found in this body of literature. However, one finds a sharp awareness, particularly in Stinchcombe (1965), that the particular time, place and circumstances of the organization's birth may lead to strongly held values and ideologies; and these will be reflected in organizational structures and processes extant beyond their functional necessity or adaptive usefulness, as a sort of *historical contingency factor*. Clearly, this proposition implies that the organization as a sociocultural system may generate values divergent from those of society because of its historical roots and particularities. Organization forms arise and vanish in the ebb and flow of historical circumstances; in this perspective, organizations may be viewed as *social actualizations of their genesis and historical transformations*.

Organizational Cultures as Systems of Ideas

Culture concepts of the ideational kind shift considerably the nature and emphasis of the enquiry into organizational culture. Culture, then, is made up of the culture-bearers' 'theories of the world' and symbolic products. Culture is a dynamic, symbol-laden context (Geertz), a set of functional cognitions (Wallace, Goodenough) or a deep, unconscious structure of mind (Lévi-Strauss).

'Culture is best seen not as complexes of concrete behavior patterns — customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters — as has, by and large, been the case up to now, but as a set of

control mechanisms — plans, recipes, rules, instructions (what computer engineers call “programs”) — for the governing of behavior.’ (Geertz 1973:44)

Although it cannot be ‘factored out’ of behavioural products, culture is nevertheless considered as a separate, conceptual realm that may develop in ways that are not consonant with a social system’s structures and formal processes. In examining the concept of organizations as sociocultural systems, the persistent question was the extent to which sociocultural systems could foster ‘cultures’ different from that of surrounding society. Now an additional question arises. To what extent can maladjustments between an organization’s culture and its structures, goals and processes occur as a result of internal or external pressures on the organization? Such ‘dissynchronization’ between the cultural and structural components of a social system is thought to be a harbinger of decay or revolutionary potential (Johnson 1966); it will be discussed briefly in the conclusion of this article.

A careful culling of the M/O literature to identify concepts and constructions congenial to one or the other of the ideational schools of culture has produced a very heterogeneous assortment of concepts, schools and theorists within the M/O field.

The Cognitive School of Culture

For Goodenough, culture is a set of functional cognitions organized into a system of knowledge and containing whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to the members of one’s society (Goodenough 1957, 1971). Among several perspectives on culture as a product of human learning proposed by Goodenough, one finds culture as ‘. . . the ways in which people have organized their experience of the real world so as to give it structure as a phenomenal world of forms, that is, their percepts and concepts’ (Goodenough 1971:28). Such a concept of culture has some equivalence in two different bodies of research in the M/O field: organizational climate and organizational learning.

Organizational Climate. The notion of organizational climate is developed in a substantial corpus of research which proposes concepts and definitions that closely approximate the notion of culture found in the cognitive school. Climate is held to be a widely shared and enduring *perception* of the organization’s attributes. It is an individual’s cognitive map, constructed out of one’s experience with the organization, which provides the member with useful cues to adapt his or her behaviour to the demands of the organization (Tagiuri and Litwin 1968; James and Jones 1974; Schneider 1975; Payne and Pugh 1976; Evan 1976; Springer and Gable 1980). Climate is then a form of acquired ‘competence’ enabling an individual to interpret the demands of the organization and to make sense of his/her ongoing stream of interactions with the organization and its members. Schneider (1975:474) writes that his concept of climate ‘. . . clearly falls in the domain of cognitive theory wherein man is conceptualized as a thinking creature who organizes his world meaningfully and behaves on the basis of the order he perceives and creates’.

Organizational climate is clearly a close kin to the cognitive school of culture found in anthropology, researchers in the former field unwittingly paraphrasing those in the latter. Indeed, it may be asserted that the body of literature and research on climate was the first and, till recently, foremost attempt at giving an empirical basis to the notion of 'culture' in organizations.

Organizational Learning. In a shifting, ambivalent set of works, organizations themselves are endowed with cognitive processes. Thus, for Argyris and Schön 'organization is an artefact of individual ways of representing organization' (1978:16); these representations are encoded into organizational maps which are the 'shared descriptions of organization which individuals jointly construct and use to guide their own inquiry' (1978:17). With Hedberg (1979), Hedberg and Jönsson (1978), and Heirs and Pehrson (1972), organizations have minds, cognitive systems and memories, develop mental maps, world views and 'myths', the latter term a misnomer defined as theories of the world that provide 'the interpretations of reality upon which organizations act' and which are 'stored as constructs in human brains' (Hedberg and Jönsson 1978:90-91).

In a related context, Arrow (1979:58) proposes the notion of organizational code as 'ways of looking at the world', which are part of the organization's capital and learned by its members, and which 'imposes a uniformity requirement on the behavior of participants' (ibid.:56). Such 'coding permits a great number of individual information sources to be pooled usefully' (ibid.:55), in what becomes an 'irreversible capital accumulation for the organization' (ibid.). 'It follows that organizations, once created, have distinct identities, because the costs of changing the code are those of unanticipated obsolescence' (ibid.).

In this perspective, organizations become *social artefacts of shared cognitive maps*; they are enactments of a 'collective mind' that is not merely a replication of the minds of individual participants. It shares a belief in a collective mind or representation different from but related to individual participants' minds, albeit in an obscure and imprecise fashion.

The Structuralist School

With Lévi-Strauss, cultural anthropology takes on the allure of a search for cultural universals, for immanent, unconscious, structures, an endeavour heavily influenced by a Rousseauist fascination with the savage mind and by concepts borrowed from structural linguistics and late Durkheimian sociology. These universals are said to be found in the structure and processes of mind; cultural products and artefacts, immensely varied in their tangible manifestations, should be considered as clues with which to break the universal ciphers stored in Man's unconscious.

The Anglo-American (as opposed to the French or even European) stream of organizational research contains any direct references to such Lévi-Straussian concepts (Turner 1983). However, many theorists and researchers make the implicit assumption that the organizational or management concepts and theories they propose are of universal applicability. Still other researchers

conclude, as a result of their cross-cultural studies of organizations, that some organizational forms and processes and, in particular, some *relationships* between forms, processes and contextual factors, are widespread, indeed 'universal' (Pascale 1978; Tracy and Azumi 1976; Hickson, Hinings, McMillan and Schwitter 1974), but the foundations of this universality are not articulated (Child 1981).

In neither of these cases, however, is any reference made to these 'universals' being linked to general principles of the 'managerial mind'. An adaptation of such Lévi-Straussian concepts to the study of organizations would posit hypotheses along the following lines: *organization forms, structures and processes, manifold in their superficial manifestations, actually result from the permutations and transformations of universal and unconscious processes of the managerial mind (or, to be even more 'universal', of the human mind)*. This is an intriguing thesis, some faint traces of which may be found in various and scattered writings on the 'managerial mind' (Ewing 1964; Summer, O'Connell and Perry 1977), on managers' cognitive styles (McKenney and Keen 1979) and on the relationship between the structure of the brain and competence in various managerial tasks (Mintzberg 1976). Perhaps, March and Simon (1958) come closest to that thesis when proposing that the limitations on 'human intellectual capacities' translate into specific organizational processes and behaviour. They state that 'the basic features of the organization structure and function derive from the characteristics of human problem-solving process and rational human choice' (March and Simon 1958:169). Since these limitations of human cognitive processes are, presumably, universal and exert a critical influence on the functioning of organizations, to that extent, March and Simon may be said to propose the Lévi-Straussian concept of organization forms and processes as *social manifestations of universal and unconscious processes of the human mind*.

Culture as Mutual-Equivalence Structure

Wallace has contributed a radically different concept of culture. Culture is a system of instrumental cognitions, mutually predictive of behaviour, which nevertheless allow human beings with very different motivations and cognitive orientations to organize cooperative strivings and participate in the social life of a community. It is a concept of culture stripped of the illusions of common goals and purposes, barren of shared perceptions, beliefs and meanings, except for that limited set of cognitions that serve to cue and predict each other's behaviour.

Weick (1979) has made good use of Wallace's concept of culture in the field of organizations, outlining some important consequences of this notion for organization theory and management. In particular Weick's linkage of mutual-equivalence structures with Allport (1962)'s notion of collective structures provides the foundations for a radically different view of organizational culture. 'Collective structures' result from a repetitive cycle of interrelated (or 'interlocked') *behaviour*. Individuals will involve themselves in

forming 'collective structures', not in the pursuit of common goals but because it suits their personal interests and needs. Members of any particular collective structure invest only part of their total behaviour ('partial inclusion') in it, although they may vary in the intensity of their involvement and, in time, 'invest' more of their behaviour in a particular collective structure if its preservation has become critical to the furtherance of their interests.

In this perspective, *organizations become the locus of intersection and synchronization of individual utility functions, the somewhat fortuitous site where actors' micromotives coalesce into organizational macrobehaviour.* Organizations are convenient means through which participants seek to achieve their varied ends. Understanding such an 'organizational culture' would mean charting the complex and brittle network of individual cognitions and motives for involvement, the idiosyncratic calculus of stakes in the preservation and furtherance of the organization, the codified framework for the mutual prediction of behaviour. This view of 'culture' is almost opposite to the conventional meaning attached to this concept, with its evocation of 'shared values, beliefs and norms'.

Organization theorists recognized, sometimes belatedly, the existence of such calculated involvement by devoting a good deal of attention to members' reasons for participation (Barnard 1938; March and Simon 1958). For instance, Silverman (1970)'s perspective contains the germs of an organizational culture of the mutual-equivalence type, when the nature of the role system and the pattern of interactions reflect little sharing of values, when the involvement of ideal-typical actors is *instrumental*, and the actions of participants based on their *expectations of the likely behaviour of others*.

Likewise, Selznick (1957) distinguishes between organizations as 'rational tools in which there is little personal investment and which can be cast aside without regret . . .' (Perrow 1979:186) and those which become 'institutionalized' exacting strong commitment and close identification from its members. Etzioni (1961) has also identified participants' 'calculative' commitment as one of three prevailing modes of involvement in organizations; and Ouchi and Jaeger (1978:681) found (type A) organizations in which persons are 'involved in the limited, contractual, only partially inclusive relationships that characterize traditional American organizations'.

The Symbolic School of Culture

The concept of culture as *products of mind, as shared meaning systems*, proposed by the symbolic school, elegantly expounded in Clifford Geertz's works, is a rich and powerful construction, informed by, and communing with, influential currents in sociological and philosophical thought. In particular, Geertz has adapted to cultural anthropology Parsons' concept of a separate, symbol-laden cultural realm of society, and Weber's *interpretive* view of sociology with its focus on the meaning attached to their actions and interactions by social actors. Weber's influence on Geertz is clear from the very title of his *magnum opus The Interpretation of Cultures* and from repeated

statements about the nature of anthropological enquiry: 'I take . . . the analysis of it (culture) to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning' (1973:5). Geertz was also influenced by Alfred Schutz's conceptual efforts to integrate Weber's interpretive sociology, Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and G. H. Mead's symbolic interactionism into a coherent phenomenological sociology. As a result, Geertz conceives of culture as: '. . . the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action' (1973:145).

The M/O literature contains many intimations of such a concept of culture in organizations. These may be regrouped according to the relative importance in the creation of symbolic systems that it grants to the organization's history and past leadership as compared to the role of contemporary (dominant) actors.

In the *action perspective* and with the *Institutional school*, an organization, as a result of the unique conjunction of its genesis, history, sociocultural context, technology and successive leadership, *may* secrete and sustain its own system of symbols and meanings, widely shared by the organization's members and instrumental in eliciting or rationalizing their commitment to the organization. However, the Actionalist and Institutional schools part company in their respective emphasis upon the history and past leadership of the organization as the fomenters of its culture. The organization's specific character, Selznick asserts, is first and foremost a *historical* product reflecting past and current administrative leaders' relative success as statesmen charting and guiding the organization's acquisition of a *distinctive competence* (Selznick 1957).

Numerous scholars have been influenced by Selznick's powerful concept of the organization and have provided it with considerable theoretical and empirical support (Clark 1972; Stymne 1972; Harrison 1972; Eldridge and Crombie 1974; Rhenman 1973; Berg 1979; Pettigrew 1979). With the latter, the organization's founder and early history play a most direct role in creating the organization's culture. The founders or entrepreneurs '. . . may be seen not only as creators of some of the more rational and tangible aspects of organizations such as structures and technologies but also as creators of symbols, ideologies, languages, beliefs, rituals, and myths, aspects of the more cultural and expressive components of organizational life' (Pettigrew 1979:574).

With the *interpretive action perspective*, there is considerably more nuance in assessing the relative contribution of past events and leaders to the organization's meaning-structure and value system. Although setting out that an analysis of organizations might inquire into 'the nature of the role-system and pattern of interaction that has been built up in the organization, in particular, the way in which it has historically developed . . .' (Silverman 1970:154), Silverman then notes caustically and with clear phenomenological overtones:

'While they may find it politic to pay lip-service to the intentions of the founder or of past

Great Men (especially in attempting to legitimate a course of action which is far removed from those intentions), the present participants continually shape and reshape the pattern of expectations by means of their actions. For, as they act they validate, deny or create prevailing definitions of the situation. . . . The pattern of interaction that emerges is further shaped by the perceived ability of certain actors to impose a particular definition of the situation upon others, who may feel forced to accept (with varying degrees of enthusiasm) this view of the organization and of their role in it.' (Silverman 1970:196)

Organizations are thus characterized by different degrees of sharing of values, norms, roles and expectations, which make up the organization's specific 'meaning-structures'. These meaning-structures are a fabric with unique patterns weaved out of (a) the organization's history, (b) the definitions of situations imposed by dominant actors and (c) members' cumulative interpretation and sense-making out of ongoing actions and interactions. The Institutional school tends to emphasize the first component, the Action perspective, the voluntaristic second component, and phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology, the third component. With the latter, organizations become *figments of participants' interpretation of their organizational experience*; they have no external reality but are merely social creations and constructions *emerging* from actors making sense out of ongoing streams of actions and interactions. In what Burrell and Morgan (1979:260) call their *interpretive paradigm*, 'organizations simply do not exist'. This is a perspective which is heavily influenced by, among other sources, Berger and Luckmann's book (1967) on the social construction of reality.

Such a concept of organizational life and reality has been propounded by many scholars of various philosophical inspirations. Viewed in a symbolic interactionist *éclairage*,

' . . . organizational realities are not external to human consciousness, out there waiting to be recorded. Instead, the world as humans know it is constituted intersubjectively. The facts (*facta*) of this world are things made. They are neither subjective nor objective in the usual sense. Instead, they are construed through a process of symbolic interaction.' (Brown 1978:378)

From an eclectic combination of concepts found in the writings of Husserl, Parsons and Schutz, Garfinkel defined a new line of sociological inquiry, which he named *ethnomethodology*. Under this broad and disputed label may be tucked a number of forays into the field of organizations (Garfinkel 1967; Bittner 1965; Cicourel 1972; Goffman 1957) to investigate how actors made sense out of the events and occurrences in their organizational world. For these researchers, organizations are 'common sense constructs' (Bittner 1965) in which ' . . . persons, *in the course of a career of actions*, discover the nature of the situations in which they are acting, and that the actor's own actions are first order determinants of the sense that situations have . . . ' (Garfinkel 1967:115).

Obviously, the symbolic concept of culture provides a roof for a broad assortment of views about organizations. However, these varied views all contain the common leitmotif of symbolic, meaningful, evocative and emotionally charged components in organizations, though there are fundamental differences as to the substantive nature of these organizational characteristics and the process through which they come about. Furthermore this symbolic dimension of organizational life is *not necessarily* coordinated, consonant, synchronized or isomorphic with the organization's formal structures, goals and management processes, albeit the treatment of that issue in the M/O literature is very scanty.

Conclusion

Clearly, the intimations of culture found in the organizational literature, differ markedly with respect to the underlying factors they emphasize as the shaping force on the culture and structure of a social system. Alternatively, one or the other of three contributing influences is given prominence: the ambient *society's* values and characteristics (structural-functionalists, cross-cultural studies of organizations and management processes); the organization's *history* and past leadership (historical-diffusionists, institutionalists); *contingency* factors such as technology, industry characteristics, etc. (ecological-adaptationists, contingency theorists). In practice, of course, these three factors always combine and vie with each other in moulding an organization's culture.

These different notions of culture in organizations are also quite distinctive in their emphasis on the intrinsic components of the social system: culture, structure, actors and the interaction among them. Some focus on *culture* as a construct that is deemed to manifest itself in a confusing mixture of extant values, beliefs, meaning structures, symbols, myths, ideologies and in an assortment of artefacts: rites, rituals, specialized language, lore, customs, metaphors, etc. (actionalists and institutionalists).

In many instances, the study of culture actually means the study of individual actors. This may take many different forms. It may focus on dominant actors casting upon organizations their values, needs and preferences (functionalists); or it may stress their ability to define the meanings and contexts of actions for others (actionalists). With phenomenology and ethnomethodology, it is the actor's own construction of meaning and reality that matters.

Cognitivists study members' shared cognitive constructions about the organization, about how to act and behave in it (organizational learning, climate researchers). In the mutual-equivalence concept, cognitive arrangements are also the focus of enquiry; however, these are now causal, calculative schemata developed to anticipate and explain other actors' behaviour. For structuralists, universal properties of mind impact upon organizations, seeding them with the same deep, latent structures, though these uniformities may be hidden by 'superficial' variations and cosmetic niceties.

In very few cases, unfortunately, is the problematic relationship between the cultural and structural aspects of the organization discussed to any extent, Rhenman (1973) and Handy (1976) offering the best treatment available up to now. The M/O literature is also remarkably silent as to the modes of integration of actors and culture in an organizational setting.

Organizational Culture: A Proposal

The foregoing review of materials and Table 1 show how particular concepts of culture have parallels, often unwittingly, in the M/O literature. It also underlines how different schools of thought in cultural anthropology variously define, and purport to study, culture.

These different concepts of culture lead to *divergent and mutually exclusive* notions of what culture in organizations might signify and portend. In order to choose an appropriate concept for the study of culture in organizations, two sequential issues must be tackled, in addition to the obvious assumption that an organization may have a 'culture' that is different from the culture of the ambient society in which it operates.

This assumption is not too controversial. The multiple particularities of its birth and history, of its past and present leadership, of its modes of adaptation to specific technologies, industry characteristics and sociocultural ambience, may endow an organization with its very own 'culture' and 'cultural manifestations'. However, it does raise the issue of the legitimacy of organizations when their values differ from those of the society that begot them. It may be that (1) all organizations subscribe to some *basic* values of the society from which they emerge, a fact which does not preclude wide and significant variations among organizations in *ancillary* or less fundamental values and cultural manifestations within organizations; (2) there is not one set of basic societal values from which the organization's functional purpose and legitimacy must necessarily flow; society itself is pluralistic, supportive of a broad array of different values to which organizations may legitimately subscribe; (3) the organization, as a 'committed polity' with its own goals, value system and culture, nevertheless negotiates and develops support for its existence by appropriate strategies directed at critical segments of society at large.

A. Should organizations be considered as sociocultural systems, or as made up of a 'social system' and a (conceptually) separate, ideational, cultural system 'capable of a wide range of modes of integration with one another, of which the simple isomorphic mode is but a limiting case . . .'? (Geertz 1973:144)

This is an issue which received little explicit attention in the M/O literature. Yet, the issue oozes pertinence for a field so preoccupied with processes and inhibitors of change and adaptation. It stands to reason that the organization's formal, structural dimensions and its symbolic, cultural ones, subjected to different degrees of external pressure and characterized by different

adaptation and integration mechanisms, may well be in a state of tension, disharmony or dissonance; 'dissynchronized', Chalmers Johnson would say (1966). For a trite but telling example, it is a matter of common observation that whenever market, competitive or technological changes exert pressures on a business firm, it will rather quickly attempt to adapt to them by changes in its formal system of goals, strategies and structures; however, these are often unsuccessful, as the organization's cultural system (e.g., its values, meaning-structures, myths) may not be congruent with the revised 'sociostructural' system, causing severe dysfunctions and compounded difficulties in coping with changed circumstances.

Some degree of awareness of this process and issue is evident in recent writings in organization theory and strategy. For instance, Rhenman (1973) sees reduced internal efficiency as stemming from *dissonance* between the organization's value system and its 'other subsystems'. Pfeffer adumbrates a concept of organizations as composed of symbolic and instrumental components which 'have different dependent variables, different processes, and are themselves only *imperfectly linked*' (1981:6, emphasis added). Meyer (1979) proposes the notion of organizations as made up of symbolic and technical structures which may become *disjointed* as a result of differing environmental pressures. Ansoff sketched a theory postulating that 'the level of culture and the level of capability in an environment-serving organization will *not match each other*, particularly in environments undergoing a shift in turbulence' (1977:63). Schwartz and Davis (1981) also stress the potential *incompatibility* between the culture and the formal strategy of the organization.

Most commonly, the possible dissociation and dissynchronization between an organization's affective, symbolic dimensions and its formal structures, policies and management processes, is ignored. The notion of organizational culture as an *ideational system* forces consideration of this issue. It provides a versatile conceptual tool that has proven its usefulness for the study of social system dynamics in cultural anthropology; it may add considerably to our evolving knowledge about the processes of organizational stagnation, decline, adaptation and rejuvenation.

B. Should culture, as an ideational system, be conceived of as located in the minds of culture-bearers or in the products of mind shared by interacting individuals?

The discussion of the previous issue presented arguments favourable to a concept of organizational culture as an *ideational* system. Four concepts of culture fit that bill: the cognitive, structuralist, mutual-equivalence and symbolic ones. With the first three schools, culture is located in the minds of culture-bearers; for the symbolic school, culture is located in products of mind, shared, social and public.

Proponents of these conflicting views have engaged in spirited debates, centring around the following difficult question: If culture is located in individual minds, what is meant then by culture as the shared property of

groups? Lévi-Strauss answers this by pointing to his search for a communality of structures that transcends individual societies and cultures, as a property of the human mind. Wallace's concept of culture does not depend on extensive sharing, but merely postulates the development of a capacity for mutual prediction of behaviour in a social setting. Goodenough and the cognitive school, however, had to face up to this issue squarely; his tortuous attempts to extricate himself from the problem through the notion (borrowed from linguistics) of cultural competence and cultural performance are not entirely convincing (Goodenough 1971). Without rehashing all the terms of the argument, culture, like language, is manifested in shared meanings and public *performance* but it is individually learned and admits of considerable interpersonal variations in cognitive structures and levels of *competence*.

For the symbolic school, the linkage or integration between the individual actor and the cultural system is an empirical issue, the explicit subject of inquiry with *immediate and considerable relevance* to organizational culture. Within the framework of the symbolic concept of culture, it is plausible to conceive of multiple modes of integration and relationship between the culture of an organization and the actor's personal construing and use of these meaningful materials. One such mode may be that of *perfect and total replication* in the individual, of the organization's system of symbols and meanings, which then powerfully condition his/her responses, leaving little room for individual choice and variations in organizational behaviour. One thinks immediately of Whyte's organization man, of Maccoby's company man 'whose sense of identity is based on being part of the powerful, protective company' (Maccoby 1976:40), or of Goffman (1962)'s vivid description of life in 'total organizations' (e.g. psychiatric hospitals, prisons).

A more common mode of integration is that of *partial replication* whereby the set of public organizational symbols is imperfectly reproduced in individual cognitions, having been modified, tampered with, by the particularities of the actor's personality and experiences inside and outside of the organization. Nevertheless, there evolves and subsists a communality of meanings among the various actors, which facilitates their interactions and serves to make sense out of their organizational world.

A third, and very different, mode of relationship between culture and individual actors may be termed the *meta-cultural* mode; the individual understands the system of public symbols of the organization and uses it to anticipate and predict the behaviour of the organization's members who participate in its culture. For the meta-cultural subject, the organization's culture becomes a Wallacean equivalence structure, eliciting no affective response nor involvement. Such relationship enables the meta-cultural individual a certain distantiation from specific organizational situations and an enhanced capacity to bring about changes both in the cultural and sociostructural systems of the organization. As one does not have to belong to an ethnic group to learn its language, similarly some people may be *competent* in the culture of an organization without being a member of that organization

(e.g. consultants, researchers). Furthermore, it is possible for some actors to be competent in *many* organizational cultures.

These various modes of individual integration of public systems of organizational symbols, which may be present simultaneously in the same organization, will be referred to generically as *cultural competence* to accommodate the broad range of possibilities.

A Conceptual Framework

The chunks and snippets of concepts discussed so far are brought together in a conceptual framework for organizational culture, sketched out in Figure 2, that is broadly based on the symbolic concept of culture. In this framework, an organization has three interrelated components:

(1) A *sociostructural* system composed of the interworkings of formal structures, strategies, policies and management processes, and of all ancillary components of an organization's reality and functioning (formal goals and objectives, authority and power structure, control mechanisms, reward and motivation, process of recruitment, selection and education, sundry management processes).

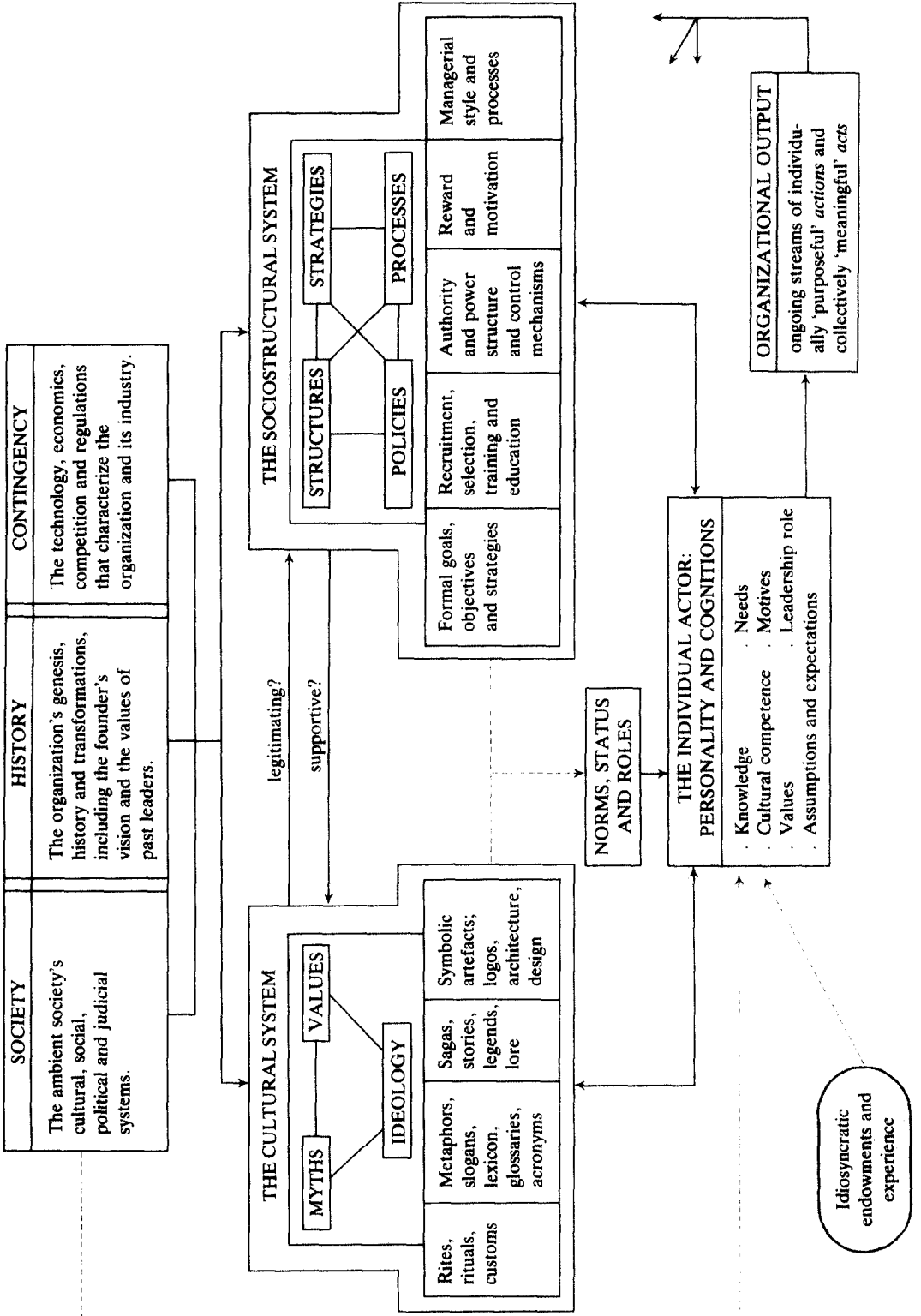
(2) a *cultural* system that embodies the organization's expressive and affective dimensions in a system of shared and meaningful symbols manifested in myths, ideology and values and in multiple cultural artefacts (rites, rituals and customs; metaphors, glossaries, acronyms, lexicon and slogans; sagas, stories, legends and organizational lore; logos, design, architecture). This cultural system is shaped by ambient society, the history of the organization and the particular contingency factors impinging upon it; it changes and evolves under the influence of contemporary dominant actors and the dynamic interplay between cultural and structural elements. The constructs of myth, ideology and value have each generated a vast literature containing contradictory and confusing elaborations and definitions. Without reviewing here the contents of this intricate literature, we propose definitions of these terms which are consistent with the symbolic orientation of our concept of organizational culture.

Myths, 'machines for the suppression of time' (Lévi-Strauss), provide tenacious and affective links between a valued, often glorified, past and contemporary reality, bestowing legitimacy and normalcy upon present actions and modes of organization. Cohen (1969) defined a myth as a substantially fictional narrative of events related to origins and transformations, expressed in symbolic terms and endowed with a sacred quality.

Ideology is a unified and symbolic system of beliefs which provide encompassing, compelling, often mythical, explanations of social reality; it legitimizes present social order or proposes radically different goals (revolutionary ideology) and urgently impels to collective action.

Values are symbolic interpretations of reality which provide *meanings* for social actions and *standards* for social behaviour. Thus values are constitutive

Figure 2
A Conceptual Framework for Organizational Culture



elements of ideology, which integrates them and arranges them into a unified system of beliefs; but values also represent the most tangible expressions of an ideology. Thus ideologies use values as building and expressive material, but values may exist without cohering into an ideology. While *not all organizations may nurture myths and ideologies, they will all tend to foster their characteristic set of values and derivative symbolic artefacts.*

(3) The *individual actors*, the third component of our model, with their particular endowments, experience and personality, are not merely passive recipients of a prefabricated 'reality'; depending on their status and leadership role, they become contributors and moulders of meanings. All actors, however, strive to construct a coherent picture to orient them to the goings-on in the organization. Their mode of relationship to the cultural system ('cultural competence') and the extent of sharing of meanings with other actors are variable and contingent phenomena. However, as all actors fabricate their 'meaning' from the same cultural raw materials, a considerable degree of sharing of meaning will tend to evolve among actors interacting in the same social context for a prolonged period of time.

The cultural and sociostructural systems of the organization are in a complex relationship, mutually supportive in 'normal' circumstances but fraught with great potential for tension and stress whenever the organization is subjected to sudden pressures for change. As a concatenation resulting from a specific social, political and cultural environment, the historical particularities of the organization and multiple contingencies, the cultural and sociostructural systems should have developed concomitantly and harmoniously, the former bestowing legitimacy upon the latter, and in turn receiving support and reinforcement from it. However, abrupt, discontinuous changes in its relevant environment, or slow, cumulative environmental changes that have gone undetected by the organization and suddenly burst upon it may easily disrupt this relationship. The requirements of adaptation may be accommodated by changes in the formal sociostructural system that may not be, and could not be, immediately translated into the cultural system, thus bringing these systems to a state of dissonance and dissynchronization.

Depending upon the nature and strength of the system of symbols and meanings, the outcome of such stress between the two systems may be more or less severe, ranging from temporary loss of efficiency to chronic stagnation and decay, organizational death or 'cultural revolution'. Norms, status and roles, immediate and concrete reflections of both the formal and informal dimensions of organization, provide sensitive indicators of the state of congruency between the two systems of the organization.

Conclusions

This paper has demonstrated the porous, ambiguous quality of the notions of culture found in the field of management and organization theory. Examined

with an anthropological lens, the M/O literature revealed a confusing but fascinating assortment of cultural notions and intimations. In particular, numerous writings on organizations, including many of the 'classics', implicitly consider organizations as sociocultural systems, with an ideational, cultural component that is presumed, postulated, to be isomorphic and consonant with their social or structural component. We presented a conceptual framework for organizational culture as a particularistic system of symbols shaped by ambient society and the organization's history, leadership and contingencies, differentially shared, used and modified by actors in the course of acting and making sense out of organizational events. Organizational culture, thus conceived, is a powerful tool for interpreting organizational life and behaviour and for understanding the processes of decay, adaptation and radical change in organizations. For, whatever else they may be, organizations are, unsurprisingly and at once, social creations and creators of social meanings.

Table 1
Definitions of Culture and Linkages to Organization and Management Literature

SCHOOLS	DEFINITIONS OF CULTURE	LINKS WITH ORGANIZATION/ MANAGEMENT LITERATURE	MAIN THEORISTS AND RESEARCHERS IN ORGANIZATION/ MANAGEMENT THEORY
		<i>A. Organizations as Sociocultural Systems</i>	
FUNCTIONALIST (Malinowski)	Culture is an instrumental apparatus by which a person is put in a better position to cope with the concrete specific problems faced in the course of need satisfaction. Main manifestations of culture (institutions, myths, etc.) are to be explained by reference to the basic needs of human beings.	The sociocultural system of organizations will, or ought to, reflect man's quest for need satisfaction through work and organizational participation. Organizations are theatres for the playing out of man's needs. To some extent, organizations are social enactments of participants' quest for need satisfaction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Human Relations School (Mayo, Roethlisberger et al.) — Social Man School (Homans; Zalesnik) — Self-actualizing Man (Maslow; McGregor; Likert; Argyris) — McClelland on entrepreneurial and managerial motivations — The Business Policy field (Andrews, Guth, Learned, Christensen, Henderson)
STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALIST (Radcliffe-Brown)	Culture is made up of those mechanisms by which an individual acquires mental characteristics (values, beliefs) and habits that fit him for participation in social life; it is a component of a social system which also includes social structures, to maintain an orderly social life, and adaptation mechanisms, to maintain society's equilibrium with its physical environment.	An organization is a purposive social system with a 'value' subsystem which implies acceptance of the generalized values of the superordinate system and which thus legitimizes the place and role of the organization in the larger social system. Organizations are functional enactments of society's legitimating values and myths.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The Structural-Functionalist School (Parsons; Barnard; Crozier) — Complex Man (Schein; Bennis)

Table 1 (cont'd)
Definitions of Culture and Linkages to Organization and Management Literature

SCHOOLS	DEFINITIONS OF CULTURE	LINKS WITH ORGANIZATION/ MANAGEMENT LITERATURE	MAIN THEORISTS AND RESEARCHERS IN ORGANIZATION/ MANAGEMENT THEORY
<p>ECOLOGICAL-ADAPTATIONIST (White, Service, Rappaport, Vayda, Harris)</p>	<p>Culture is a system of socially transmitted behaviour patterns that serve to relate human communities to their ecological settings. Sociocultural systems and their environments are involved in dialectic interplay, in a process of feedback or reciprocal causality.</p>	<p><i>A. Organizations as Sociocultural Systems</i></p> <p>Organizations are social enactments of ideational designs-for-action in particular environments. They take on varied forms through a continuous process of adaptation to, or selection by, critical environment factors (<i>which include the society's culture</i>). Disparities in these broadly defined environments (perceived or real, present or future) result in different organization forms and strategies in a never ending, and sometimes unsuccessful, quest for fit and equilibrium between the organization and its environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Open system theory (Katz and Kahn) — Contingency theorists (Thompson; Perrow; Lawrence and Lorsch; Burns and Stalker; Blau and Scott) — Cross-cultural studies of organizations (Dore; Tracy and Azumi; Pascale; Hickson, Hennings et al.; Tannenbaum et al.; etc.) — The Socio-technical system perspectives (Emery and Trist; Miller and Rice) — The Aston Group (Pugh; Hickson; et al.) — The Population Ecology school (Hannan and Freeman; Aldrich) — The new school of organization-environment relations (Pfeffer and Salancik; Meyer and Associates)
<p>HISTORICAL-DIFFUSIONIST (Boas, Benedict, Kluckhohn, Kroeber)</p>	<p>Culture consists of temporal, interactive, superorganic and autonomous configurations or forms which have been produced by historical circumstances and processes.</p>	<p>Organizational forms arise and vanish in the ebb and flow of historical circumstances. Specific patterns of organizational structures and strategies are characteristic of historical phases of the organization. Organizations are social actualizations of their genesis and historical transformations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Chandler — Stinchcombe — Scott — Filley and House

Table 1 (cont'd)
Definitions of Culture and Linkages to Organization and Management Literature

SCHOOLS	DEFINITIONS OF CULTURE	LINKS WITH ORGANIZATION/ MANAGEMENT LITERATURE	MAIN THEORISTS AND RESEARCHERS IN ORGANIZATION/ MANAGEMENT THEORY
COGNITIVE (Goodenough)	<p>A system of knowledge, of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting. Culture is the form of things that people have in mind, their model for perceiving, relating and otherwise interpreting them. It consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to the members of one's society. As a product of human learning, culture consists of the ways in which people have organized their experience of the real world so as to give it structure as a phenomenal world of forms, that is their percepts and concepts.</p>	<p><i>B. Culture as an Ideational System</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organizational climate is defined as an enduring and widely shared perception of the essential attributes and character of an organizational system. Its primary function is to cue and shape individual behaviour toward the modes of behaviour dictated by organizational demands. 2. Organizations are social artefacts of members' shared cognitive maps. Organizations develop world views (Hedberg), codes (Arrow), or public maps (Argyris and Schön) that provide the framework for organizational actions. 	<p>— Organizational climate (Tagiuri; Evan; Campbell et al.; James and Jones; De Cotti and Koyes; Schneider; Payne and Pugh, etc.)</p> <p>— Organizational learning (Argyris and Schön; Hedberg; Arrow; Heits and Pehrson)</p>

Table 1 (cont'd)
Definitions of Culture and Linkages to Organization and Management Literature

SCHOOLS	DEFINITIONS OF CULTURE	LINKS WITH ORGANIZATION/ MANAGEMENT LITERATURE	MAIN THEORISTS AND RESEARCHERS IN ORGANIZATION/ MANAGEMENT THEORY
STRUCTURALIST (Lévi-Strauss)	Shared symbolic systems that are cumulative creations of mind; universal but unconscious principles of mind generate cultural elaborations and artefacts, the diversity of which results from the permutations and transformations of <i>formally</i> similar processes and latent structures. Since all cultures are the product of the human brain, there must be features that are common to all cultures.	<p><i>B. Culture as an Ideational System</i></p> <p>Are organizations, in spite of their manifold character, structure and processes, social manifestations, at a deeper, structural, level, of universal and unconscious processes of mind? March and Simon do claim that organizational structures and processes reflect the characteristics and limitations of human cognitive processes. Do managers share similar structures of mind, similar cognitive styles and processes? The management literature on cognitive styles, on the hemispheres of the brain and their relationships to management, come close to this issue without ever tackling it explicitly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — March and Simon's cognitive assumptions — Cognitive style research (McKenney and Keen; Kolb) — Left and right hemisphere of the brain (Mintzberg) — The Managerial Mind (Sumner, O'Connell and Perry; Ewing)
MUTUAL-EQUIVALENCE STRUCTURE (Wallace)	Culture is a set of standardized cognitive processes which create the general framework that enables a capacity for mutual prediction and interlocked behaviour among individuals. It is an implicit contract that makes possible the maximal organization of motivational and cognitive diversity with only partial inclusion and minimal sharing of beliefs and values on the part of 'culture-bearers'.	<p>Organizations are the locus of intersection and synchronization of individual utility functions, the somewhat fortuitous site where actors' micro-motives coalesce into organizational macrobehaviour. Coordination of behaviour occurs not through a sharing of goals but through the elaboration of mutually predictive cognitive structures. Members' decision to partially participate reflects their calculus of relative costs and inducements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The concepts of 'causal maps' and mutual equivalence found in Weick et al. — The 'calculus of participation' elements in Barnard; March and Simon; Etzioni; Silverman; Selznick. — Ouchi and Jaeger's Type A organization, etc.

Table 1 (cont'd)
Definitions of Culture and Linkages to Organization and Management Literature

SCHOOLS	DEFINITIONS OF CULTURE	LINKS WITH ORGANIZATION/ MANAGEMENT LITERATURE	MAIN THEORISTS AND RESEARCHERS IN ORGANIZATION/ MANAGEMENT THEORY
SYMBOLIC (Geertz, Schneider)	<p>Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action. It is an ordered system of shared and public symbols and meanings which give shape, direction and particularity to human experience. Culture should not be looked for in people's heads but in the 'meanings' shared by interacting social actors. The analysis of culture therefore is not an experimental science in search of laws but an interpretative one in search of meaning.</p>	<p><i>B. Culture as an Ideational System</i></p> <p>1. Organizations as a result of their particular history and past or present leadership create and sustain systems of symbols which serve to interpret and give meaning to members' subjective experience and individual actions, and to elicit, or rationalize, their commitment to the organization. Such collective meaning-structures are manifested in ideologies, myths, values, sagas, 'character', 'emotional structures', etc.</p>	<p>1.— Interpretive, actionalist sociology of organizations (Weber; Silverman)</p> <p>— Institutional school (Selznick; Clark; Rhenman; Pettigrew; Eldridge and Crombie; Wilkins; Harrison; Berg; Stymne; Handy)</p>
		<p>2. Organizations are figments of participants' ascription of meaning to, and interpretation of, their organizational experience. They have no external reality as they are social creations and constructions emerging from actors' sense-making out of ongoing streams of actions and interactions. The actor's own actions are first order determinants of the sense that situations have.</p>	<p>2.— Phenomenology, Symbolic Interactionism and Ethnomethodology (Goffman; Turner; Brown; Garfinkel; Cicourel; Bitner; Burrell and Morgan; Smircich)</p>

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