

# SPC 3210 Final Exam

## Chapter 16 Organizational Culture Theory

- Conceptualized by Michael Pacanowsky and Nick O'Donnell-Trujillo, this theory looks to examine how organizations communicate and evolve over time.
- These two men argue that this theory invites researchers to observe, record, and make sense of the communicative behavior of organizational members.
- Because of the ever changing life cycle of organizations, members can obtain confusion, anxiety, frustration, or excitement.
- In this theory, culture is referred to the way of living within an organization. This can include employee morale, attitudes, and levels of productivity.

### The Cultural Metaphor: Of Spider Webs and Organizations

- Culture originally referred to preparing the ground for tending crops and animals. It was interpreted as fostering growth.
- Pacanowsky and Trujillo believe that organizational culture "indicates what constitutes the legitimate realm of inquiry"
- But, Organizational Culture is defined as the essence of organizational life.
- In their theoretical model, they have applied the Symbolic-Interpretive approach articulated by Clifford Geertz.
- Geertz believes that culture is like the webs spun by a spider. They are very intricate designs and are different from all others.
- He contends that each strand of a spiders web represents a discrete aspect of the organization.
- Pacanowsky and Trujillo applied these basic principles to organizations and found that managers and employees spin their own webs alike.
- Therefore, people are critical in the organization and it is important to study their behaviors in conjunction with the overall organization.
- They also claim that members of organizations engage in a number of communication behaviors that contribute to the culture of the company. (gossip, jokes, backstabbing, romance, etc.)

### Assumptions of Organizational Cultural Theory

1. Organizational members create and maintain a shared sense of organizational reality, resulting in a better understanding of the values of an organization.
  - This assumption pertains to the importance of people(in all positions) in organizational life.
  - At the core of this assumption are the values of an organization. These values are the standards and principles within a culture that have intrinsic worth to a culture.
  - Values inform members about what is important.
2. The use and interpretation of symbols are critical to an organization's culture.

- Organizational members create, use, and interpret symbols that are important to the company's culture every day.
  - These symbols represent shared meaning of organizational members and include verbal and nonverbal communication.
  - These symbols communicate the values of an organization.
  - These symbols can include buildings, logos, rituals, slogans, jargon, etc.
3. Cultures vary across organizations, and the interpretations of actions within these cultures are diverse.
- Interpretation of communication that takes place within an organization differs depending on the organization.

### Ethnographic Understanding: Laying it on Thick

- Geertz argues that to understand a culture one must see it from the members' points of view. In order to do this, he believes researchers should become ethnographers.
- Ethnography is a qualitative methodology that uncovers and interprets artifacts, stories, rituals, and practices to reveal meaning in a culture.
- Ethnography calls for observation, participation, note taking, interviews, etc.
- While Geertz was an ethnographer he relied on his field journal to record his experiences and ideas.
- In his writings, he concludes that ethnography is a kind of thick description, or an explanation of the intricate layers of meaning underlying a culture.
- Organizational Culture Theory is rooted in ethnography and organizational culture should be viewed by adopting these principals.

### The Communicative Performance

- Pacanowsky and Trujillo contend that organizational members act out certain communication performances, which result in a unique organizational culture.
- Performance is a metaphor that suggests a symbolic process of understanding human behavior in an organization.
- Performances can be classified into 5 categories: Ritual Performances, Passion Performances, Sociality Performances, Politics Performances, and Enculturation Performances.

#### Ritual Performances

- These performances are those communications that happen on a regular and recurring basis.
- Rituals include 4 types: personal, task, social, and organizational.
- Personal Rituals: these include things that you do routinely each day at the workplace. (ex. Checking email or Voicemail)
- Task Rituals: routinized behaviors associated with a persons job. (ex. If you work at mcdonalds, making cheese burgers and working the register)

- **Social Rituals:** verbal and nonverbal Routines that normally take into consideration the interactions with others. (ex. Employees getting together for happy hour every Friday)
- **Organizational Rituals:** frequently occurring company events such as meetings, picnics, etc.

#### Passion Performances

- These are organizational stories that members enthusiastically relate to and share with others.
- Just refers to employees sharing stories with each other.

#### Social Performances

- These are common extensions of civility, politeness, and courtesy used to encourage cooperation among members.
- “a little goes along way” directly relates to these.

#### Political Performances

- Performances in which member is exercising power or control.
- Acquiring and maintaining power or control is a hallmark in US corporate life.
- When members engage in these performances they essentially communicate a desire to influence others.

#### Enculturation Performances

- This refers to how members obtain the knowledge and skills to be contributing members of the organization.
- These may be bold or subtle, but they demonstrate a members competency.

#### Critique of Organizational Culture Theory

- **Heurism:** applicable in many contexts and cultures
- **Utility:** useful and relevant in explaining virtually any employee/member experience within an organization
- **Logical Consistency:** high level of consistency because of the concept of culture; some feel the theory relies too much on shared meaning which in turn jeopardizes consistency.

### **Chapter 18: The Rhetoric**

#### Why Studying Public Speaking is Important

- It is a skill employers seek in potential employees
- It allows us, as a society, to be open to listening to conflicting viewpoints