Note: Sections of Chapters 3 & 4 have been removed from this web-based version of the dissertation to protect the privacy of the individuals and groups used in this study. The Table of Contents has been left intact, however, to allow the reader a glimpse into the content of the omitted chapters. As a result of the omissions, the page numbers of the Table of Contents do not correspond to the text. For questions and comments, please don't hesitate the contact the author at liesbethg@gmail.com.

METAPHORS OF THE ORGANIZATION:

DISCOURSE IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE WORLDS

Proefschrift ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit van Tilburg, op gezag van de rector magnificus, prof. dr. F.A. van der Duyn Schouten, in het openbaar te verdedigen ten overstaan van een door het college voor promoties aangewezen commissie in de Ruth First Zaal van de Universiteit op 6 juni 2006 om 14.15u.

door

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Samenvatting

In deze thesis onderzoek ik de rol van metaforen in de publieke en private sferen van het organisationeel leven. Metaforen voor de beschrijving van organisaties die worden gebruikt in groepen worden vergeleken en gecontrasteerd met deze die worden gebruikt in meer private sferen. De vraag is hoe de private metaforen van mensen over organisaties zich verhouden tot deze die worden gebruikt door leden van een groep. Zijn de private metaforen ingebed in groepsmetaforen? Overlappen groepsmetaforen met het private domein? Ik plaats deze discussie tegen de achtergrond van zes traditionele en dominante stellingnames in de literatuur met betrekking tot metaforen in organisaties. Daarbij wordt nadrukkelijk gekeken naar de betekenis van metaforen als discursieve instrumenten die op pragmatische wijze worden ingezet ter vervulling van bepaalde functies in de conversaties.

De thesis is onderverdeeld in zes hoofdstukken. Hoofdstuk 1 localiseert dit werk in de bredere context van het sociaal constructionistisch denken. Ik verken kort de sociaal geconstrueerde organisatie door speciaal te kijken naar het proces van zingeving in de organisatie, naar de rol van verhalen in het scheppen van de organisatie, naar de cultuur van de organisatie, en naar het sociaal construeren van de organisatie door middel van discours. Deze verkenning biedt ons het podium waarop een discussie kan plaatsvinden over de diverse manieren waarop we gebruik kunnen maken van metaforen bij het analyseren van organisaties. Het hoofdstuk gaat in op de traditionele opvattingen over metaforen als zijnde gedeeld en uniek, als algemeen, als organisatie instrument, als ingeperkte cultuur, als cognitief en als werkzame factor bij verandering. Tenslotte richt ik mijn blik op het individu, omdat er zo weinig aandacht wordt geschonken in de literatuur aan de organisationele metaforen die door individuen worden gekoesterd in de meer private sfeer.

Hoofdstuk 2 beschrijft de methoden die worden gebruikt voor de analyse van de data. Ik maakte gebruik voor deze studie van een kleine non-profit organisatie in de Verenigde Staten. Er werden opnamen gemaakt van vergaderingen in de organisatie en van private interviews, en deze werden later uitgeschreven. In lijn met een discours-analytische benadering werd de metaforische inhoud van de data vastgesteld, geinterpreteerd en bediscussieerd. In hoofdstuk 3 analyseer ik de gegevens die werden verkregen van groepen, en in hoofdstuk 4 deze die werden verkregen in private interviews. De analyse van de gegevens die werden verkregen van groepen suggereren dat, in tegenstelling tot de opvatting dat organisaties worden gestuurd door metaforen die uniek zijn en die gedeeld worden, ze in werkelijkheid meervoudig en gevarieerd kunnen zijn. Bijkomende voorlopige conclusies zijn: metaforen verschijnen niet op een nette en geordende manier; er kunnen bij de groepsleden verschillende verhalen schuilgaan onder hetzelfde metaforisch thema; het type metafoor dat tevoorschijn komt hangt af van de context; de groepsmetaforen geven een uitbreiding en verfraaing te zien van de metaforen die op dit moment opgang doen in de literatuur and; het lijkt niet waarschijnlijk dat het veranderen van de dominante organisationele metafoor organisationele verandering zal bewerkstelligen.

In Hoofdstuk 4 gebruik ik dezelfde methode als in Hoofdstuk 3, maar bovendien zorg ik ervoor dat aan het einde van elk interview een vignet wordt beschreven. Deze vignetten zijn impressionistisch van aard, volledig subjectief, en zijn niets anders dan een weerspiegeling van mijn eigen poging om de metaforische gang van elk individu door de organisatie in beeld te brengen. Mijn verlangen om deze korte verhalen toe te voegen aan de tekst is eigenlijk het verlangen om te laten zien, door middel van een verhaal, van een mogelijk privaat traject van het individu naar en binnen de organisatie, en welke de begeleidende motieven daarbij kunnen zijn.

In Hoofdstuk 5 bespreek ik de implicaties van de voorgaande bevindingen. Meest opvallend, er worden duidelijk meer metaforen gevonden in het private domein. Soms zijn metaforen van individuen en groepen dezelfde, maar op andere momenten spreken ze elkaar tegen. Soms is er een tegenspraak tussen de metafoor van het ene individu en die van andere. Soms is er zelfs een contradictie tussen de verschillende metaforen van hetzelfde individu, hetgeen te kennen geeft dat er niet een enkele coherente en leidende metafoor in het spel is. Een ander opmerkelijk punt van discussie in Hoofdstuk 5 gaat over de vaststelling dat metaforen op discursieve manieren functioneren. Met gebruikmaking van voorbeelden uit private conversaties laat ik zien hoe metaforen worden gebruikt om een ingenomen positie te ondersteunen, om een positie aan te vallen, en om acties te verrechtvaardigen. Ik bespreek wat we kunnen winnen met een dergelijke discursieve, in tegenstelling tot cognitieve, benadering van metaforen in de analyse van organisaties, en geef als aanreiking dat een dergelijke benadering de mogelijkheid open houdt voor het gelijktijdig ontstaan van meerdere werkelijkheden door middel van de constante instroom van nieuwe metaforen.

In Hoofdstuk 6, tenslotte, uit ik de mening dat een beperkt aantal dominante metaforen niet in staat zijn om te voldoen aan de organisationele behoeften. Het is ons gebleken dat metaforen zowel over het publieke als over het private domein heen vloeien, daarmee een verbinding tot stand brengend tussen het persoonlijke en het professionele. Ik presenteer hiervan levensechte voorbeelden en ga na hoe mijn bevindingen een bijdrage kunnen leveren aan de organisationele praktijk.

Executive Summary

In this thesis I explore the role of metaphor in the public and private realms of organizational life. Metaphors that appear in group settings are compared and contrasted with metaphors that are used by individuals privately to describe the organization. I examine how people's private metaphors of the organization relate to metaphors used by members in a group context. Are people's private metaphors embedded within the group metaphors? Do group metaphors intersect with the private domain? I frame this discussion against the backdrop of six traditional, dominant assertions on metaphor in organizations found in the literature. A highlight of this discussion is an examination of metaphors as discursive implements used pragmatically to perform certain functions in conversations.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 locates this work in the broader context of social constructionist thinking. I briefly explore the socially constructed organization by looking specifically at the process of sensemaking in organizations, the place of narrative in creating the organization, organizational culture, and socially constructing the organization through discourse. This exploration sets the stage for a discussion on the various uses of metaphor in organizational analysis. This chapter explores the traditional assumptions of metaphor in organizations as shared and singular, as ubiquitous, as organizing devices, as bounded culture, as cognitive and as change agents. Lastly, I shift the focus to the individual, as little attention in the literature is directed to organizational metaphors that individuals nurture more privately.

Chapter 2 outlines the methods used to analyze the data. I used a small, non-profit organization in the US for this study. Organizational meetings and private interviews with individual were taped and transcribed. A discourse analytical approach was applied to the data and metaphoric content identified, interpreted and discussed.

In Chapters 3 and 4 I analyze data obtained from group settings and private interviews respectively. Observations drawn from the group setting data analysis suggest that, contrary to the assumption that organizations are guided by shared and singular metaphors, the metaphors that guide organizations may be multiple and varied. Additional preliminary conclusions include the following: metaphors do not present themselves in a neat and orderly fashion; group members may harbor different narratives around a similar metaphoric theme; context influences the types of metaphors that emerge; the group metaphors expanded and embellished metaphors currently in use in the academic literature and; changing a dominant organizational metaphor will unlikely yield organizational change.

In addition to using a similar method to analyze the private interview data in Chapter 4 as was used for the group data in Chapter 3, I provide short vignettes at the end of each individual interview. These vignettes are impressionistic, wholly subjective, and reflect my attempts to portray each individual's metaphoric journey through the organization. My wish for the inclusion of these short narratives is to show one possibility of an individual's private trajectory into and within the organization and the motivations that accompany these individuals on that journey.

In Chapter 5 I discuss the implications of the previous findings. Most notably, many more metaphors are found in the private domain. At times individuals share

metaphors with the larger group and at other times individual and group metaphors contradict each other. At times the metaphors of one individual oppose that of another. Furthermore, individuals may contradict their own metaphors, suggesting that even within one individual there is not one coherent guiding metaphor at play. Another notable discussion point in Chapter 5 focuses on the observation that metaphors function discursively. Using illustrations from private conversations, I show how metaphors are used to support a position, attack a position, and justify an action. I discuss what can be gained from a discursive, as opposed to a cognitive, approach to metaphor in organizational analysis, and offer that this approach allows for the simultaneous emergence of multiple realities through the constant influx of new metaphors.

Finally, in Chapter 6 I suggest that a few dominant metaphors will not meet the needs of shifting organizational concerns. Metaphors seemed to flow across public and private domains, connecting the personal and the professional. I present real world examples and explore how my findings might inform organizational practice.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW: METAPHORS IN INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE

I unwittingly became interested in the topic of metaphor, organizations, and individuals when I moved into an intentional "cohousing" community in Colorado in the mid 1990's. The community had been up and running about three years prior to my arrival and the group's honeymoon phase, marked by the excitement of taking part in a novel experiment, was nearing its end. By the time I arrived, about 150 members lived in the community. In structure, the community resembled a non-profit organization, complete with a set of bi-laws, a board of directors, a budget, work groups, meetings, retreats, a mission statement, and specific processes for decision-making.

I had thought that moving into an intentional community would give me instant friends and support. For me the image of "community" conjured up a certain way of life. Before I arrived I had visions of togetherness and safety; a group of people living side-by-side, sharing meals, childcare and other resources. While I did end up making some good friends and experiencing the "community" of my imagination, over time through weekly meetings and informal conversations on front porches, I became aware of various ways in which this was not a "community." This was not a cohesive entity with everyone putting the good of the whole before themselves. People muttered about doing more than their fair share of work. Some felt the community no longer had a vision and that the group had swayed from its original purpose.

Contentious issues started to emerge during the group's weekly meetings. I attended the meetings and became interested in observing how the conversation between

various groups unfolded. Each faction had specific ideas and images of what community life should look like. I noticed how, through formal meeting conversations and informal dialogues, members negotiated which group images would prevail. For some the image of "community" meant behaving as one big family. For others "community" simply meant you knew the names of your neighbors. Regardless of the particular kind of life that was evoked by its use, the word "community" functioned as a metaphor for the group.

Metaphors help constitute the realities we live in. Metaphors give groups and organizations a sense of direction, history and values. They help answer questions about the organization such as, "What is it?" "What am I a part of?" "What am I participating in? A family? A machine? A jazz band?" "A community?" Imagine the metaphor of a "workplace as a prison" versus a "workplace as a pool party." The "workplace as prison" metaphor will have "prisoners," "guards," a "warden" a "prison yard" and so on. The "workplace as pool party" metaphor will have "drinks with umbrellas," "sunshine," a "hostess," "guests," and a "relaxed" atmosphere. Different metaphors will come into view as different organizational realities are negotiated.

Organizational metaphors are not simply theoretical constructs. To look at metaphor is to look at how our view of reality influences, shapes and informs the very organizations that we participate in. For example, in the intentional community mentioned above the metaphor of "community" was counterbalanced by the metaphor of something like "homesteading individualists." This tension manifested itself in an intractable conflict involving group members' outdoor cats. These outdoor cats would occasionally eat birds while roaming around the community land. Members interested in

promoting wildlife chastised the outdoor cat owners for letting their cats loose to pounce on the poor hapless birds. Many heated discussions ensued around whether or not the outdoor cats should be allowed to roam free. The outdoor cats seemed to become symbols for individual freedom, a notion antithetical to the metaphor of community.

Another source of tension exemplified by the metaphors of individualism and community involved the building of fences. Before the community was built, community members banned the use of fences to delineate property lines. However, after completion one of the members wanted to erect a six-foot, bamboo privacy fence but, according to the bi-laws, needed community permission. Community members were conflicted in their views about the fence. Meetings were held. Gossip flowed. Permission was ultimately not granted. As a result, the members who could not build their fence moved out of the community to another part of town. Group members experienced real life consequences as a result of competing metaphoric constructs.

Much has been written on organizational metaphors. The central focus of this thesis involves metaphors and the organizing process. I will focus on metaphors that appear in group settings and will also introduce metaphors used by individuals in reference to discussing the organization. The existing literature gives little mention of what the individual brings to the organization in terms individual metaphoric vocabularies. I will explore how individual metaphors compare to group metaphors. How are people's private metaphors of the organization related to metaphors that surface in group contexts? How do individual metaphors function for the individual vis a vis group life? Are people's private metaphors embedded within the group metaphors? And conversely, do the group metaphors intersect with the private domain? In the fence

example above, the couple wanted privacy yet was presumably also interested in participating in intentional community, since they moved there after all. What is the function of the "homesteading individualist" metaphor for this couple? How do they use this metaphor to position themselves within the community? How do they use this metaphor to support their arguments for a fence, yet simultaneously use it to permit them to position themselves as community members? The present thesis will attempt to explore these concerns using data from a small, non-profit organization in the US.

My views on metaphor and organization are heavily influenced by a social constructionist stance. In the present chapter I will briefly locate social constructionism within the larger epistemological debates of the 20th century and outline some major tenets of a social constructionist orientation, beginning with some thoughts on the socially constructed world. This will be followed by a review of some of the organizational literature that connects constructionist ideas to those of the organization. Finally, issues of metaphor, organization and the individual will be introduced.

The Socially Constructed World

For ages philosophers have pondered questions such as: What constitutes the individual? What is the individual's place in the world? What is the relationship between the world and the individual? Is the world a reality "out there" independent of what we think "in here?" Is the world constructed independent of us? Or, are we constructing the world? Though these debates have raged from the times of the ancient Greeks, it was the Age of Enlightenment that initiated our Western views on the power of reason and heralded the birth of the individual mind. Some philosophers in the 16th and

17th centuries proposed that individuals were capable of observing, thinking, deliberating and choosing one's actions, finally removing ultimate authority from the hands of the noblemen and the church. During this time science became the new faith. Richard Tarnas (1991) in *The Passion of the Western Mind* writes about the triumph of science:

> For when the titanic battle of the religions failed to resolve itself, with no monolithic structure of belief any longer holding sway over civilization, science suddenly stood forth as mankind's liberation-empirical, rational, appealing to common sense and to a concrete reality that every person could touch and weigh for himself. (p. 284)

The period usually referred to as "The Enlightenment" was marked by a dominant philosophy stating that the central purpose of science was to represent objective reality. It privileged a view of the world that could be known through rational thought and objective measurement. This philosophic trend, termed "positivism" by some, posited two central tenets: the belief in a reality that existed independent from the mind that sought to know it, and the idea that reality could be known through objective and rational appraisal. Successive approximations of objective reality through observation and experimentation would lead scientists ever closer to the "truth." These philosophers believed an underlying, ordered pattern to the nature of reality existed and it was possible to know and represent this pattern.

However, a central epistemological question remained. How does individual consciousness acquire knowledge of the objective world? One view, typically identified as empiricist and traceable to Aristotle, posited the mind as a mirror to nature. If we assume that the mind reflects the world as it really is, we can believe we can obtain objective knowledge of the world. Experience of the world fills what is presumed to be a

tabula rasa at birth. However, critics of this view noted that no one could stand outside his or her experience to know whether an actual world is being mirrored correctly.

Thus a competing view, commonly called rationalism and rooted in Platonic philosophical ideas, proposed that the individual possesses innate mental processes and concepts that play a critical role in the acquisition of knowledge. Influential 18th century philosopher Immanual Kant argued that in order to understand the world, human beings must have certain innate ideas. The world does not produce our concepts but helps order them in various ways. We cannot derive notions of time, or causality, for example, from observation only. But the rationalists ultimately could not answer how concepts appear in our minds in the first place. How can we understand how new concepts continuously emerge in our culture using a rationalist view? The lively debate around whether concepts are built up through observation or are innate and inherent in the individual has flourished for centuries and to date this epistemological problem, remains just that, a problem.

In response to these unsolvable epistemological riddles, another conversation, variously referred to as post-foundational, post-structural, post-empiricist and post-modern, has emerged as a challenge to the philosophical underpinnings of the prevailing Western scientific endeavor.

The postmodern dialogue posits that we cannot come ever closer to a "true" representation of reality. All human understanding is interpretation and no one interpretation is final. Tolerance for ambiguity and pluralism is critical and the result of any investigation will be knowledge that is relative and depends on context. "Reality is in some sense constructed by the mind, not simply perceived by it, and many such

constructions are possible, none necessarily sovereign" (Tarnas, 1991, p. 396). A "radical perspectivism" using epistemological notions outlined earlier by philosophers like Hume, Kant and later Nietsche, lies at the heart of the postmodern position (Tarnas, 1991, p. 397). Namely, whatever the world is makes no requirements on interpretation. What the world is for us comes into being only in and through interpretations. The subject of knowledge is already embedded in the object of knowledge. All human knowledge is mediated by signs and symbols which gain their meaning through historical and cultural contexts and are influenced by often unconscious human interests around power and privilege.

Though many factors have influenced the postmodern position, it has been the analysis of language that has influenced its most skeptical epistemological views. Many sources have influenced this investigation. For example, Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure helped develop the discipline of semiotics, or the science of signs, and proposed in essence that the relationship between the word and that for which the word stands is basically arbitrary. There is nothing inherent in a tree that necessitates us calling it a tree. Any word, then, can stand for any person, object or event. One set of words is not more "true to fact" than any other set of words.

Other influential voices included those of: Edward Sapir and B.L. Whorf, who put forth a linguistic hypothesis that language shapes the perception of reality as much as reality shapes language; Michel Foucault's investigations into the social construction of knowledge; Jacques Derrida's deconstructionism, challenging the attempts to establish a secure meaning in any text; and Ludwig Wittgenstein, who proposed a game metaphor of language and focused on its pragmatic aspects. Wittgenstein (1958) suggested language

games consisted of certain moves, like in a game of chess, and words gain their meaning through their use within the game. The players have a limited number of moves depending on the context. An example of a language game might be the "hello" game, where after saying "how are you?" the other person has a limited number of replies such as "fine" or "good." If the person said, "that car is yellow," the game would be over, or at least disrupted. The members of any community develop ways of speaking that serve their needs as a group. These language forms become "forms of life." Like rules of a game, Wittgenstein argued, the rules for ordinary language are neither true nor false. They are merely useful for particular situations. According to Wittgenstein, language is not only a carrier of semantic referents, but has a utilitarian and relational function. I will elaborate on this point later, as it informs the basic philosophical orientation of the analyses in this thesis.

In conclusion, these propositions posited that since human experience is culturally and linguistically shaped and the specific linguistic forms have no necessary connection to an independent reality, the human mind can never claim access to any reality other than that determined by its local form of life. What we know as reality is constructed, interpreted and enacted through social interactions.

While necessary to debunk the long-standing myths of absolute knowledge and uncontested reality, the linguistically based critiques outlined above eventually gave way to a kind of nihilistic despair. As Kenneth Gergen (1999), a prolific writer on the subject of the self in relation to the world, writes in, *An Invitation to Social Construction*, "As the arguments unfold, not only do the traditions seem groundless, so many balloons afloat on hot air, but so do the critiques…the critiques are so powerful that they also destroy

themselves" (p. 30). In his book, Gergen presents an alternative to the ideological rubble. He uses a social constructionist frame from which to rebuild in new and promising directions. I will use this frame as a backdrop for my thesis and, given its prominent place in this project, will say a few words about its assumptions.

Given that it is only within a particular community and according to certain conventions that we can declare something to be true, social constructionism does not concern itself with a "true" account of the world, but rather asks what happens when people use words. What are the consequences of putting something one way as opposed to another? Social constructionism is a metanarrative that asks "is it useful" rather than "is it true." Gergen (1994, 1999), a foundational voice in social constructionism, offers the following example of constructionist concerns:

> Our attention moves to the forms of life that are favored (or destroyed) by various ways of putting things. If physicists define people as 'nothing but atoms,' for example, how does this characterization function within society; how do we come to treat people within this form of life; how will our actions differ if we characterize people as 'possessing a soul?' What kinds of people, institutions, laws and so on are favored when we speak in one set of terms as opposed to another; what traditions or ways of life are suppressed or destroyed? (Gergen, 1999, p. 38)

Social constructionism is viewed as a set of dialogues and commentaries, rather than a truth or a theory. It lodges our perceptions of reality, and all the moral and ethical imperatives that accompany that reality, in communal relationships. Nothing exists until it is interpreted by a community of people. The requirements of that community come out of its particular values and histories. People come together and begin to develop practices. Something then emerges that they might call "science" or "mental illness" or "death." Until we coordinate our actions, there is no meaning. Meaning is only borne out of relational processes. This is not to say that a material reality does not exist, but

rather that the moment we rule on what is or isn't fundamentally real, we enter into a discourse, a conversation about traditions, ways of life and a set of value preferences. And when we declare something to be true, we close off alternatives.

Constructionism does not seek to be a final word, but a form of discourse that hopes to build a world where dialogue is continuous and never ending. According to Gergen (1999), the existence of the single voice "is simultaneously the end of conversation, dialogue, negotiation-or in effect, the death of meaning itself" (p. 233). He invokes Foucault, a prominent critical social theorist, and asks the following questions: "What happens when the scientific ways of interpreting the world are set loose in the society? Who gains, who loses, and how do we wish to build our future together?" (p. 58).

The Socially Constructed Organization

Having outlined some of the logics of a socially constructed world, I will now explore their relevance to organizational process. The leap from "world" to "organization" warrants a few comments, as clearly they are not one and the same. However, we can think of the organization as a microcosm of the social world; diverse groups of people from different walks of life interact with each other and do things. Increasingly the boundaries between world and organization are blurring. Organizational researchers and commentators Clegg and Hardy (1996) point out the emergence of new forms of organization where the outer boundaries are breaking down as individual organizations blur to form "chains," "networks" and "strategic alliances" with each other. Inside organizations, top-down bureaucracies are giving way to decentralized, flat

structures aimed at empowering workers. Organizations are no longer only characterized by notions of centralization, hierarchy, authority, discipline, rules, and division of labor.

In the introduction to *The Handbook of Organizational Studies,* Clegg and Hardy (1996) write that 30 years ago organizational analysts premised key organizational concerns on assumptions of order and the unitary nature of organizations. Researchers emphasized consensus and coherence as opposed to conflict, dissensus and power dynamics. Alternative approaches emerged which favored interpretive understanding as opposed to logic and causal explanations; social construction as opposed to social determinism; and pluralistic as opposed to singular definitions. Modernist rhetoric concerned with grand narratives, essentialism, and notions of totality began to compete with postmodern ideas around fragmentation, discontinuity and indeterminacy.

In the USA, Karl Weick (1969) in his book *The Social Psychology of Organizing* focused attention on the process of organizing as opposed to its product, the bounded entity known as the "organization," and favored a view of organizational reality as socially constructed. Just as language figures prominently in accounts of the socially constructed world, so does it play a major role in the social construction of organizations. Everyday conversations, meetings, agendas, political bickering and water cooler gossip all constitute the organization. Without these various interchanges an organization would not exist.

Numerous organizational theorists have pondered and explicated the processes by which an organization comes to be perceived as such. What makes an organization an organization? How do we define the boundaries of these new organizations? How do organizational members make sense of what it is they are participating in? How is it

meaning is made? What sustains the organizational entity? In the following sections I will touch briefly on some central ways in which the process of organizing has been approached as one of social construction. Of special interest are issues of sensemaking, narrative, culture, communication and discourse. This exploration will set the stage for an appreciation of the final importance of metaphor in organizational life.

The Process of Sensemaking in Organizations

Weick (1995), a prolific scholar on a myriad of subjects related to organizing and organizations, elaborated on the concept of "sensemaking" as a way to understand organizational behavior. Sensemaking, like organizing, is a social process that occurs in a specific context. He suggested that both organizations and sensemaking processes are cut from the same cloth; to organize is to impose order, counteract deviations, simplify, and connect. These same processes occur when people try to make sense. Weick's cognitive framework helps explain why organizations, and the people involved in them, do what they do. He cautions that readers against confusing sensemaking with interpretation. In interpretation, something (for example, a text) exists prior to an interpretation. The text is already there, and ready to be interpreted. Sensemaking, on the other hand, is an ongoing activity that addresses how the text got to be there in the first place as well as how it is read. It addresses authoring and reading. It is about the ways people generate what they interpret.

For Weick and other sensemaking theorists, an organization is not an entity "out there" to be interpreted, but a process. People organize through sensemaking processes to create that which they are interpreting. According to this view, individuals are not

separate from the wider reality they live in and react to. Rather, they create and sustain images of this wider reality to rationalize what they are doing. When people make sense of things, they read into things the meanings they have created together.

Action and context are key aspects of sensemaking. Weick (1995) likes to use the following quote to illustrate sensemaking in action: "People know what they think when they see what they say" (p. 106). Weick (1995) explains components of sensemaking in the following way: "Once people begin to act (enactment), they generate tangible outcomes (cues) in some context (social), and this helps them discover (retrospect) what is occurring (ongoing), what needs to be explained (plausibility), and what should be done next (identity enhancement) (p. 55).

As an example of this process, Weick recounts the story of a young Hungarian lieutenant who sends a reconnaissance party into the icy Alps during military maneuvers in Switzerland. During the foray, the group gets lost during a snowstorm. One of the men finds a map in his pocket. They wait out the storm and find their way back to base camp using the map. Upon returning to camp, the lieutenant asks to look at the life-saving map, only to find it is a map of the Pyrenees and not the Alps. As Weick (1995) notes, "this raises the intriguing possibility that when you are lost, any old map will do" (p. 54). Why? Because maps engage people into taking action. Once action is taken, outcomes, or cues, are generated in a specific social context. These cues help people discover and explain what is happening and what needs to happen in the future.

Given the social component of sensemaking, it is no surprise that Weick (1995) extols language as an instrumental part of the sensemaking process. "Vivid words draw attention to new possibilities-this suggests that organizations with access to more varied

images will engage in sensemaking that is more adaptive than will organizations with more limited vocabularies" (p. 4). Weick favors verbal content rich in process imagery, verbs and unfolding narratives. Sensemaking requires a good story.

People who study sensemaking pay attention to discourse and conversation because that is how a great deal of social contact is mediated. Weick (1995) observes that "a significant portion of the organizational environment consists of nothing more than: "talk, symbols, promises, lies, interest, attention, threats, agreements, expectations, memories, rumors, indicators, supporters, detractors, faith, suspicion, trust, appearances, loyalties, and commitments" (p. 41). In Weick's model, the creation of organizational reality is a continuous process that takes form when people make retrospective sense of the situations in which they find themselves and their creations.

The Place of Narrative in Constructing the Organization

As noted above, organizations are constituted in part by people making sense of and reacting to the actions, ambiguities, paradoxes and dilemmas that are the mainstay of organizational life. Recall Weick's assertion that what is needed for sensemaking is a good story. Wallemacq and Sims (1998) agree with Weick that narratives are integral to the process of sensemaking. They point out that "the ultimate lack of sense is when you cannot produce a narrative to go with a situation" (p. 121).

To engage in life is to engage in narrative. Most people make sense of their lives through narrative. When asked, "tell me something about yourself," people will most likely not come out and say, "I got divorced. I have a big fuzzy dog. My kids are grown. The clown is funny." Instead, we find a way to link these disparate thoughts or feelings

into a coherent whole through the use of narrative structures. Narratives have certain structures that dictate what can be said when and by whom. Narratives are accounts of events, usually chronological, that have a cause and effect relationship. Gergen (1999) outlines some important features of a well-formed narrative: a valued endpoint; events relevant to the endpoint; ordering of events and; causal linkages. He notes that the more narrative features the speaker/writer incorporates, the more "true" the narrative will seem (p. 69).

Jerome Bruner (1990), a cultural psychologist asserts that the everyday accounts of why people act as they do reflect the essential elements of thought. We understand others by thinking in narratives and creating cause and effect links to make sense of another's actions. For example, if your best friend didn't call you as arranged, you might make sense of her actions by thinking, "she is mad at me because I didn't pick her up in time last night." Through narrative storytelling we connect events of a story into some kind of sequence.

The same penchant for making sense through narrative that occurs in everyday life occurs in organizations. Putnam, Phillips and Chapman (1996) point out that narratives (also referred to as scripts, stories, myths, legends, and sagas) are symbols present in all organizations. Organizational participants produce and reproduce narratives in order to make sense of a sequence of events. Organizations are fertile ground for multiple narratives and therefore multiple realities (Boje, 2003). While management may tell one story of "what happened during the last set of layoffs," employees may give an entirely different account. Different organizational members tell different stories about what they perceive is the reality of the organization and

organizational events. Because of this constructed and contested nature of narrative, stories have important implications for the processes and practices of organizing (Gabriel, 2004).

David Boje, (1995, 2003), a prolific writer on narrative and organizations, agrees that organizational members use stories to collectively make sense of organizations. People in organizations are embedded in a web of stories. By "story" Boje (1995) means an oral or written performance involving two or more people interpreting a past or anticipated experience. Organizational members introduce stories in the form of conversations. The speaker tells a story and the listener interrupts, challenges and adds elements to the narrative. Group members find themselves and their roles in the group by figuring out what stories they belong to.

Boje (1995) proposes that organizational rhetoric imposes and creates order and concreteness that then gets reified as organizational social fact. Taking a critical perspective regarding organizational narratives, Boje and others ask questions such as: Whose story is being told by the organization? Who gets to tell which story to whom? When do the stories get to be told? What are the motives of the storytellers? What narrative framework is being given authority? For these researchers social structure or "reality" is, in part, the result of who takes part in conversations and when and where they do so (Hardy, Lawrence & Phillips, 1998, p. 67).

Organizational researchers have explored the narrative content of organizational texts such as conversations, dialogue, official documents, newspaper articles and web sites to gain insight into how meaning is socially constructed and action is generated within the organization (Grant, Hardy, Oswick & Putnam, 2004). Grant et al. (2004) note

that narratives have been studied as: elements of organizational culture, shared identity among organizational members, and expressions of political domination and opposition. They have also been used to examine organizational policy, strategy and change.

Organizational Culture

With the increasing recognition of the symbolic aspects of organizational settings, those interested in studying organizations have used the concept of culture to understand organizational existence and organizational life. Much of organization theory is rooted in the imagery of order (Meadows, 1967). Given this concern, it is no surprise that the concept of culture, which attempts to explain the patterns and orderliness of our life experiences, has infiltrated the organizational world. These researchers ask, "how can the culture concept inform us about organizations?"

Organizational researchers borrowed the culture concept from anthropology. Many different definitions for culture exist in anthropology (Smircich, 1983), so perhaps it is no surprise that there is no consensus on one definition in the organizational culture literature (Martin, 2002). Martin (2002), in her book, *Organizational Culture*, outlines no less than twelve definitions of organizational culture. One of the most important distinctions between the various viewpoints in the "culture wars" is the view of culture as a metaphor as opposed to culture as a variable. The culture as a variable orientation views culture as something an organization *has* whereas the culture as metaphor stance sees culture as something the organization *is* (Smircich, 1983). In the former orientation, researchers assume organizations produce cultures. They produce rituals, myths, and ceremonies in the process of producing goods and services. Studies that view culture as a

variable, akin to variables like size, structure, technology and leadership patterns, assume a functionalist viewpoint (Smircich, 1983; Martin, 2002) where variables are used to predict outcomes. Underlying this approach is the search for predictable means of organizational control and improved means of organizational management. According to Smircich (1983) and Martin (2002), the 1980's witnessed a mushrooming array of organizational literature targeted at managers who proposed that organizations with a strong culture (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Peters and Waterman, 1982) could better withstand the rapidly changing demands of the marketplace.

However, during this time and continuing into the present, some researchers question whether organizational culture can be managed and shaped according to the whims of leaders. Critical theorists like Stanley Deetz (2001) criticize the hegemonic intent behind these practices, raising issues of who is in control and why. These other researchers recognize the existence of multiple organizational subcultures, or countercultures, each providing their own definitions of organizational reality. According to this critique, these alternative interpretations are often pushed to the margins by management.

On the other hand, the "culture as metaphor" orientation focuses on the symbolic meanings associated with cultural forms such as rituals, physical environments, and hierarchical structures, to name of few. Culture is a lens through which researchers view the organization. It promotes a view of organizations as a particular form of human expression (Smircich, 1983). The organization is not a vehicle for culture. Instead, "the organizational world exists only as a pattern of symbolic relationships and meanings sustained through the continual process of human interaction" (Smircich, 1983, p. 353).

These researchers explore the phenomenon of organization as a subjective experience and investigate the patterns that make organizational action possible. These researchers pay attention to language, myths, stories, rituals and symbols, but see these as generative processes that shape meaning as opposed to cultural artifacts (like those found in an archeological dig) that reflect meaning. According to Smircich (1983), these researchers ask not what organizations accomplish and how may they accomplish it more efficiently, but how is organization accomplished and what does it mean to be organized. Martin (2002) notes that if reality is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), organizational theorists using a cultural lens must study the subjective frameworks of cultural members in addition to the objective "facts" and material conditions.

Martin (2002) reviews a sampling of the cultural research literature of the last three decades, defining three theoretical views of culture in organizations. These include the integration, the differentiation, and the fragmentation perspective. The integration perspective "focuses on those manifestations of a culture that have mutually consistent interpretations" (p. 94). Words like "shared values" pervade these types of research studies. Culture is that which is clear and unambiguous. Martin uses a metaphor to sum up this perspective: "Culture is like a solid monolith that is seen the same way by most people, no matter from which angle they view it" (p. 94). Practically speaking, it often focuses on management, endorsing the interpretation of those in power over competing stories. Edgar Schein, (1985) a prolific writer on the subject of organizational culture and leadership notes that "only what is shared is, by definition, cultural" (p. 247). Deviations within this model are seen as shortcomings or problems that need fixing.

The differentiation perspective focuses on cultural manifestations that have inconsistent interpretations. Consensus exists, but only within subcultures. "Subcultures may exist independently, in harmony or in conflict with each other" (Martin, 2002, p. 94). This model views differences and inconsistencies as inescapable and desirable. According to Martin (2002), some differentiation studies emphasize harmonious relationships between subcultures whereas others stress the inconsistencies and conflicts between these cultures at various organizational levels.

The fragmentation perspective places ambiguity, rather than coherence or clarity, at the core of culture. In this view consensus is possible, but it is expected to be fleeting and issue specific, rather than organization wide and everlasting. This view studies and attempts to understand organizational tensions and polemic behavior. It explores paradoxes and contradictions and attempts to make sense of these. Many of these studies assume the existence of multiple organizational realities and focus on a multiplicity of interpretations. Both organizations and individuals are seen to have fluctuating identities (Eisenberg & Riley, 2001).

In Eisenberg and Riley's (2001) chapter on "Organizational Culture" in *The New Handbook of Organizational Communication*, they note that the traditional study of culture, which included investigations into "common meanings, integration, community and values and the language of unification" (p. 303) is at odds with the postmodern perspective which privileges difference and fragmentation. Which view should prevail? Alvesson (as cited in Eisenberg and Riley, 2001) argues that "trying to extract a common set of values from an organization that employs a wide range of people seems likely only to yield a superficial set of norms and values that may promote cohesiveness but have

little impact on work behavior" (p. 311). Martin (2002) suggests using all three perspectives (integration, differentiation, fragmentation) in a culture study. According to Eisenberg and Riley (2001), many organizational researchers no longer search for the holy grail of one organizational reality, or culture, and conclude that culture cannot be managed, but certain patterns of behavior can be cultivated and encouraged to the benefit of all.

Organization as Communication

The relationship between the concept of organization and communication is complex. Putnam, Phillips, and Chapman (1996) in *The Handbook of Organizational Studies* (1996) pose the question, "Do organizations determine the type and flow of communication, or does communication shape the nature of organizing?" (p. 375). Organizational communication, a wide field that began its "modern" journey in the 1940's by looking at topics such as, "Is an informed employee a productive employee?" (Thompkins & Wanca-Thibault, 2001, p. xxi) now encompasses diverse interests such as information processing, social networks, coordination, and participation. Thompkins and Wanca-Thibault (2001) in *The New Handbook of Communication* list the frequency of topics found in organizational communication journals from 1981-1991. Topping the list at 233 entries (out of a total of 889), were topics focusing on interpersonal relations such as superior-subordinate relations, interpersonal conflict, stress, race, gender and interviewing.

Initially, communication was seen as located within a physically tangible organizational entity. Theorists aligned with this perspective saw the function of

communication as helping maintain the organizational structure. Just as some researchers viewed culture as a variable, communication was viewed as a variable that influenced organizational performance. Researchers used a conduit metaphor, suggested by statements such as "the flow of communication" and "we must develop more direct lines of communication" to characterize the nature of organizational communication. This metaphor continues to operate today.

Others treat communicating and organizing as the same phenomena expressed in different ways. For example, Putnam, Phillips and Chapman (1996) explore the relationship between organization and communication, but assume that communication produces organization. Cynthia Stohl (1995) in *Organizational Communication: Connectedness in Action*, agrees that communication constitutes organizations. She conceptualizes organizations as "identifiable social systems of interacting individuals pursuing multiple objectives through coordinated acts and relationships" (p. 23). Using a web metaphor, she views communication as an interactive process shaped by multiple, interrelated strands of activities. Members intertwine in a variety of relationships beyond the office through community projects, childcare concerns, informal friendships, and company socials. These networks help form ties between home, work, and community, rendering organizational boundaries permeable and fluid.

Another approach to communication adds the notion that communicative processes in organizations are not neutral. Critical theorists propose that dominant and powerful groups have more access to information and therefore more opportunities to construct interpretations and therefore influence organizational reality (Deetz, 2001). Deetz poses a provocative question to his fellow researchers: "What do we see or what

are we able to do if we see organizational communication in one way versus another?" (p. 4). Deetz encourages those interested in the subject to understand the implications of the answers; he is less concerned with whether we have the right orientation or the right definition of organizational communication. He sees organizations as "complex discursive formations where discursive practices are both in organizations and productive of them" (pp. 5-6). Deetz's views lead directly to the final section which addresses the discursive aspects of the socially constructed organization.

Socially Constructing the Organization through Discourse

Each of these preceding strands of scholarships constitutes a contribution to a more general understanding of the organization as socially constructed. Each approach has a different emphasis, different terminologies and tensions, but by and large they all place an importance on processes of discourse in constructing the meaning, value, and future of the organization. This linguistic turn resulted in part from disillusionment with many of the mainstream theories and methodologies underlying organizational studies (Grant, Hardy, Oswick & Putnam, 2004). Discursively based studies now proliferate management journals. Despite this observation, Grant et al. (2004) lament that organizational discourse remains a "relatively under-utilized avenue of enquiry whose contributions have not been fully realized" (p. 2).

What, exactly, is discourse? A strict view limits discourse to talk. However, many researchers also include written artifacts when study discourse. Discourse can also mean a set of "conversations" (including written, artistic and media forms) involved in exploring a particular subject over time. For some, "discourse" moves beyond linguistic

forms and suggests a mode of thinking. “Equal rights for all,” for example, became a dominant discourse in the USA in the 1960’s, impacting the social consciousness and indeed the social practices of the times. Depending on the goals and theoretical assumptions of the specific organizational discourse research project, the definition of discourse will vary and diverse researchers incorporate a dizzying array of methods and perspectives. This is understandable, given that discourse analysis is informed by many various disciplines ranging from anthropology to linguistics.

While no one method exists to analyze organizations discursively, broadly speaking these organizational researchers analyze organizational “texts.” These texts usually include oral and written communication as well as collections of interactions. For example, a single meeting or a series of meetings could be considered “text.” Text could also include visual representations, such as the art on the walls of corporate headquarters, or the arrangement of chairs in a gathering space. Cultural artifacts, such as the award given to the employee of the month, also constitute “text.” Putnam and Fairhurst (2001) define texts as “a body of discourse produced through organizational actions and interactions” (p. 104). Grant, Hardy, Oswick and Putnam (2004) and Grant, Keenoy, and Oswick (1996) highlight literature that shows how the attitudes, behaviors and organizational members’ perceptions of reality are influenced by the discursive practices in which they engage and to which they are exposed and subjected.

Using various forms of discourse analysis, these researchers examine the way talk is shared. They don’t just look at what is said, but how it is said, where it is said, and who says it. They look at the whole fabric of talk and examine the norms, values, hierarchies and the social structures that are constituted by that talk. For example, how

do various forms of discourse keep members in or out of a group? How does an informal conversation around the water cooler between a line staff and his or her boss support or challenge the existing power differential between them? Jill Woodilla (1998) provides a detailed account of a workplace conversation and, using various forms of linguistic analysis, demonstrates that meaning around topics and organizing are simultaneously created. She also illustrates how relationships and occupational identities are formed, and how conversational members negotiate differences in interpretation. Organizational discourse researchers examine how the social reality of an organization is created through and by the discourse of that organization.

A major assumption of this dissertation is based on the notion that discursive practices in organizations not only describe things but also *do* things (Grant et al., 2004). From this perspective discourse is not seen as a separate organizational activity. It is not simply contained within the confines of organizational life but is integral in constituting that life. Because of this action component, discursive practices have social and political implications (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). According to Grant, Keenoy and Oswick (1996), the more influential approaches to discourse analysis are those that situate it within a social context. Van Dijk (1997), using linguistics, psychology and sociology, claims it is possible to move beyond textual examination to explore "who uses language, how, why and when" (p. 2).

Drawing on the assumption mentioned above that discursive practices do things, I would like to add another aspect to van Dijk's claim and inquire, who uses language how, why, and when, *and what happens as a result.* In other words, what is the function and utility for the organization and its members of a particular discourse? The following

section will return to the issue of metaphor as an instance of discourse, and introduce more specifically the details of this inquiry into metaphors and the organizing process from a macro and micro perspective.

Metaphors and the Organizing Process

Having outlined some of the major ways theorists see organizations as socially constructed, I now return to the specific focus of this dissertation, namely metaphors and the organizing process. Recall the assertion made in the beginning of this chapter that metaphors help constitute the realities we live in. Metaphors give organizations a sense of direction, history and values. In this thesis I will examine metaphors as they appear in the public and private spheres of organizational life. Let us first take a closer look at the concept of metaphor and the place of metaphor in organizational life.

What is metaphor?

Everyday language is filled with metaphor. The essence of metaphor, derived from the Greek word *metaphorikos,* or transportation, is understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another. We use metaphor to "transport" meaning from one domain to another. We use metaphor to describe something using the qualities of something else. Poets and others in the literary arts have long used and appreciated the power of metaphor, along with other rhetoric devices, to embellish their writings.

In Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) seminal work, *Metaphors We Live By,* they posit metaphor is a part of our everyday speech and deeply influences the ways in which we perceive, think, and act. They suggest that human experience and activities are largely

metaphorical in nature and that "much of our conceptual system is structured by metaphor" (p. 147). Words alone don't change our reality, but changes in our conceptual system do change what is real for us and affect how we perceive the world and act upon those perceptions. According to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphor "unites reason and imagination" (p. 193), and plays a major role in the construction of political and social reality.

Lakoff, a professor of linguistics, and Johnson, a professor of philosophy, turn to everyday language to illustrate their point. They show how common words that we use to understand our world are borrowed from other contexts. Using simple, taken-for-granted expressions, they illustrate what it means for a concept to be metaphorical and how it might structure an everyday activity. For example, the metaphor "argument is war" underlies statements such as "she attacked the weak points in my argument" and "your claims are indefensible" and consequently structure the actions we perform when engaging in conflict. The form of an argument is structured as a battle. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) challenge the reader to imagine what an argument might look like in our western culture if we viewed it as a dance with performers hoping to perform an aesthetically pleasing act instead of individuals hoping to win, attack, or defend. A different metaphor might engender a different response.

"Where reality counts metaphors have a bad reputation," writes Kenneth Gergen (1999). He notes that we traditionally define metaphors in terms of their contrast with "literal" words, where the literal meaning is usually considered to be "true to fact." Metaphors, on the other hand, are considered exaggerations and literary fluff. However, Gergen continues, "words do not mirror, map, or capture the essence of their referent but

gain their meaning and their sense of being true through the long-term usage within a community" (Gergen, 1999, p. 65). When we take a word out of its context and place it in another, we consider it metaphoric. Gergen concludes his argument, saying, "the difference between the literal and metaphoric, then, is essentially the difference between the conventional and the novel and all our understandings can be seen as metaphoric if we but trace them to our origins" (p. 65). Ludwig Wittgenstein (1958), the influential 20th century philosopher who emphasized language in reality construction, observed that metaphors define a "form of life," traditions and conventions that we can all count on to make sense of our reality.

This tension between the literal and metaphoric in our Western culture has existed since Aristotle and Plato. Plato denounced poetry and rhetoric as obscuring truth whereas Aristotle hailed metaphor as generative, writing "ordinary words convey what we know already; it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of something fresh" (cited in Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 190). Organizational theorists have used metaphor's generative claims to help address organizational issues. According to Gareth Morgan (1986), an organizational theorist who has written extensively on the subject of metaphor, Aristotle was among the first to identify the role of metaphor in the production of knowledge. Aristotle reportedly suggested that "midway between the unintelligible and the commonplace, it is metaphor which most produces knowledge" (cited in Morgan, 1986, p. 379).

Metaphor in the Analysis of Organizations

Having addressed some basic understandings of "what is metaphor," I will now briefly touch on some issues around the importance traditionally placed on metaphors in the process of organizing. Most organizational theorists would agree Gareth Morgan's (1986) book, *Images of Organizations*, first called widespread attention to idea of metaphors and their place in organizational life. His work fueled heated academic debates and theorists either extolled or criticized him. Grant and Oswick (1996b) in their concluding chapter accede that Morgan's theories and ideas have managed to survive with only "a few battle scars" (p. 214.). (In the best of all possible worlds dissensus breeds dialogue and I am grateful to the work done by Morgan and other scholars as they have set the stage for my own thinking and questioning and over the course of this thesis have become my silent mentors.)

Morgan proposed that metaphors give us specific frames or lenses for viewing the world. According to Morgan, metaphor is central to the way we read, understand, and shape organizational life. For example, if group members view the organization as a machine it is assumed that a common goal or purpose exists, and that it can achieve this purpose by ensuring that all parts are working efficiently and correctly. Like cogs in an industrial wheel, if individual workers do their part, a productive whole will result.

Morgan presents eight major metaphors that might serve as different lenses to enhance our views and understanding of organizational life. He points to two dominant metaphors currently in use, that of the "organization as machine" and the "organization as organism" and proposed that limiting our scope to these few metaphors limits our understanding and therefore our potential insights into the workings of organizations.

The results of an experiment by Palmer and Dunforth (1996) corroborated the predominance of the machine metaphor when studying metaphors-in-use in a variety of organizations. They found that when they directed participants to "write a brief definition of an organization," the majority of responses represented the mechanistic metaphor emphasizing order, structure, planning and common goals. However, when they asked for a more descriptive answer, many more metaphors emerged.

Morgan argues that conventional thinking about organization and management and their reliance on the primarily mechanical and biological metaphors trap us into specific modes of thinking and acting. To counteract this emphasis he presents six alternative ways of seeing: the organization as brain; culture; political system; psychic prison; transformation and flux; and a system of domination.

Morgan never purports to exhaust all possible images of organizational life. In fact, he invites readers to generate additional metaphors. Indeed, over the years other organizational metaphors have included garbage cans (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972) theaters (Mangham & Overington, 1987), soap bubbles (Tsoukas, 1993), and human entities (Kumra, 1996), to name a few. Indeed, the possibilities for metaphor are limited only by our imaginations as is illustrated by some of the metaphors in the Palmer and Dunforth (1996) experiments: an excited impatient child, a leaking boat from which the rats are fleeing, a coffee plunger, a winning racehorse with weights on its back, Keystone cops, and a dinosaur.

Morgan (1986) emphasizes that every metaphor encourages a particular point of view that has strengths and limitations. He cautions that no metaphor ever captures the totality of experience to which it is applied. He reminds the reader that whenever we

focus on domains of study through metaphor we engage in a process that at best creates partial truths. When researchers focus on one aspect of a phenomenon, other aspects move into the background. Above all, Morgan invites the reader into further dialogue about the utility and function of metaphor as an organizational tool.

Some principles of metaphor use have become so accepted in the literature that researchers will refer to these without citing sources, as the source can barely be traced given the principle's "taken-for-granted" stance. Barrett and Cooperrider (1990), for example, use the principle that metaphor is generative and make the following four assertions: metaphor is an invitation to see the world anew and acts as a way of organizing perceptions; metaphor facilitates the learning of new knowledge; metaphor provides a steering function for future actions and perceptions; and metaphor invites active experimentation in areas of rigidity (pp. 222-223).

Echoing these sentiments, Grant et al. (2004) observe that metaphor's generative qualities could enable new knowledge production which could provide "innovative new perspectives of organizational theory and behavior" (p. 7). Grant and Oswick (1996a) observe that there is a body of organizational development literature that uses metaphor to diagnose and find solutions to organizational problems in order to enhance the organization's performance. Cazal and Inns (1998) observe several claims about the value of metaphor in organizational analysis. Metaphors provide an expanded view of theoretical developments in the field because their use circumvents a linear and evolutionary approach to knowledge production and focuses instead on the heterogeneity of various schools of thought that each rely on different world views. No one school is therefore better than the next. Also, metaphors contribute to organization theory, as

Morgan (1986) illustrated in *Images of Organization*, because they enhance our ability to develop multiple interpretations. Lastly, metaphors offer a valuable methodological tool in qualitative research as they have the potential to generate insights to hidden, barely conscious feelings of group participants, impose structure on research material, and convey research findings to readers in a compact form.

Examining organizational metaphors often necessitates examining the ontological assumptions of different organizational views. For example, imagine an organization where language such as "it should go like clockwork," or "that won't be efficient," or "we need to streamline our production process" is commonplace. Behind these statements lies the assumption that the organization is like a machine and the people in the organization are like mechanical parts. Everyone has a specified role and if workers stay with their designated activity and perform that activity to the best of their capabilities, the organization will run like a well-oiled machine. In theory, the organization will be successful as long as people do their part. Organizational problems are more likely to be traced to individual incompetence rather than systemic oversights. Different organizational images could be generated as a result of metaphoric investigations, thereby increasing the potential for creative and alternative actions. The reader can find variations on this and other principles in many areas of the organizational study literature. (see compilations in Grant & Oswick, 1996a; Oswick & Grant, 1996 for in depth explorations.)

Metaphor in Question

While few would debate the inevitability and existence of metaphor in organizations, the legitimacy and value of metaphor in organizational science has been the subject of considerable discussion. Grant and Oswick (1996a) observe two key areas of debate surrounding the use of metaphor in organizational analysis. The first concerns the positive or negative stance toward metaphor, and the second concerns the different typologies used to rate or otherwise evaluate the metaphors. In the first case they note that while few researchers debate metaphor's generative qualities, some question the validity of using metaphor in organizational science research.

At issue is whether what a metaphor generates is appropriate for studying organizational phenomena and is something that increases our knowledge and understanding of those phenomena. Critics of a positive stance challenge the generating and liberating claims of metaphor and suggest that metaphors actually constrain knowledge. If science is about precision, the argument goes, then something that is applied in a figurative sense cannot be used in scientific investigations (Grant and Oswick, 1996a). For example, Pinder and Bourgeios (1982) have called metaphor a fanciful literary device that fosters imprecision and is not appropriate in the later stages of scientific inquiry.

Cazal and Inns (1998) agree that metaphors provide new insights but deny that they produce knowledge by themselves, and question Morgan's contention that metaphors are identical to theories or conceptual frameworks. Rather, they consider theory as a particular form of discourse, ruled by social standards and academic norms. They note that metaphors do not have unitary and single interpretations. Cazal and Inns

(1998) pose the question, “is it reasonable to assume that there is a unified conception of the machine or of the organism, thus enabling us to find a single, or even only homogeneous, mechanistic or organismic approach to organizations?” (p. 182). They see metaphors as a tool to classify theories of organizations, rather than generating the theories themselves.

Cazal and Inns (1998) do acknowledge the creative potential of a metaphor, but not by itself. According to them, metaphors’ creative powers lie in their relational characteristics. Because researchers often borrow metaphors from other fields of inquiry, metaphors foster connection and bring diverse interests into contact. Cazal and Inns observe that thinking about unexplored issues develops through dialogue and exchange, and metaphors have the potential to assist in this interchange. Karl Weick (1969) observes that the role of metaphor is expressive rather than cognitive, though in his later work he also proposes a cognitive frame for understanding metaphor.

Some have argued that researchers have not yet developed a methodology for evaluating metaphors. According to Ortony (1993) “metaphors characterize rhetoric, not scientific discourse” (p. 2). (However, in earlier works Ortony (1975) described the utility of metaphors and celebrated their ability to transfer information from one domain into another.) Metaphors are imprecise, according to these critics, and researchers have no way of measuring how well a metaphor fits. Since metaphoric understanding is a personalized cognitive process, the argument continues, a particular metaphoric image may work for some but not others. Some critics caution that problems occur when metaphors are taken from one scientific field and applied to another. According to them, researchers need to recognize metaphor’s limitations and relevance.

Other criticisms, like that of Tinker (1986), take issue with metaphor's lack of emphasis on concerns of social power and privilege. He believes that metaphors describing social phenomena are valuable only if they recognize social inequalities and domination and are used to discover opportunities for liberation. Tinker observes that our biological, organismic or mechanical representations of organizations lead us to expect them to behave automatically in ways that are in keeping with these representations, and that as a result we accept these behaviors without question. These representations give the illusion that organizational behavior is fixed and unchangeable, whereas Tinker (1986) believes that in reality they are subject to the actions of management and the owners of capital. He suggests that metaphors create a false consciousness that protects organizations from critical social analysis (p. 378).

While the first area of debate deliberates on the positive and negative stance toward metaphor use in organizational analyses, the second area involves those researchers who basically believe in the liberating, generative qualities of metaphor and have developed various typologies to understand the extent to which metaphors achieve these ends. Grant and Oswick (1996a) observe that researchers use hierarchical and non-hierarchical typologies. Hierarchical typologies assign relative value to different types of metaphor and sort them into those that most influence our ways of thinking and seeing the world (also called deep or strong metaphors) and those that have only peripheral significance (also called superficial or weak). One hierarchy proposed by Schon (1993) distinguishes between surface and deep metaphors. The deep, or influential ones, determine centrally important features of the object in question. They form the basis of subsequent superficial metaphors. For example, the influential metaphor of the

organization as human entity becomes the backdrop for the development of metaphors related to organizational action, learning and competence.

In contrast, non-hierarchical typologies do not attempt to assign relative values, focusing instead on understanding how types of metaphor work and where each type is used. One non-hierarchical typology distinguishes between dead, live and dormant metaphors. Dead metaphors are those that have become so commonplace we use them literally; for example, the "leg" of a chair or the "mouth" of a river. Dead metaphors no longer contribute to the study of a particular phenomenon. Live metaphors, on the other hand, need a specific context and a certain creativity to interpret adequately. Morgan's (1986) imagery of the organization as "psychic prison" and "brain" are examples of live metaphors. They require a cognitive stretch and may even be understood differently by different people. Dormant metaphors are semi-literal. They can be quickly identified and understood and as a result play a positive role in organizational science (Grant & Oswick, 1996a). Organizational "structure" and organizational "behavior" are examples of dormant metaphors. Dormant metaphors may transform into live or dead metaphors over time.

A second non-hierarchical typology focuses on whether the metaphors are applied inductively or deductively. Deductive approaches involve imposing already determined metaphors on organizational phenomena. While not focusing on one particular organization, Morgan (1986) uses a deductive approach when he applies his images to the phenomena of organizing. On the other hand, an inductive approach seeks to uncover those metaphors already in use. In the Palmer and Dunford (1996) experiments cited

earlier, the researchers use an inductive approach by asking participants to comment directly on the types of metaphors they believed to be operating in their organization.

It should finally be added that although treated separately in the literature, metaphors and narratives cannot be fully separated, except for analytic purposes. Many narratives are embedded within metaphors, (such as "the growth and development of our organization) and metaphors may be embedded within narratives (for example, "we grew together as a community as we discussed…"). Narratives might support a given metaphor. For example, the metaphor that an organization functions as a "family" might coincide with a story about that family's willingness to stick together through adversity. The two are interrelated in that the narrative illustrates and more explicitly describes the qualities of the metaphor.

The Present Thesis: Public and Private Metaphors

In the present thesis I wish to inquire into the formations of metaphor in organizations in two related directions. First, I wish to focus more carefully on a range of assumptions commonly espoused in the traditional literature on metaphors. Although there is broad agreement about the function of metaphors in organizational life, there is reason for questioning the received views. Then I shall shift the focus of study to the individual. Much of the organizational research on metaphor to date is concerned with shared metaphors within the organization. Little attention is directed to organizational metaphors that individuals nurture more privately. With the present inquiry exploring both the public and the private, we can also raise questions concerning the relationship between these domains of functioning, and their implications for organizational life.

Traditional Assumptions in Question

I will now bring into focus six dominant assertions in the organizational literature on metaphor. Although widely shared in both theory and practice, in each case there is reason for a closer look.

1. Metaphor as Shared and Singular

Most of the literature on metaphor in organizations focuses on shared metaphors. The emphasis on shared metaphor is coupled with the assumption of singularity. This is especially obvious in the organizational change literature. When researchers and organizational change agents perceive the metaphors to be disjointed or disparate, they have a bias toward interventions that integrate and unify (Marshak, 1993). Marshak writes the following about managing metaphors of change:

> When different people in the organization share the same underlying metaphor(s), there is usually agreement and focus on what to do. A common metaphor provides a shared understanding for everyone. When the underlying metaphors are different, conflict over what to do and how to do it is common. (p. 12)

In working with organizational change processes he suggests aligning everyone so that group members are operating from the same metaphor system. He believes consultants should listen for clarity, consistency and comprehension in word images used by organizational members.

Also interested in change, Smith and Eisenberg (1987) in their analysis of a conflict at Disneyland, look to "root metaphors" as a way of understanding conflict. They comment that, "changes in and competition among root metaphors can illuminate organizational members' struggles over appropriate definitions of reality, over

conceptions of what work life should be like" (p. 368). Inns (2002) chronicles a preliminary taxonomy of metaphor use in organizational research and describes one of her six categories as "the examination of a root metaphor." The notion that a few dominant, and therefore important, metaphors affect all of organizational life underlies the assumption of a root metaphor. A few dominant, singular metaphors hold an organization together. Conversely, though not explicitly stated, many varied and disparate metaphors break an organization apart.

Grant and Iedema (2004) point to early organizational culture studies like those of Schein (1983) and Pettigrew (1979) for this propensity toward unity. These theorists tended to underline the unifying, as opposed to the fragmented, aspects of organizational life. Marshak (1996) illustrates this assumption when he postulates, "if multiple core themes exist in isolation or opposition to each other the organization could be considered unintegrated or even schizophrenic" (p. 152). For those of us not trained in formal psychiatric diagnoses, the word "schizophrenic" conjures up images of people standing on street corners talking to unseen others, or genius hidden beneath a cloak of paranoia as portrayed by Russel Crowe in "A Beautiful Mind." In other words, the organization is in need of psychiatric help. The organization is mentally ill and needs interventions to bring some cohesion to an otherwise chaotic organizational identity.

Even though organizations may have more than one primary symbol or set of symbols, Marshak (1996) posits that all organizations will be informed by one or a related set of core symbolic themes. Inns (2002), in her taxonomy of research themes on metaphor, refers to several studies using the concept of a root metaphor (Smith and Eisenberg, 1987; Barrett and Cooperrider, 1990; Grant (1996), Dunn (1990). Perhaps

looking for the "root" or origin reflects a researcher's propensity of wanting to "get to the bottom" of things. Regardless of these speculations, root metaphors seem to go hand in hand with the "singular metaphor" proposition. I want to caution the reader that the term "singular" should not always be taken literally to mean only one, (although it can), but simply points to the dominance of a few, as opposed to many diverse metaphors which significantly shape organizational life. In Grant and Oswick's (1996b) chapter, "Where do we go from here?" they write, "whether we call them dominant metaphors, root metaphors, embedded metaphors or meaningful metaphors, we still have only the most partial of insights into the fundamental metaphors which underpin and shape organization theory and organizational action" (p. 219). Clearly, the directive here is for researchers to find the corner stones (another metaphor) upon which all subsequent organizational life is built and functions.

Yet, there is also reason to question the assumption of shared and singular metaphors. Participants bring with them into an organization a range of metaphors. Some may be shared, others remain private, and still others are shared with certain people and not others. It is also possible that the metaphors shift with time and circumstance. A metaphor required at one time (e.g. when the organization is under threat) may not be useful at another (e.g. special occasions, anniversaries). The present thesis will thus take a closer look at the assumption of singular metaphors shared throughout an organization's culture.

2. Metaphor as Ubiquitous

The general assumption here is that whatever the metaphors are, they are broadly shared and no strong differentiation exists from one part of organization to another.

Palmer and Dunforth (1996), writing about organizational change processes, opine that in order for metaphors to become embedded in organizational culture, they need to operate with perceived consistency. Presumably this consistency needs to be at all levels of the organization. Furthermore, according to Inns (2002), researchers concerned with the role of metaphor as a generative tool in organizational change processes highlight the importance of metaphor in the early stages of diagnosing organizational problems, deciding on future directions, and *maintaining a shared vision and focus* [italics added].

Perhaps the focus on unity is due in part to the cultural perspective in organizational research that gained prominence in the 1960' and 1970's. The identification of organizations with cultures has a rich history in organizational research (Martin, 2002; Schein, 1985). Recall also Morgan's (1986) "organizations as cultures" metaphor. According to Grant and Iedema (2004), though more recent studies like those of Martin (2002) address cultural differentiation and fragmentation, their accounts "continue to take as their point of departure what is shared and common, rather than what differentiates and complicates" (p. 6).

Most likely your average person on the street is more familiar with the term "corporate culture" than "corporate fragmentation." The phrase "corporate culture" and its accompanying values and viewpoints have infiltrated how people think of organizations. Oswick and Grant (1996) see corporate culture as one of two fundamental aspects of organizational development (the other is planned change) and devote several chapters to the subject in their book, *Organizational Development: Metaphorical Explorations*. Agreeing with Grant and Iedema, Hocking and Carr (1996) argue that "the study of organizations has been dominated by the culture metaphor" and as a result has

focused on culture's "holistic nature" (p. 74). The culture metaphor has become a substitute for organization theory.

Hocking and Carr (1996) challenge the unitary concept of culture notion. They believe the "culture as metaphor" view is rather static (p. 73). They dispute a monolithic view of organizations and instead treat them as multiple realities that are better understood as subcultures (See also Oswick, Lowe & Jones, 1996, for a similar conclusion). This view helps focus the attention on the role that diversity plays in organizations. Hocking and Carr (1996) opine that the organizational theory and behavior literature has been entangled in the "structural-functionalist preoccupation with the need for harmony and integration" (p. 75). Here I remind the reader of Marshak's vision of an unintegrated, "schizophrenic" organization in the absence of a few core themes.

There is also reason to question the assumption that the metaphor is shared at all levels of the organization. The notion of subcultures or sub-units seems particularly salient here. Participants may share metaphors within their departments or work groups that they don't share with people "above" or "below" them. Rank and power may affect the types of metaphors used by different groups. Managers may use metaphors that are congruent with their goals and desires, (especially if they designed the plans in the first place) but line staff may not have been consulted and may have an entirely different view of a project's design or of desired outcomes.

3. Metaphor as Organizing Device

It is commonly believed that organizational members make sense of the organization through shared metaphor(s). These shared metaphors hold the group

together. Akin and Schultheiss (1990) argue for the use of metaphor in promoting morale and cohesion as an initial stage in organization development. Eisenberg (1984), while allowing for some diversity, argues for effective managers and employees to strategically use metaphors to facilitate a sense of cohesiveness while at the same time allowing for a variety of individual interpretations. Marshak (1993), and Smith and Eisenberg (1987) search for "root metaphors" to organize otherwise fragmented organizations.

Researchers focused on organizational narratives and storytelling illuminate the human penchant for coherence and cohesion. How does something make sense? What holds the whole thing hold together? According to Wallemacq and Sims (1998), "we find it hard to make sense of things that have no tangible reference or metaphor" (p. 122). Human beings strive to make sense of things to give meaning to events. Wallemacq and Sims comment that, "The ultimate lack of sense is when you cannot produce a narrative to go with a situation" (p. 121). When many disparate, disjointed and fragmented metaphors exist in an organization it is more difficult to produce a narrative that explains it all. Thus it "makes sense" that traditional organizational researchers strive to find a few dominant metaphors that will render the organizational "story" coherent and sensible.

An exception to the general trend of studies favoring group cohesiveness and shared metaphors should be noted. Palmer and Dunforth (1996) investigated individual participants' metaphoric descriptions of their organizations. These researchers asked two different groups about their perception of their organization. One group was asked simply to "write a brief definition of an organization" and the other was asked to describe the organization using a metaphor, and then explain what they were trying to convey through their metaphor. The second set of answers revealed a highly complex,

ambiguous, paradoxical and messy organizational reality. Palmer and Dunford note that the variation in metaphors may also be used to highlight the divergent experiences that people have of organizations.

Again, some questions can be raised regarding the assumption that the metaphors serve an organizing function through bringing coherence and cohesion to an organization. Participants may use similar metaphors but have entirely different interpretations. These interpretations provide many various organizational realities. The differences may separate rather than coalesce the organization and its members. Also, participants may have a variety of relationships to a single metaphor, depending on their investments and motivations for being in the group. For example, while an organization may encourage its members to consider the organization a "family," not all individuals will have the same perception of what it means to be a family member.

4. Metaphor and Bounded Culture

Traditional organizational metaphor researchers favor the assumption that shared metaphors create a coherent, whole organizational culture. This coherent whole is bounded and these researchers tend to treat those boundaries as impermeable. The classic literature on organizational culture set the stage for this orientation. It treats the organization as a concrete, physical entity, a thing separate from the people and social relations of which it is a part (Marsden & Townley, 1996). These researchers use modernist approaches with the accompanying ontological assumptions that objective reality exists "out there" and can be measured using scientific methods of inquiry that include careful sampling methods, precise data collection and the testing of hypotheses,

ultimately bringing the researcher closer to objective truth. Research could accurately reflect objective reality (Martin & Frost, 1996).

These earlier culture studies focused heavily on management and used what Martin (2002) has termed an "integration" perspective. They enticed company leaders and managers with the promise of increased employee motivation and ultimately higher levels of productivity and profitability. Management could create "strong cultures, havens of harmony in which employees shared their leader's beliefs, assumptions and visions for the company" (Martin, 2002, p. 8). Peters and Waterman's (1982) *In Search of Excellence,* and Deal and Kennedy's (1982) *Corporate Culture: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life* for example, outlined ways to attain these "strong" cultures and their work gained much acclaim in the general public. They argued that strong cultures hold people together and help the organization successfully weather changes in addition to increasing profit margins. Companies invested large sums of money trying to build strong cultures to capture a competitive advantage.

Martin (2002) suggests that the integration perspective goes along with the idea of *an* organization. Culture studies often do not take environmental influences into consideration. She notes that many definitions of culture contain an assumption that a culture is unique and not found in other organizations. Cultural members often tell stories about their organization's defining characteristics, how they are different from others. Martin (2002) explains that organizations often define their products or services as unusual to win over their competitors. Cultural uniqueness is desirable, marketable and necessary to gain a Darwinian edge in the corporate "dog eat dog" world. A survival of the fittest mindset prevails.

The literature on metaphor mirrors the logic that one is trying to understand or improve *the* organization, a bounded entity separated from its exterior. As noted in an earlier section, researchers place high value on the finding the few, dominant metaphors around which a group can coalesce. Ideologically speaking, culture studies followed early anthropological studies that focused on isolated tribes and communities. Organizational metaphor research has followed in these traditions, looking for root metaphors that explain the actions, values and beliefs of the organization.

The assumption that the metaphor creates a bounded culture can also be questioned. First of all, there may be many sub-units, each with their own micro culture. Secondly, participants may find themselves both inside and outside the organizational boundary. Newly hired staff may not yet feel part of the culture and may initially get their sense of the organization from what they have heard or read from people outside the organization. In addition, participants do not join an organization as isolated entities. They are connected to webs of relationships outside the organization. These relationships accompany the individual into the organization. Lastly, participants may find their place in the organization through their connection to other members. A friendship with the boss may make someone an insider. However, relationships change and an insider may suddenly find themselves on the outside, suggesting the organizational boundary may be permeable rather than bounded and discrete.

5. Metaphors as Cognitive Structures

A prevalent assumption in the traditional literature posits that metaphors function cognitively. A preponderance of the literature tends to view metaphor as the way we understand the world. Metaphors are generally described to make a link from the

familiar to the unfamiliar. They bridge the gap from the unknown to the known. Many proponents of metaphor use in organizations extol its epistemological potential. As noted earlier, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that language, and specifically metaphors, structure our conceptual systems. In fact, they believe all thinking is inevitably metaphorical and that we cannot as humans think and express ourselves without metaphor. These authors view "understanding" as something that happens in our heads. Changes in our conceptual systems, the argument continues, affects how we perceive the world and act on those perceptions. Metaphors, therefore, play a central role in the construction of political and social reality. Organizational researchers such as Morgan and others have long promoted this view and take these claims about metaphor into the organizational realm, asserting that metaphors are a way of thinking and seeing and can be used as a framework for organizational analysis. In fact, one of Morgan's (1986) eight metaphors is that of "the organization as brain." Morgan sees metaphor as framing inquiry. In short, metaphors serve a cognitive function.

Kendall and Kendall (as cited in Oswick and Grant, 1996) argue that metaphors function to make abstract ideas concrete, help clarify ambiguity, assist in thought and facilitate expression of the subjective. Grant and Oswick (1996a) write that metaphors "are the outcome of a cognitive process that is in constant use" (p. 1). Chia (1996) sees the purpose of using metaphor in organizational analysis to "relax the boundaries of thought" (p. 130). Mangham (1996) also uses a cognitive approach in his study of the discursive features of emotion in organizational life. Central and inherent in the cognitive view is that cognition, or thinking, predetermines discourse. I think something, then I say it. Cognition directs the action that follows.

A significant implication of this assumption is that most of the traditional research using metaphor treats metaphors as directive and organizing action. Metaphors lead to action as opposed to being viewed as actions themselves. In one of Inns' (2002) categories, "metaphor as tool for generative thinking" she describes the approach as one which usually includes participant involvement and which has "specific organizational end results in mind" (p. 312). Others (e.g. Keizer and Post, 1996; Morgan, 1986) also point to metaphor's creative potential to uncover different assumptions, perceptions and implications for action. In other words, metaphor is a precursor to action. Broussine and Vince (1996) comment that metaphor plays a role in change processes in that they stimulate reflection and action. Barrett and Cooperrider (1990) state that "metaphors spawn categories and terms that drive people to initiate actions congruent with the metaphors informing their beliefs" (p. 223). They use the concept of the root metaphor and provide an example using the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, arguing that US involvement was connected to the cognitive categories that emerged from the root metaphor of the domino theory. Morgan (1986) believes that "each metaphor has its own injunction or directive: a mode of understanding suggests a mode of action" (p. 331).

Palmer and Dunforth (1996) in their study of organizational metaphors-in-use write, "this linkage to action is an important characteristic of metaphors." (p. 8). They offer an example of an organization perceived as an overweight individual. They make the connection to action by stating that metaphors name a state ('This is fat'), describe an attitude to the state ('Fat is bad') and imply an appropriate course of action ('Fat must be removed'). They assert that, "…the meanings that we attribute to what is going on around us influence the actions that we take…Sometimes, through metaphors providing a

different conceptualization of a situation, *alternative courses of action* [italics added] may be generated that may otherwise not have emerged" (p. 8).

In contrast to the cognitive view of metaphor stands a pragmatic perspective. Here metaphors are not cognitive precursors to action, but actions in themselves. In this context we may ask such questions as: "What is the language doing?" "How is it functioning?" "What metaphors and narratives are being told and to whom?" "Who stands to gain (or lose) what from these accounts?" As one of the foci of this thesis I will examine how metaphors are used and how they function in the context of organizational life.

In general, viewing language performatively and pragmatically has a rich tradition in Western philosophical thought. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1958) has greatly influenced the pragmatic orientation to language. The reader might recall he turned a revolutionary spotlight on the way words gain their meaning by introducing the concept of language games, suggesting words acquire this meaning through their use within the game. Speech act theory developed by J. L Austin (1962) and embellished by J. R. Searle (1969), offers a compelling statement of discourse as action and illustrates the performative character of speech. Austin showed how words do things. For example, the proclamation, "you are hereby sentenced to life in prison" said by a judge in a courtroom (as opposed to two children playing dress-up) has real implications for how the world might be organized in the future.

This pragmatic view is also congenial with a social constructionist view of metaphor that treats metaphor as discourse. That is, metaphor as used *within* conversations or relationships. Social construction emphasizes discourse as the main

vehicle through which self and world come to be, and studies how discourse functions within social relationships. Kenneth Gergen (1999) suggests that the "content of an utterance is less important than the way it functions within various relationships" (p. 132). Heracleous (2004) believes that "discourse is action in the sense that its originators aim to achieve certain outcomes through communication" (p. 177). This differs from the more cognitive orientation that treats metaphors as directive and as precursors to action.

6. Metaphors as Change Agents

By changing the dominant, operating metaphors, organizational development specialists can influence how individuals perceive and function within an organization. This assumption follows a cognitive orientation to metaphor and supports the notion that if shared and overarching metaphors help create and influence organizational values, beliefs, and actions, then changing these influential and powerful metaphors will result in changing the organization. Change the dominant view and you will change the group. In Inns' (2002) preliminary taxonomy she refers to this as "metaphor as a hegemonic tool to influence perception and interpretation" (p. 313).

Marshak (1996), a proponent of this type of thinking, writes that significantly changing organizational behavior requires "accessing and modifying controlling metaphorical constructs" (p. 151). Marshak (1993) advises competent leaders and change agents to learn to manage the metaphors of change. He directs change agents to "seek to intentionally shape how people conceive and think about the change through the creative and constructive use of metaphors, images, and symbols" (p. 14).

Some organizational analysts espouse a utilitarian attitude toward metaphor and encourage managers and consultants to use them to chart company morale, locate new

solutions to problems, and assist the personnel department in attracting the right candidates for the organizational culture (Inns, 2002). However, as Palmer and Dunforth (1996) note in their experiments of implicit metaphors-in-use, the experiential basis of metaphors makes it unlikely that simply proposing a new metaphor will significantly alter dominant organizational perceptions unless those go hand in hand with changes in management and organizational practices. Barrett and Cooperrider (1990) point to research which illustrates how people adhere to their interpersonal theories, assumptions, expectations, and impressions, even when faced with contradictory evidence.

In addition, Dunford and Palmer (1996) found that structural and political factors often impeded actions. They underline that managers wishing to use metaphors for organizational change processes need a keen awareness of the patterns of power and influence. They believe organizational change agents should not underestimate the power of dominant metaphors in organizational life, and what it takes to change those metaphors. Smith and Eisenberg (1987), in their Disneyland study, also allow the more polyphonic view that maintenance of a diversity of interpretations can aid organizations in adapting to change.

There is reason to question whether changing dominant metaphors will result in organizational change. Metaphors may move into and out of focus, depending on context, making it difficult to identify a dominant metaphor in the first place. Furthermore, individuals may harbor a variety of metaphors of an organization. Their metaphors make sense to them. Why would they give up on them in favor of a single, imposed metaphor? Introducing a dominant metaphor may even have an adverse effect. Recall the Disneyland study mentioned in the previous paragraph. The Disney

Corporation promoted the metaphor of "family" to encourage a more cohesive work force. However, when employees were laid off, the metaphor backfired. Employees became upset. After all, you wouldn't fire your brother, sister or mother.

Broadening the Scope: The Individual

Little attention has been paid in traditional organizational literature to the individual's private metaphors for the organization in which they participate. Perhaps it has seemed too complicated to include the individual metaphors. What would researchers and organizational consultants do with a multitude of metaphors given that finding the common denominator, the shared vision and organizational mission, is often considered the unifying force, the glue that holds the whole endeavor together?

Introducing individual metaphors might result in chaos that would distract from the goal of getting everyone on the same organizational page. If different metaphors emerged, which metaphors should take precedence? What organizational processes are in place to address multiple views and realities? Who makes decisions about which metaphoric lens should prevail? Who is alienated as a result of the outcome of those decisions? In introducing individual metaphors we run the risk of finding, and perhaps even amplifying, differences and of highlighting existing tensions. Of course, it is not as though traditional researchers neglect the fact that individuals exist, but rather that they are rarely treated as potential resources for generating fruitful possibilities to current organizational practices and problems.

At the risk of pandemonium, this research project attempted to include individual participants' metaphors in the account of organizational life. What would individual group members have to say about the organization and about their life within the

organization outside the group context? What kinds of relationships exist between individual and group metaphors? In the present thesis I explored whether individual members, speaking privately, would use metaphors similar to those of the group, or whether they would nurture totally new ones, or both. How important were these private metaphors to the individuals and how might they influence the individual's involvement in group life? Would, as David Boje (1995) suggests, the individual narrative get swallowed up by the dominant group metaphors? Do the individual's private metaphors follow the person into the organization? While organizational researchers have investigated organizational metaphors at length, the relationship between the metaphors of the individual and the group remain relatively unexplored in the organizational metaphor literature.

Individuals bring many discursive resources to an organization. When a person walks into (or logs on to, as the case may be) the world of work, that individual's social, cultural and historical self comes to work as well. As Cynthia Stohl (1995) points out, while an organization may have physical boundaries, our relational webs spin far beyond those walls. She writes "our personal lives and our views of the world are intricately interwoven with our work relations and our organizational perspective" (p. 4). She points to an underpinning of American culture, the Protestant work ethic, which places our work lives as primary and all-encompassing, leaving little room for other commitments. She notes that the belief that our work lives and our personal lives operate independently has existed since industrialization. In fact, we cannot separate our "work self" from our "family self" or "bowling club self" or "party self" and so on.

George Castanza illustrates this tension in the popular US television series *Seinfeld*. He struggles comically with keeping "relationship George" separate from "independent George." George is able to keep these two selves apart most of the time except in this particular episode when his best friends invite George's girlfriend to accompany them all to a movie, requiring "relationship George" to meet "independent George." George laments, "If Relationship George walks through this door he will kill Independent George. A George divided against itself cannot stand!" The audience commiserates with his anguish when his two selves and their respective worlds collide and laughs at his attempts to restore these distinct domains.

Various philosophers and theorists have explored the way people bring their past relations and languages into their present relations. Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian literary theorist writing in the 1930's during a totalitarian regime, writes, "our own discourse is gradually and slowly wrought out of others' words that have been acknowledged and assimilated" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 345). In other words, nothing we say is ever solely of our own making. We borrow from a gargantuan vault of words, each endowed with its own rich history. Bakhtin's notions of the self are inextricable from relationship. Persons are born into meaning through dialogue. For Bakhtin there is no such thing as a voice that exists in isolation from other voices. We can assume, then, that organizational members carry a rich repertoire of discursive resources with them into the organization. In fact, people have built their lives around some of these discursive traditions.

For example, you might come from a tradition where elders are treated with utmost respect. You say "yes, ma'am" and "yes, sir" to anyone who is your senior in age and in stature. You carry this linguistic and sociological tradition with you into your job

where you happen to have a young woman as your boss. Because of her own traditions she has created an egalitarian work environment with an open door policy. She doesn't understand why you don't feel comfortable coming into her office and giving her feedback on various projects. You don't understand why she continually defers her authority to employees of lower rank when she is clearly the boss. Over time, without some conversation and understanding between you and your boss about the different traditions, your lack of feedback might be taken as a lack of interest, and her lack of overt authority might be taken by you as a lack of competence.

Wertsch (1991), in his book *Voices of the Mind,* echoes Bakhtin's ideas and those of another 1930's Russian theorist, Lev Vygotsky. Wertsch also explores the relationship between mental processes and their cultural, historical and institutional settings. According to Wertsch, our actions, feelings and thoughts are in large part determined by our sociocultural and historical context. (Wertsch also recognizes universal aspects of human mental functioning, but points out that the two research strands need to be integrated). Wertsch uses human action and interaction as his unit of analysis, avoiding the philosophical nature/nurture debate that places either the environment or the individual as a primary agent of the development of human mental processes. He observes that human action/interaction is always mediated by specific means such as language or other "tools." He concludes, therefore, that even when mental action is carried out by individuals in isolation, "it is inherently social in certain respects and it is almost always carried out with the help of tools, such as computers, language, or number systems" (p. 15).

The self, then, is a relational entity (Gergen, 1994, 1999). Bakhtin (1981) proposed that people's relationships are influenced by centripetal and centrifugal forces. The first refers to the tendency for our interactions to become rote and mechanical. (The "hello" or "goodbye" language game, for example). The second refers to the tendency for chaos and disorder; for new words or actions to enter into relationships, potentially disrupting and potentially transforming them. Thus, a relational self can either adhere to the norms and conventions of language, cementing identities, or it can evolve with each new unfolding conversation creating fluid, evolving identities.

In conclusion, the "self" that enters the organization comes in with a whole host of traditions and an immense repertoire of discursive options. We take something from past relationships with us whenever we enter a new relational sphere. Given our relative inability to filter out what we learn in one relational context when we move into another, it seems likely that the individual's private metaphors follow the person into the organization. We may ask, then, what happens when an individual's metaphor(s) does not match up with those of the organization?

Consider, for example, that an organization hires a new employee (let's name her Sarah) because she has fantastic references regarding her efficiency and organizational skills. The leadership team hires Sarah but doesn't consult with front line staff about what they think of her. The team members doing the stressful, front line work think of themselves as a family and newcomers are carefully scrutinized in terms of fit. These team members would tell you they would do anything for each other. Part of the morning work routine starts with people asking each other how things are going in their personal lives. Sarah joins the team and starts her first day of work wondering what is going on,

and why people aren't at their desks, working. She is perplexed and frustrated because she feels much time is being wasted talking about issues not related to the tasks at hand. Over time Sarah might alienate herself by going to her desk and getting down to business while others are still chatting. Or, she might also start sharing personal stories with the group. Or, she might challenge the group to use their time more efficiently, a suggestion which may or may not be well received.

The example highlights questions such as: What metaphors do individuals bring into the group? How do they affect the group metaphors already in place? Is there room for individual narratives in a group situation? How are these expressed? What is the relationship between the group and the individual metaphors? Are they mostly shared? Or are they distinct? What happens as a result of potentially different metaphors and narratives converging? Should organizations only hire those people whose metaphors dovetail with those already in place? Are metaphors ultimately useful tools for comparison?

In summary, in this thesis I aimed to include the individual in an exploration of organizational reality. I intended to explore the following assumptions found in the traditional literature on metaphor in organizations: metaphor as shared and singular; metaphor as ubiquitous; metaphor as organizing device; metaphor and bounded culture; metaphors as cognitive structures and; metaphors as change agents. I used metaphor to explore the public and private domains of an organization. I investigated the relationship between the individual and the group metaphors, and discuss the implications of these findings for our understanding of organizational life.

To investigate these issues, I explored group metaphors by analyzing transcripts of group meetings and group emails from one small, non-profit organization, pulling out metaphoric themes and providing examples of these themes from the transcripts. I used these micro communicative processes to explore commonly held organizational assumptions. Then, I examined individual metaphors by analyzing transcripts of interviews with six individual members of the same organization, using the same method as was used to study the group metaphors. I divided this investigation into two parts: the first examined the private metaphors, and their function and utility for the person in group life; the second explored the relationship between the private and the public metaphors.

The next chapter provides a detailed account of the research methods used in this endeavor.

CHAPTER 2

Pi Patel: "So, you don't like my story?"
Mr. Okamoto: "No, we liked it very much. Didn't we, Atsuro? We will remember it for a long long time."
Mr. Chiba: We will.
[Silence]
Mr. Okamoto: "But for the purposes of our investigation, we would like to know what really happened."
Pi Patel: "What really happened?"
Mr. Okamoto: "Yes."
Pi Patel: "So you want another story?"
Mr. Okamoto: "Uhhh…no. We would like to know what really happened."
Pi Patel: "Doesn't the telling of something always become a story?"
Mr. Okamoto: "Uhhh…perhaps in English. In Japanese a story would have an element of *invention* in it. We don't want any invention. We want the 'straight facts,' as you say in English."
Pi Patel: "Isn't telling about something----using words, English or Japanese---already something of an invention? Isn't just looking upon this world already something of an invention?"

(From *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel)

METHODS OF RESEARCH

Methodological Assumptions

In the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Gergen and Gergen (2000) contend that there is no way to separate methodology from ideology. They state, "there is a pervasive tendency for scholars, at least in public writings, to presume coherence of self" (p. 1032). They see research as a relational endeavor with the goal of generating a communicative process and establishing productive forms of relationship. Embellishing on Gergen and Gergen's comments, it is as if we expect the author to have a singular, coherent point of view by the time he or she sits down to render his or her account of "what happened here." However, a relational view would propose that research is a dynamic activity

involving dialogue and constant evaluation. With this orientation in mind I present the following account of my research methods, not to defend the truth of my results, but in the hopes that others will reflect and discover alternative ways of constructing, interpreting, and organizing the data.

In this thesis I employ a qualitative, interpretive approach to the analysis of organizational discourse. Interpretive studies generally aim for understanding meaning and not experimental verification. A broad range of theoretical approaches exist within the interpretive tradition but most have as a unifying factor a focus on understanding the frame of reference of the participants involved in the study (Grant, Hardy, Oswick & Putnam, 2004). An interpretive approach assumes that reality is socially constructed and that discourses play a central role in this process.

Researchers using an interpretive approach typically support the notion that knowledge is dependent on the language and symbols of a culture and the communal processes of meaning making. These constructionist perspectives view knowledge as dependent on the vantage point and values of communities of knowers. Knowledge is produced in an interactional process embedded in the context in which it occurs. Communication and relationship with others and the environment are key components of this process.

Many approaches to the analysis of organizational discourse exist. Putnam & Fairhurst (2001) outline various approaches to the discourse-organization relationship and encourage researchers to state their assumptions clearly. I agree with those researchers who believe in a constitutive relationship where an active, dynamic process between discourse and organizations exists, in which organizations produce language and

language produces organizations. This is in contrast to a reflective relationship where discourse is seen as representing or reflecting organizational structures. In a reflective relationship discourse is a *product* of organizational life as opposed to being an integral part of its make-up and identity.

In order to analyze organizational discourse, researchers have borrowed methodological tools from the field of discourse analysis. This field of inquiry has deep roots in sociological, anthropological, linguistic, and literary-based studies. Discourse analysis examines how humans use language to communicate, particularly how speakers construct messages and how listeners respond to those messages. The analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use (Brown &Yule, 1983; Levinson, 1983). It typically attends to the purpose and function of language as well as to its structural components. Context, therefore, is often an important feature of discourse analysis. At its most basic level, discourse analysis examines instances of language use beyond the boundaries of a sentence. Discourse analysts often investigate the functional use of language. They use an interactional view of language which views language use as tied inextricably to social relations and identities. In contrast, a transactional view of language assumes that the main purpose of communication is the transfer of information.

Fairclough (1992) and van Dijk (1997), both influential thinkers in the field of discourse analysis, contend that analysis of discourse should include the examination of language in use, the ways it is used to communicate ideas and beliefs, and the social setting in which the discursive event takes place. According to van Dijk (1997) it is possible to move beyond textual examination to explore "who uses language, how, why, and when" (p. 2). It could be argued that most everyday human interaction functions

relationally. Discourse analysts use a variety of methods to investigate how language is used to constitute these relationships.

There is no one method or even set of methods used by discourse analytic researchers. Different methodological and epistemological perspectives underlie various approaches, a comprehensive review of which is beyond the scope of this project, but brief examples will be given. Grant et al. (2004) observe that one key methodological issue regarding organizational discourse relates to whether studies place an emphasis on language in use or language in context. An example of a language in use methodology is conversational analysis (CA), an approach that focuses on the micro processes of communication. CA researchers deal with detailed transcripts of "talk," investigating conversational elements such as turn-taking patterns, topic shifts, adjacency pairs (e.g. question/answer, demand/response), disclaimers, pauses, hesitations, intonations and interruptions. The main purpose of CA is to examine how people make sense of their worlds through the use of various interactional methods and procedures. CA researchers attempt to understand the organizing properties of discourse. In other words, how the behaviors and actions of individuals are "influenced" by what happens during a particular discursive interaction.

Critics of methodologies that focus on the micro processes of communication contend that these approaches do not sufficiently acknowledge the context in which an interaction occurs. Heracleous (2004) notes that organizational researchers need to take into account the ways in which historical and social context shape the interpretation of organizational discourse. An influential example of a context sensitive approach is critical discourse analysis (Grant et al., 2004). While no single view of critical discourse

analysis exists, most critical discourse analysts would agree that they focus on the role of language as it relates to ideology, power and socio-cultural change. They focus not so much on the micro processes of communication but rather on the processes of power and dominance that underlie a particular text.

Critical discourse studies often view organizations as dialogical entities harboring competing discourses, each vying for organizational dominance. Postmodern studies overlap with critical discourse analyses but underscore the notion that organizations are polyphonic entities comprised of a multiplicity of discourses, resulting in multiple, often fragmented organizational realities. Critical discourse researchers Broadfoot, Deetz and Anderson (2004) argue that since no one theoretical or methodological approach can address all the properties of discourse, researchers would do well to draw on a variety of approaches.

This research project draws on a context sensitive discourse analytical type of approach, highlighting the performative character of language as its point of departure. The discourse approach in this project has been influenced by the language philosophies of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1958), and speech-act theory originally developed by J. L. Austin (1962) and later embellished by J. R. Searle (1969). Speech-act theory suggests that words can mean more, or something other, than what they say. These theories offer compelling arguments of discourse as action and challenge traditional assumptions that contend that to say something is to state something that is either true or false. Following Wittgenstein's notion of language games mentioned in the introduction, Austin, a student of Wittgentstein's, proposed that to say something is to *do* something. What language

does is dependent on the socio and historical context within which the interaction takes place.

For example, if a woman walks into a room with an open window and says to a person in the room "Gee, it's cold," she might be indirectly asking someone to close the window. The same statement said by one lover to another on a starry night might be an invitation for one of them to put his or her arm around the other. All discourse is therefore *situated* in that discursive interactions take place within contexts that shape and condition how what is said will function socially.

While this research project primarily employs a discursive approach it is also informed by a postmodern gestalt that views organizations as a composite of complex, fluid and paradoxical processes. A postmodern lens supports a notion of discourse that favors and legitimizes multiple and contradictory views of organizational reality. In addition, issues raised in critical discourse analytic approaches have informed the views and interpretations in this paper. Critical discourse analysis examines language and the role it plays in power, ideology, and sociological and cultural change processes. Studies using this critical perspective often characterize organizations as "dialogical" entities in which discourses vie with each other for dominance (Grant, Hardy, Oswick & Putnam, 2004). These types of studies explore how and why some organizational meanings take precedence over others and become the taken-for-granted reality of the organization. Grant et al. (2004) note that this approach goes beyond simple examinations of conversations and allows researchers to appreciate the importance of what is being said when and where and by whom.

Description of Study

The Organization

In this dissertation I investigated the expression of metaphors in both the public and private domains of a single organization. I wished to explore the range of metaphors that appeared in the group context and those that appeared during private individual interviews, and examine the relationship between the metaphors in the two domains. Would metaphors from the group appear in the individual accounts? Would individual metaphors surface in the group? Would individuals share metaphors with each other? What kinds of metaphoric relationships would emerge within and between the domains? How did the individuals relate to group life and would their metaphors reflect those relationships? How did the metaphors function? What was their utility for the individual and the organization?

Data were obtained for this case study from a small, alternative, psychotherapeutic training institute the US. For purposes of confidentiality I will call it the River's Edge Psychological Institute. The institute came into being in the early 1980's in Europe. The founder, originally born in the US, had gone to Europe in the 1960's to study physics but started Jungian analysis as a result of having bad dreams. He turned his attention from science to psychology and subsequently became a trainer at the Jung Institute. There, he continued to experiment with the intersection between physics and psychology, searching for ways to experience the unconscious.

In 1982, about 50 people interested in the founder's work developed a research society based on the founder's psychological principles. Several years earlier a handful of students from the US had discovered the founder's work through one of their college

professors and had traveled to Europe to study his ideas further. Some members of this original group continue to live near the institute's main training center in the US today. I interviewed two of these "old timers" for the individual metaphor section of this paper. The influx of people in the early 80's inspired the founder to shift his focus to the world outside individual therapy. The founder continued to expand his ideas into social and political realms, hoping to apply the principles developed in his work with individuals to his work with groups. A major organizational shift happened in the 1990's when the founder and some of his colleagues moved from Europe to the US to establish a new training center. As with any change, the move was hotly contested and debated by organizational members. This US-based center is the focus of my study.

In the US, the founder and his colleagues explored large group transformation and conflict resolution methods as a way for groups to work on their development. These methods involved identifying marginalized "voices" or "parts" of the group and helping these come forward and interact with other, more "mainstream" parts. Group members believed that through the interaction between these parts a deeper sense of community could be created. The institute sponsored and facilitated large international forums where social and political issues could be investigated using these methods.

While the founder continued to develop his work, the US-based training site continued to flourish and grow during the 90's. Week long seminars and classes were offered, drawing people from other parts of the US, Europe and Asia. The teachers developed a master's level curriculum that became accredited by the state's department of education and was attended by many international students. The institute also developed an at-a-distance learning curriculum. Since the 1990's satellite training sites

have sprung up around the US and other parts of the world, with the most experienced teachers from the main center going abroad for portions of the year to train others. Teacher and trainers from these other sites often come to the main site for additional education and experience. Many teachers at the institute run private practices in addition to teaching. Student enrollment has not continued to grow into the new millennium, a source of concern for those teachers whose main income is derived from teaching and providing therapeutic training and supervision to students.

The organization supports psychological training programs both nationally and internationally. The latest phone list shows the organization has between 100-150 members worldwide. The list under represents the actual number, however, as many teachers and students are unofficially affiliated with the organization. Many people do not study formally but attend various classes and workshops and consider themselves ad hoc organizational members. The US-based center studied for this thesis is the largest of all the sites and is considered the organization's home base. The founder, his wife, and a handful of other senior teachers have their primary residence in the area, drawing students from other parts of the US and internationally to the area for seminars and classes.

Today, the organization is exploring ways to diversify its activities and outreach into the community at large. The institute's founder continues to teach at the institute and his ideas remain the vital force in the organization. The institute is housed in a single-level wood building with a large multipurpose room for classes and seminars, an administrative office, six small rooms used by certain teachers for their private practice, and a small kitchen. The carpeted multipurpose room is brightly colored with large

pillows and wooden benches along the walls. Chairs are stacked in a corner. Outside, the parking lot is bounded on one side by a long concrete wall with a multicolored mural of quixotic figures and symbols painted by one of the teachers.

I chose this particular organization in part because I was in my fifth year as a student at the institute and had extraordinary access to the workings of the organization and its members. In addition, because of the training program's focus on the intersection of groups and individuals, students and teachers in the organization were inherently inclined and interested in exploring the kinds of issues raised in this thesis. My standing as a long-term student gave me access to group meetings, email strings, gossip, and to the general goings on of the organization. Prior organizational knowledge allowed me to place the data in a larger context. For example, in depth knowledge of the institute's psychological paradigm, the organization's history and stories of "how things used to be," allowed me to understand references to past events, group lingo, and other organizational cultural artifacts. In addition, as a student I had developed relationships with several of the teachers, which afforded me the privilege of conducting private interviews. It should be noted that I discontinued my studies before graduating to allow more opportunity to pursue my doctoral degree.

Group Metaphor Data

I gathered information from two sources to obtain data for my analysis of metaphors in the group, or public, domain. First, I audio-taped two large organizational meetings. The organization holds what members call "community" meetings several times a year. While not mandatory, on average about 20-30 people attend these meetings. Attendees include currently enrolled students, teachers, office personnel,

former students, and members of the general public who take occasional classes at the institute. The purposes of the meetings vary, depending on current issues and concerns. The two meetings audio-taped for this project each had a different purpose and thus a distinct flavor. I obtained verbal permission to tape the meetings from participants present at each meeting.

Permission was granted by group consensus, a method regularly used by the group to make decisions. In this process it is not necessary to obtain a 100% unanimous vote, as part of the group's philosophy contends that diversity is always present and, in fact, necessary for deep democracy. To reach a decision the group uses a "green light" approach where those who harbor reservations agree to go along with a decision, knowing they will have an opportunity to voice their concerns in a future process.

The first meeting, held on February 3rd, 2003, was called specifically to discuss new ethics guidelines that had been requested by the state's department of education. (The training program offers an accredited master's degree, which is reauthorized periodically by the state.) The outcome of this first meeting would have serious implications, as many foreign students attended the program and would lose their ability to stay in US on their student visas if the state denied the reauthorization. In contrast to the first meeting, the second meeting held July 2nd, 2003, did not have a predetermined agenda. It provided an open-ended opportunity for group members to voice concerns about programming and classes, explore tensions between different factions within the organization, discuss world events, or address any other issue that interested and concerned them.

I took written notes during the meeting and later transcribed the meeting tapes. Kvale (1996), in his book *InterViews*, addresses the transcription process and points out that although it "seems like an apparently simple and reasonable procedure, transcriptions involve a series of methodological and theoretical problems" (p. 163). He notes that while the transcriptions come to be regarded as solid, empirical data, "they are artificial constructions from an oral to a written mode of communication" (p. 163). During the course of a transcription the researcher/transcriber needs to make a series of judgments and decisions about how the transcription should proceed. Kvale (1996) reminds us that transcriptions are not copies of some original reality, they are interpretive constructions that can be used as tools for specific purposes.

In this research project I performed all transcriptions. I transcribed the spoken words as accurately as possible, though at times the words were undecipherable due to multiple voices speaking simultaneously or extraneous background noise. I added commas and periods when necessary to facilitate reading the transcript. When members made similar utterances simultaneously, as in a Greek chorus, I picked one sample statement to represent the general sentiment. I tracked who was speaking, noting whether the speakers were teachers or students. I did not note a speaker's intonation, unless the speaker expressly emphasized a word. I did not focus on pauses, hesitations or interruptions.

After transcribing the tapes in the manner described above, I reviewed each transcription several times, looking for metaphoric content. Using differently colored ink I then described in my own vernacular what I perceived was an underlying metaphor in the transcription. An example might better illustrate the process. In the following

excerpt a female teacher is speaking, pointing out different sides of an issue. I initially labeled this a "dispute metaphor." (Instead of using different colored ink I have used italics in this example.)

> I feel it's good that we are talking about the different possibilities that we could honor our relationships and rules that the state makes. But on the other side I just want to say that also it's good that we are spelling these things out because also the evaluative relationship is hurtful. So, I just want to add that side of it. [*Dispute metaphor]*

At times the content could not be easily distilled into a single, succinct metaphor as in the above example. In these instances I used a narrative-like interpretation. I gave each new interpretation a number, noting how many instances occurred with similar numbers. The following example illustrates this process:

> About writing things down…and you know, we didn't have an ethics code for a long time. And we didn't have to write it down. 'Cause we were such a tightly knit group and so close and just friendships it sort of, you know, do that and I think there's also a little spirit of rebellion. *Narrative #8: In the beginning we were more like an extended family. We didn't need rules to be written down or outsiders telling us how to behave. We like being rebels.*

I then compiled and sorted the metaphors and narratives according to similar metaphoric/narrative themes. This procedure was complicated by the notion that, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) posit in *Metaphors We Live By*, most linguistic expressions contain metaphoric content. Some metaphors and narrative descriptions that surfaced in initial readings of the transcripts did not find their way into the final analysis, as they seemed to be isolated accounts of minimal significance for the purposes of this project. I attempted to find multiple instances of each metaphor, not so much as "proof" of their existence as to suggest trends or themes from which to draw insights about the larger function of metaphor in organizations.

As a second source of data, I studied a series of emails from an organizational email string spanning a four-month period between April, 2003 to July, 2003. Teachers, non-registered students and other interested parties who lived in or near the institute's geographic area used the email string to post opinions, announcements and business related matters. These postings could include practical information about organizational meeting times, garage sale announcements, after thoughts about the previous meeting, invitations to birthday parties, or political commentary on recent governmental actions. Using a similar procedure as outlined above when analyzing meeting transcript data, I compiled examples of metaphors in use, looking for multiple instances of the same or similar metaphors.

Individual Interviews

As was noted in the introduction, I also wished to expand the investigation on the function of metaphor in organizations by including an analysis of private, individual metaphors and contrasting these metaphors to the metaphors found in the group.
In order to explore metaphors in the private, or individual domain, I interviewed six teachers and transcribed the conversations in a similar format as was used to transcribe the group meetings. I reviewed the transcripts multiple times looking for metaphors and focusing on their function and utility. I wanted to explore the types of metaphors individual members used in their descriptions of the organization and organizational life. How did these individuals position themselves in relation to his or her own metaphors and those of the group? How did the metaphors function? What was the relationship between the private and public metaphors and what could this tell us about understanding organizational life?

The six teachers interviewed consisted of two men and four women. I chose these six because of their different levels of involvement in the organization. Two of the women had been with the organization since its inception. One of these two was only briefly involved in the initial stages but left to pursue a professional life outside the group for many years before returning to the organization later in life. Another woman married one of the originators and became deeply invested in the organization as a result of this relationship. She subsequently divorced her partner and became less involved with the group. The fourth woman interviewed had only recently graduated from the program and, unlike the others, did not teach other students or hold seminars at the institute. Of the two men, one of them (in a parallel situation to one of the women) had also married a foundational member and subsequently divorced. He had little involvement with the organization at the time of the interview. The other man became inextricably involved with the organization due to his role as the institute's business administrator.

I had a comfortable, personal relationship with each of them, which I hoped would be conducive to an honest and open dialogue. I emailed the six potential interviewees, explained my project and asked for their participation. One of their main concerns involved confidentiality, as each of them was still an active member within the organization. They signed consent forms that stated the interview material would only be used for the specific purpose of this thesis and would not be shown to other organizational members. Any other use would require additional consent.

Each interview lasted about an hour and was semi-structured. I did not use the same questions for each interviewee, but followed general guidelines designed to cover similar material (see Appendix A for sample questions). This format gave me the

freedom and flexibility to follow the interviewees' interests and offered the potential of opening up new avenues of inquiry, as well as supporting my creativity in unfolding particular answers. I attempted to verify interpretations throughout the course of the interview, as is suggested by Kvale (1996), as a technique to enhance the quality of the interview.

I started each interview by asking the participants to tell a brief story about how they became involved with the organization. This allowed me to connect more personally with the interviewee. I also included a question about the interviewee's personal hopes and dreams and asked to what extent the organization supported these goals. I included this section in an attempt to gain insight into the person's level of satisfaction with group life. How might the metaphoric content reflect an interviewee's level of commitment to and interest in the organization? Each conversation attempted to address the group member's metaphors of the organization, the direction they perceived the organization to be headed, and their relationship to the organization. At some point I asked each interviewee directly to name a metaphor that they believed best described the organization. I then compiled my interpretations and observations in an analytic account for each interviewee, using multiple quotes to bring in the interviewee's voice as well as give the reader an opportunity to construct the data in alternate ways.

At the end of each interview analysis I fabricated a story in an impressionistic attempt to illustrate the interviewee's journey and negotiation of organizational life. In each story I attempted to include what I considered salient elements and tensions expressed by the interviewee in the interview process. These stories are meant to

illuminate and enhance through creative means the varied and multifaceted aspects of the individuals, their roles and their relationships to the group.

Methodological Considerations

I have attempted to present the methodology so that others might find alternative ways of constructing and interpreting the data. Any one approach will necessarily foreground certain aspects while obscuring others. In the following paragraphs some methodological reflections will be presented. Jill Woodilla (1998) raises the methodological concern that the meaning of an utterance changes each time the words are revisited following their original utterance. She notes that "just as a transcript can never capture an actual unfolding situation, so meanings can never be completely isolated or fully articulated" (p. 49). Interpretation and meaning making are subjective processes. Another researcher could have interpreted the data in this project differently. As a result, alternative metaphors would surely have emerged and different organizational relationships and realities could have been explored.

Another consideration involved categorizing of the metaphors. Questions such as which metaphors required a separate, distinct category and which could be subsumed under a larger, umbrella metaphor needed close attention. For example, the "organization as community" metaphor and the "organization as family" metaphor were initially combined but upon closer scrutiny warranted separate categories, as the two concepts are used differently in our everyday vernacular and multiple examples of each one surfaced upon viewing the transcripts. In another example, one could make the case that the metaphor of the "organization as dialectical exploration" could be considered part of the

metaphor of "the organization as process," since in "unfolding" something, a "process" occurs. However, details and nuances become obscured in this kind of synthesis. "Dialectical unfolding" exemplifies a process that relies on polarities for its effect. The presence of polarities structures and enacts a certain kind of conversation wherein participants hold oppositional stances. "Process" alone does not highlight this aspect. Every metaphor carries fine distinctions that warrant consideration.

Naming the metaphors "found" in the data also involved much deliberation. For example, the "dispute metaphor" illustrated in the example above was also named the "battle metaphor" in an initial draft, but finally became more neutrally named "the organization as dialectic exploration." As this example shows, each depiction elicits an entirely different organizational story. Some group members might relate to the group's side-taking process as a battle, while others could view it as a means to deeper understanding of the other's position. Naming the narrative-like descriptions (see the example cited earlier) proved especially challenging, as most were not easily captured in one pithy metaphoric expression. They required a distillation process that might have marginalized and obscured potentially useful complexities.

Distinguishing and separating metaphor from narrative was a difficult task when analyzing the data. Metaphors are used to describe one thing in terms of another. They impose one image of something onto something else, often giving us insight into other dimensions of a phenomenon. Metaphors resemble narratives in that stories are often embedded in metaphors. For example, the metaphor of a struggle as an "uphill battle" gives the reader a sense of the story of this struggle. The struggle is difficult (uphill) and contentious (battle). According to some cultural researchers we think in narrative. We

make sense by constructing narratives. We story our lives and our circumstances. Therefore, when we hear or read of a struggle as an "uphill battle" we want to fill in the story. Who is struggling? What is making it difficult? Was it always a struggle? How long will it go on? What are the implications of this struggle? Metaphors and narratives blend and merge, at times making it impossible to determine how and where they intersect. For these reasons I have sometimes used the term metaphor and narrative interchangeably.

Taping and transcribing posed many methodological concerns, some of which were mentioned in an earlier paragraph. In this case, the reader might recall that permission to tape the meeting was gained by consensus at the beginning of each meeting, a method generally used by this organization in decision-making processes. It is probable some participants were not in agreement with the decision to have the meetings taped but were hesitant to speak out in public. As a result, these dissenting voices might not have contributed to the meeting discussion, affecting its content and process. I had considered asking prior permission to tape the meetings using the email string, but was dissuaded from this by a senior teacher who was supportive of my research and believed that the group would not be able to come to an acceptable consensus in a timely matter before the meetings.

Sample selection for the individual interviews also warrants a few comments. I limited my interviews to teachers because, while the organization values student input, the teachers are the final arbiters of policy and regulations, and in the final analysis determine much of the organizational structure. Students enter and exit the programs, but the teachers remain as a relatively consistent influence. For example, in the first meeting

to discuss whether the group should abide by the state imposed guidelines, the teachers had already met and researched the issue for months before bringing it to the larger group of students. Students were not involved in the background discussions on the implications of these new policies. Including individual students' metaphoric vocabularies would be a worthwhile and interesting endeavor for future research. Entirely different metaphors could emerge to offer additional insights into the group's functioning. While I chose not to interview individual students, I did include excerpts from students' emails and used students' quotes from the public meetings in the group metaphor analysis.

My student status opens further methodological considerations. At the time I performed the interviews, I was still a student in the institute's training program. While the agreement of strict confidentiality and my favorable relationship to the interviewees promoted a trusting atmosphere, what alternate metaphors might have emerged had I been another teacher and not a student interviewer? On the other hand, what metaphors emerged *because* I was a student and not a fellow colleague? My student status both limited and expanded the metaphoric repertoires that emerged. In addition, while my insider status afforded me access to meetings and teachers, what organizational idiosyncrasies had I become inured to as a result of this inside view? Which aspects of the organization and group interactions had become "normal" and no longer noteworthy for me?

CHAPTER 3

GROUP METAPHORS IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE

As I outlined in the methods section, in order to explore group metaphors in public discourse I participated in and taped two organizational meetings. I also culled emails during a four-month period from an organizational email string. In what follows I will briefly describe the nature of these meetings, introduce metaphors that occurred with some frequency in the meetings and on email, and give examples of these metaphors in use.

Group Meetings

Several times a year the organization, or school, holds "community meetings" in which the teachers, formally enrolled students, and non-enrolled students meet for about one and a half hours to discuss various issues. These meetings serve several purposes: They give students a chance to practice their group facilitation skills; they give group members a chance to know each other; they give the group a chance to process and discuss interpersonal issues, such as the relationship between the different student groups or student/teacher relationships and; they are sometimes a forum for discussing outer world events, such as US foreign policy or local politics.

The meetings usually follow a loose format and in general do not have a set agenda. Occasionally, a meeting is called for a specific purpose. I analyzed both types of meetings in this research project. The February 2nd meeting had a specific purpose whereas the meeting on July 1st meeting did not.

Meeting on February 2nd, 2003

This meeting, unlike community meetings normally held in this organization, had a specific purpose and goal. The meeting was explicitly called to discuss new ethical guidelines that had been requested by the state's department of education reauthorization office. Recently, the state scrutinized programmatic guidelines in the school's masters program during a standard reauthorization investigation. The River's Edge Psychological Training Institute offers three programs: a certificate, a diploma, and a masters degree that has statewide, but not regional, accreditation. The three different programs have three different sets of requirements. The state took issue with some of the school's practices around student-teacher relationships and required programmatic changes to the masters degree program before granting its reauthorization. The stated purpose of this meeting was to discuss these changes and decide whether or not to accept them.

During the last several months the teachers, headed by a subgroup, had discussed at length the ethical issues raised by the state. One of the subgroup members presided over this meeting. Since it was billed as a "community meeting," it was open to registered and non-registered students as well as teachers. More than the usual number of people attended this meeting, most likely because the ethical issues at hand challenged not only this school's way of doing things but also basic traditions long held in psychological training programs in general.

The group needed to make decisions at this meeting that could potentially dismantle the school's programs and render the school, as it currently operates, defunct. The state would prohibit the school from running its diploma program along with the masters degree, should the teachers decide not to comply with the reauthorization

requirements. The subcommittee had not emphasized this latter point in pre-meeting emails, and many students were shocked at this revelation.

Meeting on July 1st, 2003

More typical of most "community meetings," this one did not have a set agenda. In the meetings that do not have a set agenda, facilitators, who are group members, elicit topics from the participants at the beginning of the meeting. These topics are then discussed and "sorted" for the ones that hold the most interest and energy for the group. The decision about which topic to focus on is reached by a general consensus. For example, after discussing potential topics the facilitator might ask members to clap for their choice. The topic with the loudest clap wins, so to speak. The purpose of these general meetings is to bring out any issues students and teachers are concerned about. This could be as general as the war in Iraq or as specific as relationship issues between different groups or members of the organization. This gathering included currently enrolled students, teachers, office personnel, students who were enrolled in the past, and others who didn't fit any particular category but enjoyed taking occasional classes or seminars at the institute.

It was a warm summer evening on this particular night and people gathered outside before the meeting, laughing and joking. About 50-60 people attended this meeting. A celebratory atmosphere pervaded the room and an outsider walking in might have thought they happened upon a party. Some people hadn't seen each other for several months and were talking in small groups, reconnecting and reestablishing relationships.

E-mail Exchange

In general, email strings are widely used in most organizations to facilitate communication amongst the members. Participants choose to subscribe to a group string, and can thereby send a message to everyone on the string without having to put in separate email addresses for each person. The River's Edge organization has several email strings; one for teachers, one for students, one for students and teachers, and one for teachers, students, and people loosely affiliated with the River's Edge organization living in nearby, surrounding areas. I used the latter string for this research project. The string is used to post announcements and business related matters, like a bulletin board. This could include school meeting dates and times, garage sale announcements, or invitations to birthday parties or performances. Participants also use the string to process left over issues from community meetings or to introduce new issues and concerns about the workings of the organization. The email excerpts have not been edited for grammar or spelling but are reproduced here as they appeared.

Metaphors in Action

From these three different sources I was able to discern the recurring presence of eight different metaphors. Evidence for each of these metaphors could be located in both the group meetings and the email exchanges. It is possible that another researcher might have located different metaphors and examples. My interpretive lens is surely shaped and colored by my previous standing as a student, my relationships with various teachers, the gossip I have heard in passing, and my personal and cultural history which allow me

to observe some things while being oblivious to others. At the same time, language is often ambiguous and polysemic. Many interpretations are possible.

At times I use the same excerpt in different metaphoric categories. I realize that the categorizations run the risk of oversimplifying and obscuring the subtleties and overlapping features of the metaphors. In the end, I offer this analysis to enrich our dialogues on organizational process and construction.

I now turn to the eight most prominent metaphors and the illustrative examples from which they are drawn:

The Organization as Community

The Organization as Family

The Organization as Identity Seeker

The Organization as a Fruit Salad Democracy

The Organization as Renegade

The Organization as Dialectic Exploration

The Organization as Therapy

The Organization as Theater

Group Metaphors in Public Discourse: Preliminary Conclusions

In the present chapter I have attempted to illuminate the major metaphors employed by group participants as they conversed with each other in various public settings. In the next chapter I will explore the private metaphorical realm. There will be much to say

about the present findings in light of this ensuing exploration. However, at this point I wish to offer six conclusions suggested by the present findings alone:

1. *Organizations are not guided by a unifying metaphor, but by multiple metaphors.* Many metaphors operate simultaneously in this organization. The following eight metaphors were identified: the organization as community, as family, as identity seeker, as fruit salad democracy, as renegade, as dialectic exploration, as therapy, and as theater. Contrary to some of the academic literature cited in the introduction, there does not seem to be one, or even two, dominant metaphors at work. Instead, a cacophony of images and stories are perpetually at play, continually informing and affecting each other.

2. *Metaphors do not present themselves in a neat and orderly fashion.* Often times, several metaphors appeared in one excerpt, suggesting that researchers cannot easily delineate where one metaphor ends and another begins. For example, in the second meeting a group member suggested 'unfolding roles in order to explore different parts of the group for a deeper understanding.' The "organization as theater," the "organization as dialectical exploration" and the "organization as therapy" all belong to this suggestion."

3. *Group members may have different stories relating to the same metaphoric theme.* For example, in the excerpts illustrating the "organization as identity seeker" metaphor, some group members reminisced about the way things used to be while others looked to the future. Both groups attempted to locate the group's identity from different perspectives. Group members also related differently to the "organization as community" metaphor. Some in the group longed for a "deeper" feeling of community connection while others were already experiencing deep feelings of community. Interestingly and

perhaps coincidentally, those looking for more connection were students while those already experiencing and celebrating their feeling of community were teachers.

4. *Context influences the type of metaphors that emerge.* Some metaphors appeared more frequently in one meeting than another. The "organization as identity seeker," for example, appeared more frequently in the first meeting where the group wrestled with accepting the state's reauthorization criteria and ethics guidelines. Also, the "organization as renegade" and the "organization as fruit salad democracy" appeared more frequently in this meeting. On the other hand, the "organization as community" metaphor appeared more frequently in the second meeting. The reader might recall that the second meeting did not have a set agenda or any particular issue to discuss. Each meeting had an entirely different goal, suggesting that different topics and intended outcomes influence metaphorical content.

5. *The metaphors emerging in the organization expand and embellish the metaphors currently in use in the academic literature.* One could argue that some of the metaphors are subsets of more traditional, academic metaphoric categories already in use. For example, the "fruit salad democracy" metaphor could be considered a subset of Morgan's (1986) "organizations as political systems" metaphor. Or, the "family" metaphor could belong to "organizations as cultures," (Morgan, 1986), since families are often considered mini-cultures. However, subsuming metaphors under larger umbrella images obscures the complexity and subtlety of each metaphor as it appears in this particular organization and in each particular context. For example, if I had combined the "community" and the "family" metaphor I might not have noticed the way in which the group appropriates the rituals of a family, or the way in which the founder functions like the head of the family

in the organization. Like a piece of impressionist art, academic metaphors provide broad and interesting brush strokes, but the painting's genius is in its tiny licks and drops, smudges and lines. Entirely different metaphors may become dominant as an organization confronts various new challenges.

6. *Changing a dominant organizational metaphor will unlikely yield organizational change.* This conclusion follows from the arguments developed above. First of all, there does not seem to be *a* dominant metaphor. Metaphors emerging as dominant in one setting move to the background in other settings. As was noted above, far fewer instances of the "organization as renegade" metaphor appeared in the second meeting than in the first. Recall that the second meeting did not have a set agenda whereas the first meeting focused on whether to comply with state rules and regulations, a subject conducive to an oppositional stance. Which dominant metaphor, then, should an organizational change agent focus on? If the organization is in part constituted by the interplay of various metaphors, it does not seem productive to focus on one. This observation challenges the idea of organizational culture as a unified array of beliefs.

CHAPTER 4

INDIVIDUAL METAPHORS IN PRIVATE DISCOURSE

The last chapter explored organizational metaphors that appeared in the public domain. I identified eight metaphors and cited instances of their use in the context of two organizational meetings and an organizational e-mail string. I focused on the metaphoric content that emerged in these settings in order to contrast it with the metaphoric contributions of the private realm.

In this next chapter I introduce the individual and focus on the metaphoric content that emerged during private conversations with six teachers in the organization. I hope to illuminate the various metaphors that appear in this domain and compare and contrast them with those found in the previous chapter. I will present each interview separately. I have taken the liberty of ending each individual interview with a fictional account of the participant's narrative trajectory in the organization, drawing out certain themes to challenge our traditional notions of what it means to live an organizational life.

Metaphors in the Private Domain: Preliminary Conclusions

The six individual interviews discussed above provided rich material for metaphoric exploration in the private domain. I will recapture the insights gleaned from the individual accounts in the following paragraphs. The next chapter will address both the group and individual accounts in more detail as well as consider the implications of looking at both the group and individual domains.

1. Individuals may share metaphors with the larger group. Metaphors that appeared in private interviews also surfaced in group conversations. Some instances of shared metaphors included the metaphors of the "organization as community," the "organization as family" and "the organization as theater."
2. Individuals may interpret and respond in diverse ways to the same group metaphors. For example, while privately individuals shared the image of "community," each interviewee had a different, and at times contradictory, view of this image. One of the participants described "community" as a "place like home," while another viewed it as an opportunity for learning and sharing resources with interested colleagues.
3. Individuals may rely on metaphors not found in the larger group. Many additional metaphors appeared in the individual accounts. Several of the interviewees used metaphors that highlighted the power structure of the group, such as the "organization as pyramid." Metaphors depicting the organization's hierarchical aspects did not appear in the group accounts, although an alternate and more egalitarian view of the organizational structure, the "organization as fruit salad democracy," did appear.
4. Individuals may contradict metaphors used by other participants. Kent used a "coffee shop" metaphor to describe the group, whereas Paula related to the organization as a "business" with a networked structure, and Sophia used the metaphor of the organization as "religion" in her account.
5. Individuals may have disparate, at times conflicting, views of their own metaphors. During the course of the interviews, participants would at times

renegotiate the meaning of their own metaphors. Simon, for example, initially contends that the organization is in a "crisis," and risks "dying" because there is "no energy." Yet, after some discussion he recants this assessment of the crisis and observes that the crisis is not the result of a lack of energy but of too many trained therapists and not enough clients. It seems metaphors are discursive resources used for particular purposes at particular times, depending on the speaker's goals and positioning.

6. Individuals' actions and metaphors may contradict each other. For example, Joanna does not view the organization as an" organization." As far as she is concerned she is "hanging out with mates." That is, she has friends who also happen to be her colleagues. She does not think of herself as being part of an official structure, yet these "friendships" give rise to collaborative projects that ultimately serve to boost the organization's financial base. Interestingly, Joanna can articulate the potential gain for the organization as a result of these projects, but still does not consider herself a member and does not participate in organizational meetings.
7. Individuals may place themselves both inside and outside the organization. Many of the respondents had contradictory feelings about where and if they fit into the organizational structure. At times a participant would move from insider to outsider during the course of one interview, depending on the context.
8. Individuals' narratives of the self may impact the metaphors they use. For example, Paula explains that she has "given up" her whole adult life to the organization and its ideals. She is also arguably one of the most influential

members of the group and has historically concerned herself with the financial viability of the organization. Paula is irritated with those colleagues who do not view the organization as a "bona fide" organization. Paula uses a "business" metaphor to describe the organization, a metaphor that goes along with the narratives of her self as a prominent member of the group and with her concerns about the organization's place in the world.

9. Metaphors used by individuals may not refer to the organization as a whole, but to sub-units of the organization. That is, individuals do not necessarily relate to a monolithic entity called "the organization," but to little lodgments or pieces of the organization. For example, Kent does not think of the organization as an "organization" but does, however, relate to the group as a "gossipy coffee shop." He is greatly concerned with insider/outsider issues, and his place in the organizational hierarchy.

In the following chapter, I will discuss in more detail the conclusions from the group metaphor section and the individual accounts. What conclusions can be drawn from the public and private domains about the function and utility of metaphor in organizations? Finally, I will consider the private and the public domains together.

CHAPTER 5

METAPHORS: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

In this chapter I will revisit both group and individual metaphors, expanding on the preliminary conclusions discussed at the end of each of the previous chapters. I will then combine the two domains and offer insights that might be drawn from looking at the full picture. What kinds of relationships can be found between the group and individual metaphoric realms? Do individuals share metaphors with the larger group? Do the metaphors conflict? Are some metaphors found in one domain and not the other? How are the individual metaphors embedded in and functionally related to the group metaphors? What are the implications for understanding organizational life on the basis of these findings?

As this discussion unfolds I will revisit the dominant assertions on metaphor outlined in the introduction. To reiterate, much of traditional organizational research on metaphor is concerned with dominant metaphors within the organization. The following summarizes assertions that follow these concerns:

- Metaphors as shared and singular
- Metaphors as organizing devices
- Metaphors as functioning cognitively
- Metaphors as ubiquitous

The first three assertions will be addressed in the discussion on group metaphors. The fourth assertion will be discussed in the last section, which focuses on both group

and individual domains. The preliminary conclusions outlined at the end of the previous chapter will be also be expanded in the following sections.

Group Metaphors Revisited

It is first useful to compare the metaphors employed in the group setting with traditional accounts of the major metaphors of the organization as elaborated in Chapter 1. The following were among the major metaphors found in the group discussions and in e-mail posts among organizational participants:

- *The organization as community*: "We share beliefs, a value system and language that binds us together and sets us apart from other groups and communities."
- *The organization as family*: "We are a close-knit group that pays attention to the details of each other's personal lives. We celebrate birthdays, support each other when we are sick and though we sometimes fight and bicker, we know our relationship will endure."
- *The organization as identity seeker*: "We are concerned about where we have been and where we are going. Should we become more mainstream in our approaches and our programming? Should we let the organization 'die'? Who are we today?"
- *The organization as a fruit salad democracy*: "We believe in principles of deep democracy wherein all voices, especially those at the margins, have a place at the table."
- *The organization as renegade*: "We are a group that prides itself on its social activism by challenging conventional norms and standards. We like being different."

- *The organization as dialectic exploration*: "We are a group that explores the polarities of any issue. We feel this kind of exploration leads to deeper understandings of people and situations."
- *The organization as therapy*: "We use group gatherings to process issues and gain a deeper understandings about ourselves and our functioning."
- *The organization as theater*: "We use group meeting time to unfold different roles and encourage them to interact in order to explore complex group dynamics."

In this context let us consider Gareth Morgan's (1986) classic account in *Images of Organization*. Although the nuances and implications are not identical, similarities can be found between the group's metaphors and those of Morgan. Morgan's "organization as political system" and the group's "organization as a fruit salad democracy" have much in common. We could consider the "fruit salad democracy" metaphor as a subset of the "organization as political system." However, the fruit salad democracy metaphor is more focused and explicit in its implications. It is not a politics of fascism, for example, but a politics of inclusivity and polyvocality.

Similarly, we could consider that the group's "organization as family" and the "organization as community" metaphors both belong under Morgan's "organization as culture" metaphor, as both "family" and "community" could be considered cultural entities. However, the metaphors of both "family" and "community" are more explicit than the general notion of culture, and detail particular types of relationships among members. If I had combined the "community" and "family" metaphor, I might not have noticed the way in which the group appropriates the rituals of a family, or the way in which the founder functions like the head of a family in the organization.

The group's "organization as therapy" and Morgan's "organization as psychic prisons" also share a common thread, although with opposing connotations. Specifically, "therapy" is generally considered a practice that facilitates psychological growth and awareness leading to a more positive self-concept, whereas the concept of "psychic prison" focuses on psychological limitations and constraints.

Now let's consider metaphors that were not found in Morgan's book. The metaphors of the organization as identity seeker, as renegade, as dialectical unfolding, and as theater all expanded his metaphoric repertoire. The "organization as theater" metaphor, while not explored by Morgan, has received previous attention in the literature. As was noted in the analysis of the group metaphors, Erving Goffman (1959) developed the "dramaturgical perspective" to analyze social interactions. The appearance of alternative metaphors in the public setting suggests that traditional academic metaphors, such as the "organization as machine" and "the organization as organism," account for a limited view of organizations, at least by those who participate in them.

In summary, while an important opening to our understanding of organizational metaphors, the present study suggests that a far richer reservoir of metaphors play a role in organizational functioning. Undoubtedly, research in other organizational settings would expand even further on the range of metaphors in use.

I now return to the assumptions of the role of metaphor as outlined in the introduction and reviewed at the beginning of this chapter. I will address each of these in turn, providing examples from the public and private domains of my analysis to examine these assumptions more closely.

Metaphors as Shared and Singular

As noted in the introduction, much of the organizational change literature addressing metaphor assumes that highly functional organizations are held together by one or two dominant, ubiquitous and shared metaphors. Organizational consultants focus their attention on finding and/or developing these metaphors. It is assumed that if organizational participants use the same metaphoric lens, they will develop similar ways of being, acting and thinking. When faced with multiple metaphors, researchers and organizational change agents show a bias toward finding overarching or root metaphors that will coalesce diverse strands and tensions in an attempt to integrate and unify the organization (Marshak, 1996). Behind this attempt is a belief that an unintegrated organization is less functional than an integrated one. Marshak (1996) used the term "schizophrenic" for organizations with multiple core themes existing in isolation or opposition to each other.

Early organizational culture studies showed a propensity toward finding unity and identifying those aspects of a group that bind people together, a trend which seems to influence researchers today. In addition, theories of individual psychology are sometimes superimposed on organizations as if they were human entities. Just as individuals may seek out psychoanalysis for treatment of an unintegrated self, full of psychological complexes and splinter personalities, a fragmented organization is seen as needing consultation to help pull its disparate parts together.

In contrast to the assumption that a few, widely shared metaphors comprise the organizational glue, the present research revealed a multitude of metaphors operating simultaneously in the organization. There did not seem to be one or even two dominant

metaphors at play. Rather, I identified eight major metaphoric themes (outlined above). No one metaphor seemed more dominant than any other, and multiple instances could be found for each metaphoric theme. At times, group metaphors conflicted with each other, further confronting the notion of shared and singular organizational realities. For example, the "organization as renegades" and the "organization as fruit salad democracy" metaphors pointed to contrasting beliefs in how to go about solving organizational differences. While renegades may resort to covert, and at times violent, tactics to voice their needs and opinions, members of a fruit salad democracy attempt to hear all sides of an issue using dialogue and debate and do not generally use violence as a means to their ends.

I do not wish to imply that all eight metaphors had equal prominence all times. Instead, metaphors became momentarily foregrounded. In fact, it seemed different metaphors took center stage in different contexts. For example, some metaphors appeared more frequently in the first group meeting than in the second. Recall that in the first meeting the group needed to come to an agreement on organizational policy and procedures. The meeting had a specific goal. Many more examples of the organization as "renegades," as "identity seeker" and as "fruit salad democracy" appeared in this first meeting, an observation that makes sense in light of the context and purpose of the meeting. Having a meeting with a set agenda was atypical of the regular quarterly meetings usually held by the group.

The second meeting reflected a more typical organizational occasion. It had no particular agenda or goal but was intended to provide an opportunity for group members to interact and process general organizational issues. The metaphor of the "organization

as community" figured prominently in this discussion. Not surprisingly, group members refer to these regularly scheduled meetings as "community" meetings and one of their underlying purposes is to help build "community." Metaphors of the organization as therapy and as theater were also highlighted in this setting where process, rather than content, was of primary concern. Entirely different metaphors might have appeared had these meetings been called "creativity night" or "roll call" or "love fests" or "morning minutes."

It seemed that in this organization multiple metaphors were continuously at play, informing and affecting organizational reality. Organizational metaphors seemed to come into and out of focus, depending on which conversational resources were needed at a particular time for a particular organizational function

Metaphor as Organizing Devices

There are many ways in which metaphors have been used as organizing devices. For one, organizational consultants and researchers have used metaphors for understanding organizational phenomena. Metaphors can provide tools for analysis and for guiding future actions because they not only describe reality but also help constitute that reality. Srivasta and Barrett (1988) point out that when we name an object we direct certain actions toward that object that are consistent with the attributes of that object. For example, we relate differently to the 'object' of marriage depending on whether it is conceived of as a contract or a fairy tale. Similarly, an organization that is like a pyramid will constitute different hiring, firing and promotional practices than an organization that

is like a jazz band, with different individuals (instruments) taking the lead (solo) at different times.

Many consultants have also searched for "root" metaphors (Marshak, 1993; Smith & Eisenberg, 1987) in the hopes of bringing cohesion and coherence into otherwise fragmented organizations. Morgan (1986), in *Images of Organizations*, provided various images for viewing and understanding organizations. According to Morgan and many others metaphors help frame organizations and bring certain aspects of their functioning to the fore. Morgan's image of the organization as brain, for example, focuses on an organization's ability for information processing. By looking at an organization as a brain, we can improve and organization's capacity for intelligence, flexibility and creativity. The brain metaphor encourages us to explore how an organization can learn to learn and speed up its information processing capacity. Metaphors can conceivable help structure organizational functioning.

To illustrate, imagine an organization that operates with the metaphor, "we are a caring organization." In theory, that organization would treat its customers, its suppliers, and its employees in a caring way. The whole organization would be organized around its kind, thoughtful, helpful and considerate practices. Ideally, this organization would even deal with conflict in a caring way. The dominant metaphor of a caring organization would structure the actions, values and beliefs of that organization.

Yet in contrast to these practices, the present study suggests that the organizing function of metaphors is limited. First of all, as was noted above, multiple metaphors appeared in the organization studied in this project, suggesting more than one organizing principle was at play. Furthermore, the metaphors that appeared did not present

themselves in a discriminant and orderly fashion. They overlapped and mixed together, sometimes running together in the same sentence and sometimes embedded within each other. To illustrate I return to the example cited in the preliminary conclusions. In one of the group meetings a group member suggested 'unfolding roles in order to explore different parts of the group for a deeper understanding.' The "organization as theater," the "organization as dialectical exploration" and the "organization as therapy" may all be found in this suggestion.

The way in which metaphors may overlap and intertwine can also be illustrated. In the first meeting the group discussed its reactions to the state's new ethics guidelines. A female member commented, "About writing things down…and you know, we didn't have an ethics code for a long time. And we didn't have to write it down. 'Cause we were such a tight knit group and so close and just friendships…it sort of you know do that and I think there's also a little spirit of rebellion." This excerpt includes the metaphor of family ("we were such a tightly knit group and so close") embedded in the theme of the organization as renegade ("we didn't have an ethics code for a long time" and "there's also a little spirit of rebellion") in addition to the metaphor of the organization as identity seeker. The speaker is reminiscing about an old identity, indirectly providing a stage to raise questions about the group's new and developing identity. Are we now a group that writes down its code of ethics in a policy and procedure manual? How does a consultant discriminate between these metaphors and decide which one should take center stage?

At the same time, upon closer investigation some seemingly contradictory group metaphors complemented each other, suggesting that finding the holy grail of the

dominant metaphor in order to organize and coalesce the group may not be necessary. Metaphors might already be interlocking in creative ways and need only be nurtured and encouraged to interact. To illustrate, the metaphors of the "organization as identity seeker" and the "organization as renegade" seemed initially at odds. "Renegades" are often considered fierce individualists bonded by loyalty and driven to action for a cause, whereas "identity seekers" are usually considered reflective, introspective individuals interested in growth and awareness. But let's consider this: While "renegades" may not sit around talking about who they are and what they are becoming, they are nevertheless extremely concerned with their identity, particularly the political implications of their publicly perceived identity. We begin to see how these stories might intersect in unique ways. The identity seekers might consider characteristics of "renegade" as part of their identity repertoire. The relationships embedded in these metaphors could potentially find new avenues of expression and consequently new ways of relating through focused interaction between the two images.

Metaphors: Cognitive or Discursive?

As outlined in Chapter 1, most organizational researchers treat metaphor as cognitive devices that serve as precursors to action. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in their seminal work, *Metaphors We Live By*, argue that metaphors structure our conceptual system. This conceptual system resides in our heads. Changes in our conceptual system affects how we perceive the world and consequently how we act on those perceptions. A cognitive orientation to metaphor includes the following foundational and psychological assumption: There exists a mind that instigates agency. I, a bounded and

autonomous self, have a thought and then I act on that thought. The thought I have belongs to me. When someone criticizes my thinking, I feel personally attacked because that person has just injured something that is mine. This mind exists independently, separate from other minds.

Turning to the field of organizational studies, Morgan (1986), who opened new vistas on the use of metaphor for organizational analysis, also treated metaphor as a cognitive device. He viewed metaphor as a way of "seeing," a lens through which to observe the world and frame inquiry. Palmer and Dunford (1996), who studied metaphors in use, referred to metaphors' "linkage to action" (p. 8). According to Grant and Iedema (2004), many researchers working in the field of organizational discourse studies rely on the cognitivist view of discourse. That is, the view that cognition is pre-discursive and determines the discourse that follows. (This parallels the above-mentioned studies that view metaphors as cognitive and determining action.) Cognition, then, determines discourse. Or more colloquially, what I think determines what I say.

In contrast to this cognitive stance I will suggest that metaphors are *discursive implements* used by people in conversations to *do* things. Metaphors gain their meaning through their use in relationships. Metaphors are not frames or lenses for *seeing*, but are *actions* that function as tools for accomplishing something. As Wittgenstein (1958) suggested, language has a performative function. Promises, oaths, rituals, etc. ("I now pronounce you husband and wife"; "I sentence you to ten years in prison") change the world in an instant. Language *does* something. (See Chapter 1 for additional treatment of Wittgenstein's propositions). The words have a function and gain their meaning from the social, historical and cultural fabric of which they are a part (Gergen, 1999;

McNamee and Gergen, 1999). Words gain their meaning through relationships. In fact, it has been argued there is no meaning outside relationship (Bahktin, 1986). Every utterance requires a supplement to render it intelligible.

The discursive properties of metaphor can be illustrated from the data. The following examples attempt to illustrate how metaphors may function within ongoing conversations. How do metaphors position the speaker? How do they position others? How are they used to support a logic, or rationalize a person's actions? How are they used to invite a particular course of action?

Metaphors used to support a position

The reader might recall that Paula immediately resonated with the metaphor of the organization as a "business." She concerned herself at length with the viability and future of the organization and positioned herself as a "CEO" or "general manager." While the organization in this study did not have a traditional, hierarchical structure, with titles such as CEO, president, vice-president, manager and so on, Paula acted as CEO by taking a major leadership role in many organizational activities. For example, she became the first academic dean, researched and designed the curricula for two masters programs, and presently functions as the academic dean of the new masters degree. She took the lead in talking and negotiating with state officials when the organization's educational programs were being audited, and led other faculty and students in discussions about whether and how the programs should conform to the new requirements.

Paula used another metaphor that positioned herself in a different way. At the end of our conversation she referred to the organization as "my baby." A "baby" requires a "mother" and she, in fact, positioned herself as one saying, "but to think of it [the organization] with you at this distance, I have a much more parental, benign feeling towards it." Paula told me she made herself available for emergencies, and received random calls from other administrative members in times of crisis. Utilizing the "baby" metaphor, she positioned the organization as a helpless creature needing her support and guidance.

Kent, in his interview, used the metaphor of the organization as a gossipy coffee shop. During our conversation he expressed great concern with his insider/outsider status, "gossiping" about his own organizational trajectory that had taken him from outsider to insider and back to outsider. This "gossipy coffee shop" metaphor supported his position as an outsider, a position he adhered to with great tenacity stating that, in fact, he had never felt completely "in," even during his "insider" period.

Further illustrating the proposal that metaphors are functional, discursive conversational implements, Kent used a different metaphor at another juncture in the conversation to support an additional group affiliation and position. He referred to the group as a "tribe of crazy, mad, insane people" and spoke with pride about the hopes and dreams of the group and about having a "core sense of being with people who have a similar vision." Now fully identifying with the group he said, "I'm mad and everybody is mad to try and be a part of it. And that is what I like about it." It seemed Kent used an assortment of metaphors at different moments in the conversation to position himself in a variety of ways, depending on his motives and needs.

Simon's metaphors also changed depending on his motives, his orientation to the organization and his position within the organization at a particular juncture. Recall that he was interviewed on the eve of his resignation as executive director of the organization. He recounted that nine years ago he had been asked to rescue the organization out of a financial crisis. According to him, the organization now ran smoothly. Later in the conversation, however, he stated the organization was "in a crisis." No longer having an investment in the organization's daily operations, he used a crisis metaphor to depict his organizational reality. A crisis metaphor lent support to his plans to leave the organization. After all, who could blame someone for jumping off a potentially sinking ship?

Metaphors used to attack a position

Returning to Paula's account, she not only used a business metaphor to position herself as a leader, but also used this metaphor to challenge alternative organizational accounts and attack other positions. She spoke disparagingly of those members who did not relate to the organization as a bona fide organization with legal structures, policies and procedures, but who viewed the organization as just a "place to hang out." She also questioned the position held by some that the organization was like a family, or a community of like-minded seekers. Paula used the metaphor of the "organization as business" as a rationale for viewing the institute as a teaching and research facility, and promoting practices that positioned the organization as a graduate research center.

At another juncture in the conversation Paula referred to the organization as an entity that, like a monster, "eats people up." This metaphor stands in sharp contrast to the

aforementioned “organization as baby” metaphor. Using the metaphor of the organization as “her baby,” she positioned herself as a mother hen. However, using the “organization as monster” metaphor, she confronted the position of some members that the organization should function as a benevolent parent, providing love and support to its participants. Paula did not support the notion that the organization’s role included helping individuals attain their personal goals. She used the “baby” metaphor to support her own “parental” actions, yet employed a “monster” metaphor to attack those who did not respect the organization as a formal, legal entity. Her “monster” metaphor challenged the view of the organization as a “place like home,” or the organization as a substitute for family. It rationalized what could be considered a coldhearted view of the organization’s responsibilities to its members. Paula stated, “Do people hold my hand while I sweat over my ideas? No. Do I want that? No. Does that exist anywhere? Does any organization support an individual? No. Organizations eat up individuals. It’s what they do.”

Natalie used the metaphor of the “organization as pyramid” to attack the group’s publicly held democratic principles. She concerned herself greatly with issues of rank and power, criticizing the organization for the disparity between its theoretical democratic ideals and their everyday manifestation, which she observed as being hierarchical and top-down. She reported how the founder’s presence stifled creative thinking, arguing, “That’s not democratic. It’s just not.” Simon also concerned himself with rank and power, attacking the internal hierarchy, which he claimed was “really strong.” The organization’s power structure, headed by the founder, deeply affected

Simon's personal commitments. He recounted that he debated his decision to resign at length, fearful of retribution from the founder as a result of his actions.

Metaphors used to justify an action

The metaphor of the organization as a business allowed Paula to justify a variety of actions that would affect the organization's financial welfare. For example, the development of the organization's degree programs, the adoption of the state's proposed ethics guidelines, and the proposal that the main site in the US should function as a graduate studies program were actions designed to invite the organization to expand its fiscal base. Paula also championed expanding the curricular boundaries to include research into fields other than therapy, and to create organizational structures that could support this kind of exploration. She also rationalized the inclusion of members not officially enrolled in the academic programs, arguing it was "good business" to have people with different academic and professional backgrounds participate in the organization. She promoted the development of smaller, decentralized, entrepreneurial endeavors to expand the organization's pecuniary options. In addition, Paula used the "organization as baby" metaphor to justify, like a good parent, the sacrifices she felt she had made for the organization during her many years of involvement.

Natalie, concerned about rank and power, positioned herself as a rebel and used this metaphor to justify a public confrontation with the founder, something that was simply "not done" in the organization. During our conversation she articulated her concerns for freedom of expression, and rationalized her challenge to the founder as a

way to foster a more democratic atmosphere. She stated others in the organization saw her as direct and fearless, actions that were supported by her rebel stance.

Simon used a crisis metaphor to justify his wish to leave the organization and start his own consulting business. Recall that he did not consider the organization as a "crisis" while he functioned as executive director. In fact, Simon explained that his business expertise brought the organization out of a financial crisis nine years ago. Now, however, he uses this metaphor to explain his desire for change and his impending departure from the group. A "crisis" calls for certain kind of response. Imagine, for example, if he had said the organization was having a little "trouble" or "mishap" instead of a "crisis." Could he have rationalized leaving the organization with these metaphors? Using one metaphor as opposed to another has implications for the actions that might follow. A "mishap" does not require an ambulance, fire fighters or other emergency personnel, whereas a "crisis" requires this type of dramatic response.

The above illustrations attempt to highlight the discursive character of metaphor. As Wittgenstein (1958) pointed out, words are tools in a toolbox. They accomplish specific actions or goals. They position speakers in specific ways, help them attack other positions and rationalize certain actions over others. The illustrations show how metaphors function to engage participants in particular kinds of relationships and therefore in particular organizational realities.

Individual Metaphors Revisited

The exploration into the private domain provided various insights into observations and questions raised while investigating the public realm. I will first expand on the list of preliminary conclusions provided at the end of the previous chapter on the individual and then will turn the focus back to the group and investigate the full picture.

Many more metaphors appeared in the private arena. To give a sense of their scope I will review them here.

- *The organization as community*: "We share beliefs, a value system and language that binds us together and sets us apart from other groups and communities."
- *The organization as family*: "We are a close-knit group that pays attention to the details of each other's personal lives. We celebrate birthdays, support each other when we are sick and though we sometimes fight and bicker, we know our connections will carry us through the tough times."
- *The organization as homey school*: "We are a cozy, alternative place to learn. We aren't a regular school because of our small size. The main "campus" has a building with one big room where the majority of classes take place, like an old-fashioned one-room school house."
- *The organization as radical individualists*: "We are a bunch of counter-culture, eccentric individualists who convene and discuss psychology and psychological processes in ways that are not generally understood or accepted by the mainstream."

- *The organization as renegade*: “We are a group that prides itself on its social activism by challenging conventional norms and standards. We like being different.”
- *The organization as pyramid*: “We have a hierarchical, top-down power structure in our group. Old-timers and people with connections to old-timers have more power than newcomers. The founder is considered the leader and has the most power.”
- *The organization as imperialist*: “The main training site dictates the policies and procedures for other sites. Because of the large number of experienced teachers at this site, we think we are superior and have more to offer than other sites.”
- *The organization as cult*: “We follow a leader and a set of beliefs and principles put forth by that leader. Group members who challenge the leader’s beliefs or position may fall out of favor with the leader and be relegated to the margins of the group.”
- *The organization as crisis*: “We run the risk of collapsing or dying if we don’t do something to change our organizational structures.”
- *The organization as crossroads*: “We have to change the way we operate. We need to connect more to the mainstream.”
- *The organization as organism*: “We are a group that changes and grows in response to changing circumstances.”
- *The organization as tribe*: “We are a band of people who have migrated across two continents to set up a home base. We gather regularly to tell stories about the past and plan for the future.”

- *The organization as dialectical exploration*: “We are a group that explores the polarities of an issue. We feel this kind of exploration will uncover people’s deeper motivations and impulses and lead to more complex understandings of our own and the group’s dynamics.”
- *The organization as coffee shop*: “We are a group that likes to gather in cozy spots and gossip about who’s in and who’s out and how many students are going to whose class.”
- *The organization as nest*: “Our group is a safe place where we are supported and cared for.”
- *The organization as baby*: “The organization needs constant tender, loving care and attention. We will sometimes sacrifice our individual well-being to help the organization thrive.”
- *The organization as experiment*: “We have no idea what will happen next in this organization’s development. We try things and see if they work. If they don’t, we try something else.”
- *The organization as process*: “We think of the organization as a dynamic entity that does not have a set form or structure.”
- *The organization as liquid*: “The organization has a fluid form that cannot be corralled and does not have explicit boundaries.”
- *The organization as network*: “The organization supports separate business endeavors, none of which are tied to each other financially, allowing for maximum innovation with minimum risk.”

- *The organization as sacrifice*: "We have spent blood, sweat and tears to build this organization. Our whole adults lives have been wrapped up in it and we gave up a lot to be here."
- *The organization as monster*: "Organizations eat people up. This organization is not in existence to help or support people to grow and develop."
- *The organization as business*: "We are concerned about market shares, making a profit and developing new programs to expand our financial base."
- *The organization as religion*: "Like fundamentalists everywhere, we are a zealous group that holds on firmly to its beliefs about transpersonal psychological principles. We adhere to these beliefs and view with skepticism paradigms that challenge these beliefs."
- *The organization as gap:* "We have trouble relating and interacting with people from other paradigms. We can't seem to cross over into other domains."
- *The organization as psychic prison*: "We are like a family with all the accompanying psychodynamic patterns of a family. The roles of father, mother, siblings, etc get constellated when we interact with each other. Sometimes we are trapped in these patterns and have difficulty finding other forms of relationship."

I will now return to the set of preliminary conclusions outlined at the end of the previous chapter in greater detail.

Individuals may share metaphors with the larger group. Some of the metaphors that appeared in the private realm also surfaced in the public domain. Individuals shared the metaphors of the organization as community, family, renegade, and dialectic

exploration with the larger group. It seemed all but one group metaphor (the organization as fruit salad democracy) was embedded in the individual accounts. Natalie hinted at the "fruit salad democracy metaphor" so one could argue that it also appeared in the private realm. If we include the "fruit salad democracy" metaphor, all group metaphors were found in the private realm.

For example, the "renegade" metaphor surfaced in Kent's account of the group as "mad, crazy, outrageous." He referred to the group's "unconventional" aspects with some measure of pride. Natalie embodied the "renegade" in the way she dared to challenge the founder. Simon's brought to life the "dialectical exploration" metaphor in the way he addressed various issues. He would constantly place himself on different sides of his own opinions in a "on the one hand, on the other hand" kind of way. The "family" metaphor surfaced in individual accounts through the use of statements like " a place like home," and through rituals, such as celebrating birthdays and taking care of sick and at times dying members. Though participants shared the "community" metaphor with the group, interpretations of this metaphor varied. The next section addresses the complexity of "shared" metaphors.

Individuals may respond in diverse ways to the same group metaphors. Closer examination showed that though individuals shared metaphors with the group and would on occasion use an identical word to depict a particular metaphor, interpretations of the metaphor's meaning varied tremendously in the private realm. The "organization as community" metaphor offers a clear example. This metaphor was widely shared among participants in addition to appearing multiple times in both group conversations and e-

mail posts. Organizational meetings were referred to as "community" meetings and insiders referred to the organization as "the community." At first glance it seems like a dominant metaphor.

However, recall that Natalie used the "organization as community" metaphor to describe a community as a place "where people looked for a high dream of home," a place where people could be themselves and experiment with having a voice, a place where people looked for friendship and love. (Natalie later contradicted herself, a point that will be discussed shortly). Paula also used the metaphor of the "organization as community," but instead spoke disparagingly about those group members looking for an intentional community of support and friendship. She subtly criticized those members looking for a place like home. Instead, Paula's experience and interpretation of community revolved around access to research, projects and learning opportunities. Kent had yet another view of the "organization as community." He envisioned it as a coffee shop where people gathered and gossiped. Sophia described the community as a group of "creative, elite individuals" incapable of interfacing with mainstream society. Clearly, the metaphor of the "organization as community" did not have a singular interpretation. This observation raises a methodological concern that research methods that simply ask participants for a word or concise description may not gain access to the complex narratives that potentially accompany a single metaphor. Consultants may not want to assume coherence and alignment of metaphors, even if participants use similar language to portray the metaphor.

Individuals may rely on metaphors not found in the larger group. Many more metaphors appeared in the individual realm that did not appear in the public setting. The metaphors that appeared in the private realm vastly expanded the range of images and narratives found in the traditional literature. Palmer and Dunford's (1996) metaphor exercise described in Chapter 1 buttresses these findings. They also documented the creative generation of non-traditional metaphors by individuals when asked to describe their organizations metaphorically. This study revealed that individuals privately articulate a much broader spectrum of metaphors than is generated in a group setting. The appearances of these various metaphors suggest that traditional academic metaphors might account for a limited view of the organization.

Privately, interviewees used metaphors that emphasized power dynamics within the group. Individuals questioned and criticized the prevailing structure of the organization, calling it hierarchical, a cult, and a pyramid. One individual explicitly said, "It's just not democratic. It just isn't." Other critical metaphors, such as the "imperialist" critique leveled against the group by one participant, and the appraisal of the group as "elitist" and somehow above the mainstream concerns, were also raised. Interestingly, metaphors depicting the organization's hierarchical aspects did not appear in the public domain. On the contrary, an opposing and more egalitarian image of the organizational structure, the "organization as fruit salad democracy," did appear. These observations beg the question that if these metaphoric themes were shared amongst individual participants, why they did not surface in group conversations? I will address these concerns shortly.

The metaphors generated privately had a certain panache, a flamboyant, creative and eccentric flair. Recall the metaphors of the organization as tribe, coffee shop, baby, monster, crisis, liquid, sacrifice, to name a few. Why did these types of metaphors not appear in the group setting? What happens to individual metaphors when a group convenes? We could speculate: Hierarchical dynamics within a group might prevent individual metaphors and narratives from surfacing. People generally adhere to a social order. The organization might have certain rules and regulations and meetings generally have a specific form, depending on their purpose. Usually there is an agenda and a facilitator, people take turns speaking, there is a dominant communication style, and so on. Imagine what metaphors might emerge if participants used the visual arts or performance pieces to outline an agenda, express opinions, or offer suggestions.

Individuals may contradict metaphors used by other participants. Kent used a "coffee shop" metaphor to describe the group whereas Paula related to the organization as a "network", a "baby," and a "monster." Sophia described it as a "psychic prison" and a "fundamentalist" religion. These examples (there are many others) illustrate the tensions in the private realm. However, if I had revisited each individual after completing the initial interviews and asked about their thoughts on the metaphors that surfaced in the others' accounts, additional metaphors may have appeared, especially if the metaphors were looked at discursively and not cognitively. I could have asked Kent, for example, about his thoughts of Paula's "monster" metaphor. Perhaps aspects of the metaphor would have resonated with him as well, erasing the tension that seemed initially present. As this project was an initial exploration into the public and private domains of

metaphor, I did not 'cross-reference' metaphoric accounts between individuals. This would be a worthwhile endeavor in the future.

Furthermore, similar metaphors can engender opposing responses. Joanna and Simon used different metaphors, "crossroads" and "crisis," respectively, with similar meanings. Both individuals used these metaphors to depict the organization's need for change. However, Simon and Joanne used opposing ways to relate to and act on these metaphors. They used different ways of engaging with the organization around their experience of "crisis" and "crossroad." They did not have a unified view of how the organization should go about managing the "crisis" or "crossroads." Simon, ("crisis") planned to distance himself from the organization while Joanna, ("crossroads") intended to become increasingly more involved, teaming up with other members to diversify the organization's interests.

Individuals may have disparate, at times conflicting, views of their own metaphors. A single participant might use multiple, and at times contradictory and conflicting metaphors, to describe the organization. For example, the reader might recall Simon's extensive metaphoric repertoire (the organization as renegades, as liquid, as process, as experiment, as pyramid, as organism, as cult, as crisis, and as nest) and his frequent reevaluation and renegotiation of these metaphors during the course of the interview. Both structure and process, seemingly opposing themes, resonated with Simon initially. However, toward the end of the interview he recanted his structural metaphors in favor of a process-oriented one. It seemed the interview process helped shape his construal of the metaphors and his understanding of his relationship to the organization.

This observation follows from a discursive emphasis. It also suggests that the act of dialogue, the engagement with another, has an effect on how we construct ourselves, our relationships, and our understanding of organizational reality.

Natalie also contradicted herself, at first depicting the organization as a place to express oneself but then as a place that was limiting and intellectually binding. Paula described the organization as a networked business, but also as her baby, a metaphor that seemed at odds with the more formal image of a business. For Paula, the image of a baby mirrored her motherly and at times protective relationship to the organization. The image of a business mirrored her involvement at an administrative level. She "mothered" the organization in the sense that she became instrumental in designing the school's curricula. She behaved like a CEO in the way she concerned herself with the organization's future and the marketability of the institute's programs. Though seemingly at odds, we see how both metaphors ("baby" and "business") can function simultaneously in conversation.

The above example also shows how metaphors may overlap and be relationally embedded. The metaphor of "baby" conjures up images of "parent," suggesting she may have a parental relationship to the organization, which she also views as a network. Thus the metaphors or "baby" and "network" may function in an interrelated way. It seems from these observations that individuals are capable of considering complex organizational realities and given support and encouragement, can articulate their multifaceted perceptions.

Not all individual accounts were rife with contradictions, however. Sophia's organizational account did not seem to hold many oppositional views. She expressed

ambivalence about whether or not she should remain an organizational member, having been disappointed and disillusioned by the group's lack of support for her private research and professional endeavors. But she was not ambivalent about her perceptions of the organization. She employed metaphors with primarily negative connotations, using images like "fundamentalist" and "elitist." Her organizational stance and positioning also reflected her negative views. She placed herself as an outsider, though she stated she continued to perform perfunctory duties to maintain a minimal connection to the group. However, unlike Simon, she was not ready to leave the nest despite her obvious discontent.

Individual's actions and metaphors may contradict each other. At times individuals' actions would contradict their metaphors of the organization. Joanna, for example, did not identify as having a worthwhile voice in the organizational conversation and claimed she did not concern herself with organizational issues, placing herself on the periphery of group life. In fact, she did not resonate with the concept of "organization" but thought of the River's Edge Institute as a "homey school." However, she acknowledged that, in fact, she did have opinions about the organization's position and mission within the larger community and believed the organization needed to diversify its efforts to survive. She revealed she was involved in a teaching project with other group members in an effort to broaden the organization's financial base and contribute to its attempts to integrate with the larger community.

In Simon's analysis we also find a contradiction between his actions and his metaphors. Though he functioned as a paid administrator, a position that required his

attention to structure, rules and regulations, he said he believed the organization was more like a fluid organism with no boundaries. His official duties as an administrator were at odds with his image of a liquid-like, morphing organizational entity. Words alone do not give a complete picture of an individual's involvement in and relationship to their organizational reality.

Metaphors used by individuals may not refer to the organization as a whole, but to sub-units of the organization. Seldom does the existing literature on metaphor address variations in metaphors by sub-units. While the organizational culture literature recognizes the existence of "subcultures," the literature on metaphor does not tend to explore these more discrete units. It seemed some individuals related to what they considered their little lodgment of a "home" within the organization, instead of to the organization's entirety. For example, Joanna stated she didn't have much affiliation with the organization yet was involved on a project with a subgroup of colleagues and friends. She reported having an active social life with other organizational members, calling the organization a "homey" school, while at the same time distancing herself from the formal notion of "organization." Even though he stated the organization "saved his life," Kent preoccupied himself with insider/outsider dynamics," using the metaphor of a "gossipy coffee shop" for the organization. The variety of metaphors used to refer to organizational sub-units further expands the metaphoric vocabulary in a given organization, and should not be overlooked when exploring the metaphors and narratives in use.

Individuals may place themselves both inside and outside the organization.

Many of the respondents had contradictory feelings about where and if they fit into the organizational structure. At times Sophia used the word "we" to align herself with the group, but in the same sentence would criticize the group. For example, "we do such and such and I have problems with that because…" This ability to shift perspectives has profound implications for organizational conversations. (Natalie, Simon, and Paula all showed this ability as well). First of all, it supports the notion of a fluid organizational boundary where participants can move from one sphere (outsider) into another (insider), identifying with both positions. Next, it suggests that participants have the ability to shift points of view and draw on additional metaphors, even when they are critical of the organization. Those participants who don't align themselves with the prevailing organizational views but at the same time can appreciate an insider perspective have much to offer the conversation. When individuals step outside their own view alternative realities emerge. For example, by simply asking participants to reflect on how outsiders might view the organization, new metaphors emerged.

Interestingly, many interviewees positioned themselves both inside and outside the organization. The reasons for the participants' insider/outsider affiliation varied and insider/outsider dynamics effected participants in different ways. Kent and Sophia did not willingly choose to be outsiders. Both were initially outsiders but became involved in relationships with senior members of the organization, which allowed them access to the inner circle. Over time their relationships with their insider partners ended and they found themselves back on the outside. Their outsider status affected them each in

different ways. Kent's outsider status greatly concerned him, while Sophia viewed her status in part as a symptom of her own lack of investment.

Simon, initially an outsider, became an insider as a result of his administrative post. His business background paved the way for this position, which he held for nine years. Now Simon planned to quit his post and feared he would lose favor with the founder because of his resignation, and as a result find himself on the periphery. For Natalie, who had close friends in the inner circle, the organizational boundary seemed quite permeable and she moved easily and from inside to outside, depending on her needs. Her rebel persona, along with her interest in rank and power, influenced how she positioned herself in the group and what she was willing to sacrifice to remain part of the group. It seems one's insider/outsider status is a fluid reality influenced in part by one's relations within the organization.

Individuals' narratives of the self may impact the metaphors they use.

People's private lives, the stories they use, seem to affect their organizational investments and affiliation. Paula envisioned the organization as a leading international research center for graduates of the institute. She readily admitted that her "whole life is wrapped up in this." If the organization failed, she would fail with it. Having been an instrumental figure in the development of the organization, her reputation, in a sense, rested on its success. Many of her concerns centered on marketing, developing and revising the organization's business plan. These concerns dovetailed with Paula's narrative of having sacrificed and given up most of her adult life for the organization and its future.

In Simon's interview he reported that he felt his talents were underutilized by the organization. He recounted that in the years before joining the organization, he had had many more students and teaching opportunities. He wanted to be "consumed" by his professional interests and felt the organization did not provide enough opportunities for growth, in part due to its hierarchical structure. Simon wanted to return to the world of business as a facilitator and dreamed about writing a book. Spurred by these interests Simon quit his job as the organization's administrator. He used the metaphor of a crisis, a metaphor that justified his intentions to leave the organization. In addition, he viewed himself as a baby bird and the organization as a nest. Another person might have emphasized the comfort of the nest. In Simon's narrative of the self, however, he concluded that baby birds need to fly out of the nest, and prepared himself to leave the organization.

In another example, Natalie had a profound interest in power and rank issues and positioned herself as a rebel with a cause within the organization, occasionally challenging even the founder. She was not concerned about adhering to some pure form of the institute's psychological principles, but wanted to develop simplified training materials that could be easily assimilated and taught in mainstream businesses. She used the metaphor of the "organization as pyramid," a metaphor that highlighted the power inequities within the organization, to challenge the status quo and support her quest for intellectual freedom and her desire to veer from the organization's teaching methods.

Kent was greatly concerned about his insider/outsider status, a narrative theme that he admitted has occupied much of his life. This theme surfaces in metaphoric

depiction of the organization as “gossipy coffee shop,” a metaphor he uses to support his worries about “who’s in and who’s out” of the organizational inner circle.

Recall that Sophia developed a wildly popular series of workshops for students alongside her own research interests. She was reprimanded for her endeavors and for several years was subtly ostracized for these pursuits which occurred outside the bounds of the institute and did not offer any financial gain to the organization. In her interview, Sophia shared that the organization’s lack of support in her research interests greatly damaged her collaborative and affiliative sentiments toward the organization. Sophia sees herself more as a researcher than a therapist, and her adverse experience left sour taste in her mouth. Perhaps not surprisingly, she used metaphors with negative connotations when describing the organization.

Lastly, Joanna’s immigrant status affected her involvement with the organization and her depiction that the organization was at a “crossroads.” She believed the organization needed to branch out into the mainstream mental health world. Joanna’s stay in the US depended in part on her employment in a mainstream mental health organization. She needed to straddle the world of the institute and the world of work. She used the “crossroad” metaphor to justify her involvement in organizational projects that reached out to the mainstream.

Each illustration above highlighted a single metaphor to draw out examples of how an individual’s narrative of the self could impact the metaphors they use. We must remember, however, that every individual account had many, sometimes contradictory, metaphors at play. Individuals are polyvocal beings living out multiple life stories, some inside and some outside the organization. It seems we are always living at the

intersection of our narratives and metaphors. The point is that these multiple stories may impact the multiple metaphors used to depict organizational life.

The Group and the Individual: What Can We Learn?

We will now look at both the private and public domain. What insights can be gleaned from the full picture? The private realm of organizational metaphors has been heretofore infrequently explored. There is virtually no research that I can locate comparing this private realm to the public domain. When we consider these realms together, the following questions come into focus: Are the private and public realms separated? Do they interpenetrate? Are there tensions between them? Do metaphors in one realm affect behavior in the other? What is the relationship between the metaphors found in each realm? How does this investigation help us understand the complexities of organizational life?

Metaphors as ubiquitous

As noted in the introduction, the traditional literature treats metaphors as shared across all levels of the organization. It is thought that whatever the metaphors are, they are broadly shared with no strong differentiation between one part of the organization and another. Researchers interested in organizational change have remarked that in order for metaphors to become embedded in organizational culture, they need to be used with perceived consistency (Palmer and Dunford, 1996). Presumably this means consistently embedded at all levels of organizational functioning. However, exploration of the public and private domain in this study's organization revealed otherwise.

Enter the individual. In speaking privately to individual members, many more metaphors emerged. Metaphors were not shared across all levels of the organization. While individual members did share some metaphors with the larger group, many opposing and contradictory themes emerged. Shared metaphors between the individual and the group included: the organization as community; the organization as family; the organization as renegade and; the organization as dialectic exploration. On the other hand, various group metaphors were challenged and disputed in the private realm. For example, the group metaphor of the organization as fruit salad democracy was confronted by metaphors such as the organization as pyramid, as imperialist, as cult, and as religion in individual accounts. In general, it seemed that metaphors whose themes were critical of the organization appeared in the private domain. (Again, this demonstrates the discursive approach, in which metaphors are viewed as conversational "tactics" to support or attack a position.) These observations have potentially weighty implications for researchers and organizational consultants. To gain of full picture of organizational life, consultants need to interact with groups and individuals at all levels of the organizational hierarchy.

Even when individuals used the same metaphor (expressed in identical words) such as "community," signifying at first glance a possible pervasive and ubiquitous theme, closer inspection revealed wildly disparate understandings of this metaphor. These competing interpretations did not surface in the group discussion or in group e-mail posts, further underlining the need to include the individual in all accounts of organizational reality. This observation leads me to suggests that though a metaphor may seem to permeate various organizational levels as evidenced by its use in group meetings,

mission statements, and brochures or plaques on the walls, its general acceptance may not be as solidly entrenched as some, especially those at the top, might like to think.

Even two individuals holding administrative posts, who were presumably more aligned with each other and might be expected to express similar metaphoric themes, also perceived the organization in dissimilar ways. One considered the organization her "baby" while the other planned on leaving the organization ("fly out of the nest") due to dissatisfaction with the potential for growth and development within the organization. We cannot assume, then, that individuals positioned at a similar organizational level will necessarily share similar metaphors.

Individual interviews revealed allegiances to different subcultures within the organization, an observation which further challenges the notion of a ubiquitous metaphor transcending organizational levels. One interviewee, a new teacher, felt little allegiance to the *organization* as a whole, but was involved in a project with a subgroup. She used the metaphor of a "glass ceiling" to portray her dissatisfaction with the organizational structure, but at the same time expressed excitement about her participation in the subgroup's project. It seems more apt to treat organizations as instances of multiple realities constituted through multiple metaphors than as monolithic entities with dominant themes and interests.

Metaphors flow across domains

Many of the metaphors that emerged in the public domain could also be found in the private domain. In fact, all but one group metaphor was embedded in the individual accounts. How do we account for the appearance of the group metaphors in the private

realm? Individual members seem to have incorporated the public metaphors into their private metaphoric vocabularies. Or, conversely, the group has incorporated the individual metaphors into the public conversation. Regardless of where we might locate the metaphors' origins, there seemed to be a metaphoric flow between the public and the private worlds, each informing the other.

I have previously discussed how individuals transport a host of metaphors into the work place. "Individuals" are understood here not as single, atom-like, entities but as complex conglomerates. Individuals bring their histories of relations with others into the organization. These embedded relations likely inspire an individual's use, interpretation and relation to particular metaphors. Perhaps simultaneously, group metaphors emerging out of the group's history and traditions, flow into the private realm.

An example of a group metaphor making its way into the private realm might go as follows. A newcomer to the River's Edge Institute would be immediately exposed to the metaphor of "community." Quarterly meetings are listed as "community meetings" in the class schedule. Group members refer to the organization as "the community." The newcomer might incorporate this metaphor into his or her metaphoric lexicon and over time embody this metaphor in his or her relationships, behaving in a "community-like" way, whatever that may mean for that particular individual.

Further illustration can be taken from my own work in an organization. In my current job I have observed how metaphors frequently interpenetrate and flow across the public and private domain. I work on a crisis team that has the "organization as family" as one of its operating metaphors. Team members will occasionally say, "We are like a family." Over time I observed the group performing certain rites and rituals of a "family.

Team meetings were held at the home of the eldest member. Members would talk while sinking into overstuffed couches with beverages and cake to celebrate birthdays, along with addressing work-related clinical concerns. Some members would stay afterwards for a glass of wine or beer. At work, group members talked about their vacations and their personal lives.

As a supervisor, I was not encouraged by management to think of my coworkers as family, as that could impinge on my ability to supervise them. (After all, you wouldn't fire a family member). However, the "family" metaphor has become part of my lexicon as well. This became apparent the other day when I had a medical emergency in the early morning hours while alone in my house. To my surprise, the second person I considered calling was a coworker. I do not have a close relationship to this person, yet while in great need I considered them a resource. I have incorporated the group metaphor of "family" into my private domain, despite official directives to "see" them otherwise.

The appearance of the family metaphor in both public and private domains has implications beyond social interactions. The group's hiring process reflects this metaphor's concern with close emotional connections. In the last phase of a rigorous screening process, new applicants interview with the team members. After the interview team members discuss whether the person is "a good fit." The team has declined many potential hires because they did not meet the "good fit" criteria, though the person's clinical skills might have been excellent. While discussing the new hire after the interview, team members ask each other and themselves, "Can I sit in a car with this person for 2 hours while waiting for police?" In other words, can I imagine feeling connected to this person? Will we have something in common? Can I trust this person to

watch my back while in dangerous situations? The metaphor has interpenetrated both public and private domains. We can better appreciate the chaos that at times rules the organizational landscape when we imagine many different metaphors flowing across domains in a similar fashion.

It seems the traditional assumption of a few dominant organizational metaphors does not take into account the constant influx of new individual metaphors nor the processes by which metaphoric resources become embedded in both the group and individual domains. New and competing metaphors constantly enter the organizational matrix, highlighting the difficulty of using *a* metaphor for organizing. Turning again to the individual, the analyses of the six participant interviews illustrated how competing versions of the metaphor of community were present. How does a consultant or CEO choose which view to mobilize for the most accurate representation of that organization's life? Individuals bring with them a history of previous relations which affect their interactions, their interpretations and their view of reality within the organization. It is in part because of this importation of metaphors and the ensuing process of negotiating competing interpretations, that existing organizational metaphors are not static and seem to continuously shift and sort. Bahktin (1986) suggested that in the negotiation of meaning new configurations of language are constructed and new meanings generated. Meaning is constructed at the margins of understanding. In other words, the minute someone says, "I don't understand. You mean…" a negotiation is in progress and the familiar rituals of how the conversation should proceed are precariously situated.

As metaphors are recontextualized, their meanings may change

Context and meaning are inextricably intertwined. A metaphor may have one meaning in one situation and another meaning under different conditions. Let's take the example of the "organization as community" metaphor, as it appeared in both realms. Teachers, students, old timers, newcomers all used the term "community" publicly and privately when referencing the organization. However, when I asked individuals privately to elaborate on the notion of "community" many different, and at times conflicting, interpretations appeared. In Natalie's account, she aligned herself with the "community" when speaking about her (positive) initial involvement in the organization, yet later distanced herself when she expressed her strong views on the skewed rank and power issues in the organization. For Paula, who stated she didn't use the organization as a stand in for family or a social life, "community" meant a group of people who share ideas and learn together.

The meaning of community also changed in the public setting depending on where it was situated within the conversation. In one instance in the second meeting a student facilitator attempted to encourage the group to bring forth "unresolved issues hanging in the background" in order to process them. She expressed that as a result "you can feel more the community and feel more connected." For the facilitator "community" is not yet fully happening. She believes issues need to come forth and get processed and then real "community" will happen. Another student echoed this saying, "I'm wanting more to connect to the community." Both approached "community" as something "out there" to strive for, to work towards having. There is a sense of distance to this entity called "community."

Alternately in a different context the meaning of "community" gained a different kind of life and meaning. Moments earlier in the conversation a teacher had also referred to the "community." This teacher was one of the original members of the group and has been around since the group's inception. Her three-year old son and her partner (also a teacher) accompanied her to the meeting. While her son crawled on her lap she said to the group, "I like feeling the community. I like it when things get intimate and I'm not just seeing people in passing but we have the opportunity to do something that deepens my feeling or our feelings of community." She says, "I *like feeling*..." Unlike the students this teacher *already feels* connected. She *is* the "community" in one sense. "Community" is not a dream or a future wish.

There is no meaning inherent in a metaphor. It is given meaning within a certain context. Who says something, to whom it is said, when it is said, why it is said, and who stands to gain from using one metaphor as opposed to another, all affects the meaning and function of a metaphor. Different meanings open up possibilities for new relational configurations and therefore new avenues of action.

Recontextualizations of metaphors have significant impact on organizational realities. This next example illustrates how recontextualizing a "crisis" metaphor changed the organizational landscape in the behavioral health care company that currently employs me. This company has instigated several major changes in the last few years. My organization contracts with the county to provide mental health services. Due to financial pressures the county began an overhaul of the mental health care delivery system about three years ago. Uninsured clients were draining the county coffers with high hospitalization rates. The system was "in crisis" and "acute care coordination"

became the central focus of mental health work. Individual therapy was considered costly and ineffective in these times of "crisis" and became a maligned intervention. Decreasing hospitalization rates became everyone's primary goal, and new programs sprouted up to meet these concerns.

Three years later county officials have come and gone, hospitalization rates have decreased, and the system is no longer in "crisis." The "crisis" metaphor has been recontextualized to a "recovery" metaphor. "Motivational interviewing" and "strength-based" interventions now take center stage. Neither model is inherently better, though arguments frequently arise on the merits and deficits of both. The point is that recontextualization of a metaphor gives it new meanings and thus provides possible new moves for an organization.

Tensions between the public and private domains

At times metaphors found in the individual realm contested those in the public domain. For example, the private metaphor of the "organization as cult" confronted the group metaphors of the "organization as community" and the "organization as family," suggesting group life encompassed more than a simple story of cozy, wholesome togetherness. Who can forget images of Jim Jones and kool-aid with the mention of "cult?"

Private metaphors of the organization as "imperialist," "hierarchy," and "pyramid" contrasted directly with the "fruit salad democracy" metaphor of the group. These metaphors challenged the "fruit salad democracy" notion of equal representation. In addition, the private metaphor of the "organization as psychic prison" more clearly

delineated the "organization as therapy" public metaphor, adding confining features with the image of "prison." After all, a "psychic prison" does not conjure up images of free and self-actualized persons suggested by the metaphor of "therapy." Furthermore, private metaphors of the "organization as crisis" and the "organization as crossroads" added tension to the more general group metaphor of the "organization as identity seeker." The two private metaphors called forth a feeling of urgency and the need for action and choice, whereas "identity seeker" engenders a more neutral attitude.

Privately individuals were divided in their stance toward the River's Edge Institute as an "organization." The majority did not use "organization" as a point of departure when describing the group. The metaphor of "organization" was at odds with the group metaphors of "renegade," "family" and "community." Perhaps because of the numerous opposing metaphors in the individual realm, the more formal view of the organization as "organization" did not find its way into the public domain. (However, we also need to consider that in a different context this metaphor might have emerged).

At times individual accounts test the group metaphors. Negative aspects of group metaphors appeared in the private realm, with some metaphors appearing in direct opposition to each other: community-cult; fruit salad democracy-imperialist; therapy-psychic prison. In fact, no "negative" metaphors appeared in the public domain. There are many potential reasons for this: Participants may have been hesitant to speak critically in public due to power and rank issues. In this organization, both teachers and students attend the public meetings. These teachers evaluate the students and "bad behavior" at a meeting could potentially affect a student's standing.

The founder's presence at the meetings might also have prevented participants from speaking critically in the larger group for fear of reprisals. Many of the interviewees considered the founder an important and powerful figure. The reader might recall that Natalie spoke frankly about the effect of his influence on rank and power issues in the group. Simon feared he would become an outsider when he quit his post as an administrator. Because of these concerns private metaphors like the "organization as imperialist," the "organization as hierarchy," and the "organization as pyramid" might not have appeared in the group setting.

It should be noted that not all group metaphors were contested in the private realm. The "organization as renegade," for example, appeared in both realms with similar interpretations. In addition, the "organization as dialectical exploration" appeared in the public realm in the way the group members positioned themselves in opposition to each other, and in the private realm (especially Simon's account) it appeared in the way he continually practiced positioning himself on alternate sides of his own arguments.

Private metaphors are related to action in the public sphere.

Participants' private metaphors seemed to have a significant relationship to actions in the organization. Individual participants spoke candidly about the organizational "hierarchy" and the founder's inhibiting influence on group members' abilities to express themselves, to grow professionally, and to feel powerful in the group. One respondent complained about the lack of opportunity and upward mobility. Another felt limited by a "glass ceiling." Still another had not been supported in her endeavors to develop an innovative research approach and felt alienated as a result. At its extreme, two

participants (Simon and Sophia) contemplated leaving the organization perhaps as a result of the dissonance between their private metaphors and those of the group.

How participants perceived the organization seemed related to their involvement in the organization. Private metaphors provided insights into participants' organizational stance and relations. As noted elsewhere, in my first interview with Kent I asked him to describe the River's Edge Institute by asking, "How would you describe the organization? What is the group like?" He differentiated between the two words asking, "The group or the organization?" He continued on, describing the difference between the two. In subsequent interviews I specifically asked respondents to comment on the image of "organization."

Privately, half the individuals did not associate the image of "organization" to the River's Edge Institute. Kent viewed the organization as a "coffee shop" where people could hang out and gossip. He eschewed the image of the organization as a "water cooler type of place," an image that has a corporate, suit-and-tie kind of flavor. Recall that he was exceedingly concerned with his placement within the organization. His self-proclaimed outsider status kept him on the periphery of organizational involvement. At one point he voluntarily removed himself from the teaching faculty to work on his teaching style because his classes suffered from low enrollment. Joanne became confused when asked how she would describe the organization, asking puzzled, "what organization?" For her the organization was a "homey," alternative school. Her social life and her organizational life interpenetrated and though she perceived a "glass ceiling" in the organization, she continued actively participating in subgroups.

Paula, on the other hand, immediately resonated with the image of "organization" and, in fact, did not appreciate the "let's hang out" attitude of some of her colleagues. She was extremely concerned about the organization's business plan and financial welfare and helped design and direct a new program within the organization to diversify its interests.

I want to underscore that I am not suggesting a causal relationship between a participant's metaphors and their organizational involvement. I am not implying that a certain organizational image precedes a participant's subsequent actions. I have proposed elsewhere that metaphors are discursive implements, used as conversational resources to do things. Metaphors help constitute certain relational realities for the individual within the organization. From a discursive perspective, the metaphors gain their meaning through their use.

In summary, we can say the following about metaphors in the public and private domain. Group metaphors by themselves give an incomplete picture of organizational reality. To understand the organization we must include the individual's world outside the organization. This world includes the individual's history of relations with others. As was noted elsewhere, individuals provided additional metaphoric resources and used many more creative and eccentric metaphors than were found in the group setting. When we consider that different contexts require different metaphors, it follows that the additional metaphors brought into the group by individuals may be useful for responding to fluctuating organizational demands. The new metaphors may introduce tensions, however. The challenge, then, is to use these tensions to inspire conversations where new meanings, and therefore alternative courses of action, can emerge.

Individuals' private metaphors were exceedingly important to the individual and to their relationship to group life. Individuals' private motives and interests affected the metaphors that appeared in their accounts. Their organizational stance and investments depended in part on these metaphors. Individual satisfaction with the organization may be shaped by the relationship between the group metaphors and that of the individual.

Many of the individuals in this study placed themselves both inside and outside the organization. The traditional assumption of a bounded organizational entity can be called into question as a result of this observation. Participants seemed to move across a permeable organizational boundary and viewed the organization from both insider and outsider perspectives, simultaneously aligning and distancing themselves. Participants were able to shift perspectives and contemplate complex organizational realities. Conversations in which we access the voice of the other give rise to potentially transformative dialogues (McNamee & Gergen, 1999). In every conversation, a reality has the potential to be solidified or expanded. In order to appreciate the individual perspective and utilize what it might offer, we must believe that individuals (and all of their previous relations) do not subvert the organizational agenda but provide powerful and creative resources for exploring alternative possibilities.

CHAPTER 6

FINAL REFLECTIONS

In these preceding pages I have attempted to explore the realm of metaphor as it appears in the public and private domains of organizational life. Some major assumptions found in the traditional literature on metaphor and organizations were questioned as a result of this inquiry. In these last few pages I will reflect on some of these findings and explore how they might inform practice; for it is in practice that we gain the potential to create the organizations we want to work in and the world we want to live in.

This study revealed an organizational landscape rife with a variety of metaphors. One or two dominant metaphors did not seem to hold the organization together. It seemed organizational metaphors came into and out of focus, depending on which conversational resources were needed at a particular time for a particular organizational function. What might be a "dominant" metaphor in one organizational scenario could take a back seat in another. This suggests that entirely different metaphors could become dominant as an organization confronts various new challenges. One of the implications of this observation is that a few dominant metaphors will not meet the needs of shifting organizational concerns. Organizational consultants searching for dominant metaphors might want to ask when and whether dominant metaphors should take center stage, given that conversations shift, participants come and go, and organizational needs change.

At times metaphors in both the public and private realms conflicted with each other, challenging the notion that organizations are held together by shared metaphors. The various metaphors that emerged did not seem to create a bounded, shared

organizational culture. On the contrary, metaphors seemed to flow across public and private domains. Individuals, viewed here as conglomerates of multiple narratives and metaphors, transported a whole host of unique and creative metaphors into the organization. The personal and professional seem to be connected.

This implies that organizational boundaries are permeable and fluid, allowing connection between inside and outside. This permeability factor calls into question the notion that organizations are bounded entities separated from the world outside and held together in part through shared metaphors. It seems there is no policing the organizational boundary, and no obvious line exists separating inside from outside. In fact, many of the participants positioned themselves as both insiders and outsiders, providing reflective comments about the organization from different perspectives. This illustrates how private views offer a realm of reflection on the public domain, but reflection that is often not utilized by the organization.

The present inquiry also revealed that participants often related not to a monolithic organization, but to organizational sub-units. Half of the interviewees did not relate to the concept of "organization" as a descriptor for the River's Edge Institute. Yet, all of the participants could easily relate to people within the organization. In fact, it seemed a participant's sense of "organization" seemed to flow from these personal connections. One of the problems with "metaphors of the organization" might be that they don't account for what could be an entirely different realm of metaphors of the sub-units, with the individual potentially positioned as the ultimate sub-unit.

While these conclusions challenge and enrich the existing literature on metaphors in the organization, I wish to direct concluding attention to the following specific areas of concern.

Private Metaphors as a Public Resource

The individual does not enter the organization as a blank slate, an empty container ready to be filled with organizational "culture," strategic plans, or mission statements. Participants enter the organizational realm accompanied by a rich history of narratives and metaphors (or ways of talking) that are meaningful to them. If we subscribe to the view that the more conversational resources participants have at their disposal, the larger their potential for creative and flexible contributions to the organizational conversation, we can understand the value of encouraging the importation of new metaphors from outside the organization. These individually imported metaphors could potentially enrich and invigorate organizational discussions, offering options and opportunities for action and reflection not previously considered. In return, individuals could better integrate their lives inside and outside the organization. This point requires expansion:

Expressions such as "joining the rat race" or "being on a treadmill" suggest people have a less than desirable relationship to the world of work. To make a living you must do what someone wants you to do. There is usually a hierarchy, a "boss," who decides your fate. In the state I live in, a recent teacher strike in neighboring counties stalemated over the issue of whether or not educators could be told where to teach, regardless of the teacher's own preference. Teachers objected to having to potentially drive miles from their home, but the board of education did not want to relinquish control over teacher placement.

People go on vacations to return to "themselves," to rejuvenate, to feel the "real me" that is implicitly different and less desirable that the "organizational me." People's ways of talking in the organization are but practiced rituals designed to conceal an individual's true motives and also, unfortunately, their creativity and inspiration. Participants' deepest concerns about themselves, their families, their health, their politics, and their god(s) are not usually expressed in the organizational context. Upon reflecting on the observations in this thesis, it seems the individual's private visions and concerns are an untapped organizational resource. The open expression of these visions needs encouragement to enter the public arena where they could provide fertile soil for organizational endeavors.

John F. Kennedy implored US citizens to "ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country." With this plea he inspired the populace to put aside their individual needs and focus on the greater good. In return, people could expect a better life for their children. Organizations have a similar expectation of people but without the passion and heart of JFK. Organizations expect individuals to suspend what is important to them to serve their company. In the best case scenarios, in exchange for their efforts people receive money and benefits, necessary compensation toward their attainment of the American Dream. However, despite the promise of these rewards most people do not jump joyfully out of bed in the morning and run excitedly to work. An example from my workplace illustrates how well intentioned organizational meetings fall short of including the individual (and therefore new metaphors) and thus miss out on utilizing a participant's creative and adaptive potentials.

In my position as a supervisor I attend meetings with line staff as well as with upper management. Case managers and other line staff complain that their managers and vice presidents have lost touch with what they do. Because of a series of layoffs three years ago, people are hesitant to speak up for fear of losing their jobs. Management recognizes this problem and has recently invited line staff to "staff satisfaction" meetings run by managers. However, these are one-way exchanges where a manager/facilitator notes issues brought in by the staff. These issues are then brought to upper management who discuss them and make suggestions to the managers and supervisors. They operate under a "trickle up" and "trickle down" theory of relationship. Rarely do upper management and line staff find themselves in the same room. While participants are encouraged to "speak out," their voices fall onto note pads and later end up on a bar graph dissecting the various concerns. There is no real dialogue encouraging the open expression of private visions.

Once a year there is the company picnic where people tend to convene in their usual configurations and little interpenetration of sub-units occurs. Members of upper management put on skits to make themselves more "human," however, no real conversation occurs the next day at the office as a result, except perhaps in the form of gossip around the proverbial water cooler.

The appearance of many more metaphors in the private domain raises important considerations for organizations. Organizations might benefit from listening to and integrating private metaphors. I have previously discussed how metaphors can function as discursive resources and how these resources can invite certain actions. Organizations today need flexible, creative and adaptable participants who do not sit back in silent

judgment reserving their energy for more enticing endeavors at home, but who feel energized and appreciated for the rich conversational resources they offer their work environment. This study revealed that many creative and varied metaphors appeared in the private realm. This suggests that the innovation thinking and acting needed for organizations to thrive *already exist* amongst their participants. However, it seems from the present research that individual metaphors may get lost in the group setting. The challenge, then, is to draw out these private metaphors through appreciation, openness, and a genuine curiosity and belief in individuals' capacities to hold and successfully negotiate many competing and contradictory narratives. The present research indeed indicates that individuals have great capacity in this area.

Toward a Discursive Understanding of Metaphor

One of the important features of this study was its exploration of a discursive approach to metaphor. Much of the traditional literature on metaphor in organizations views metaphors as functioning cognitively. My wish is not to replace this notion, as a cognitive orientation is useful for particular communities of practice, but rather to offer an alternate perspective. I illustrated how metaphors function within ongoing conversations, how they position participants in particular ways, how they support certain logics, and invite particular courses of action. In short, I illustrated metaphor's dialogic characteristics in the hopes of opening up new ways of thinking about organizational reality and change. Recall the popular traditional approach to metaphor that includes changing existing dominant organizational metaphors (by first diagnosing and understanding them) to encourage new ways of perceiving a particular organizational

problem. A discursive approach to metaphor calls into question the efficacy of this practice. Given a performative orientation to metaphor, that is, an orientation that views them as conversational resources in the service of some goal or action, it seems unlikely that introducing new, often management driven, metaphors will result in organizational change.

An example from my current workplace, a 1,200 employee behavioral healthcare company, illustrates the difficulty of embedding a new metaphor into the fabric of a group. I supervise a mobile mental health crisis team that contracts with our local county for crisis services. Due to increasing demands for our services, a second team was set up three years ago across a major river running through town, creating an "east side" and a "west side" team. The first and "original" team was initially stationed thirteen years ago in a windowless office in an old downtown hotel-turned-homeless-shelter and began with a team of three people doing outreach to homeless individuals with mental health concerns in the downtown area of the city. This team takes pride in its grassroots origins and street smarts.

The organization stationed the second team near the suburbs in a neat, clean and newly air-conditioned building. Though the teams performed the same work, the people, the atmosphere and the way the work was performed on each team varied considerably. Privately, individuals from the each team would complain about "the other side." While not openly antagonistic, the teams did not mix or mingle, except to exchange clinical information, usually by phone. Several years ago the manager and supervisors (I was still field staff at that time) decided to introduce the slogan, "One team, two addresses" to address the lack of cohesion and the underlying animosity between the two sides. They

organized “summit” meetings during which both teams were required to be present. These meetings were intended to help the two sides get along. They encouraged members to mingle and occasionally would bring in tabletop exercises with questions such as, “what was your worst date?” to encourage interaction. Participants dreaded the meetings, which lasted four hours every other month. They did not consider them useful and privately individuals grumbled about what they perceived was a forcing of relationships and connection. Needless to say, the intervention was only marginally successful. While staff now had a better sense of each side’s “culture,” relationships did not flourish.

However, several months later a staffing shortage succeeded in accomplishing what the four-hour meetings had failed to do. Out of necessity “east siders” were sent across the river to the “west side” to cover shifts. Team members were now forced by circumstance, not managers, to work together. While the two sides did not become one “happy family,” so to speak, relationships improved and gossip about each other’s quirks and idiosyncrasies diminished greatly. Working together co-ordinating actions “solidified” the team, not an outside intervention thought up by management without staff input.

At the same time I do not wish to conclude that introducing or changing existing metaphors will not lead to organizational change. The data did show that new metaphors can be caught up in the conversation and lend themselves to new ways of acting. For example, a look at the metaphor of the “organization as renegade” shows how a group can “live out” a particular metaphor, lending support to the notion that introducing a new metaphor could potentially affect the behavior and interactions of the group. Renegades

are generally thought of as anti-establishment crusaders in favor of some cause. In keeping with this mode of action, the group in this study took an oppositional stance toward the "mainstream" world outside the organization. Sentiments such as, "we are not like those conventional others beholden to conventional norms" informed and simultaneously constituted antagonistic relationships to outside authoritative entities, such as the state's department of education reauthorization committee. Modes of interactions inherent in the "renegade" metaphor required members to either resist or capitulate in response to the state department's proposed guidelines. Other modes of action, such as collaboration, inquiry or negotiation were not entertained during the group discussion. This illustration partially supports the notion that metaphors can lead a group toward certain behaviors, in keeping with the "story" the metaphor supports.

That being said, however, unlike a cognitive view that assumes that the one "new way of seeing" will singularly guide future actions, a discursive approach does not eliminate competing metaphors or dictate a single new direction, but allows for the simultaneous emergence of multiple realities through the constant influx of new metaphors that people bring with them and share in the organizational context. We are always living at the intersection of our (many) narratives and metaphors and well-intentioned consultants are unlikely to eradicate them. Change, then, is not something that can be "put on" a particular group. Change might result from the multiplicity of narratives and metaphors constantly jostling and jumbling as participants, informed by their own narrative trajectories, position themselves in various ways for various purposes.

What we need in organizations is meaningful and flexible opportunities for interchange with facilitators, be they insiders or outsiders, who appreciate individual

participants for their potentially rich metaphoric contributions. In every conversation, realities have the potential to be solidified or expanded. In order to appreciate individual contributions and utilize what they might have to offer, we must believe that an individual (and all of his or her previous relations) does not subvert the organizational agenda but provides powerful and creative resources for exploring alternative possibilities. Given the social constructionist view that language does not reflect an objective reality "out there," and that one can never really "know" the contents of another's mind, it seems immaterial to work towards fully "shared values" or "shared assumptions." Rather, we might co-ordinate our actions toward commonly accepted goals, acknowledging all the while the contradictions and tensions that will undoubtedly be present in the go of it.

Reflections on Methodology

Finally, I wish to touch on several methodological concerns, particularly in the hope of adding to the continuing dialogue on the multiple uses of discourse analysis as a method of sociological inquiry. In an article by Antaki, Billig, Edwards, and Potter (2002) entitled "Discourse Analysis Means Doing Analysis: A Critique of Six Analytic Shortcomings," they note that in the past 15 years discourse analysis has introduced new methods of research, new ways of conceptualizing research questions, and new ways of understanding the nature of psychology. These authors are interested in developing and maintaining serious and rigorous standards in the field of discourse analysis. Based on their review of numerous journal submissions, they note that work using discourse analytic methods contain a range of shortcomings. Recognizing that no one has been

designated as the world's authority on discourse analysis, and that even the most rigorous approaches are not free from scrutiny, I nevertheless wish to offer some critical reflections on the methods used in this analysis.

The reader might recall the following steps involved in the data analysis for this thesis. Group conversations and private interviews were taped and transcribed. The transcriptions were reviewed for metaphoric content. The metaphors were given a name and instances of text with the identified metaphors were cited. Conclusions were drawn from these examples of metaphors in use.

Antaki et al. (2002) point out that one of the methodological troubles in discourse analytical studies is the "under-analysis through summary" (p. 8). They contend that "summarising [sic] the themes of what participants might say in an interaction typically does not involve any analysis of the discourse that they are using. A summary is likely to lose the detail and discursive subtlety of the original" (p. 8). Though the public and private conversations were transcribed almost verbatim, I did not track inflections, hesitations, pauses, talkovers, repairs etc. in my transcriptions, perhaps losing some of the "discursive subtlety of the original."

Furthermore, I "summarized" text that was then labeled with a metaphor which was determined by the content of the text. Summarizing runs the risk of drawing attention to certain themes and not others (Antaki et al., 2002). In fact, I was the final arbiter of which pieces of text and therefore which metaphors would become the basis of the analyses. Since I did not offer the reader the opportunity to review the transcriptions in their entirety, other potentially salient metaphors may have gone unnoticed. In an attempt to mitigate these concerns, I used interview excerpts to illustrate how I arrived at

a particular metaphor in an effort to create a transparent account of my analysis. I want to underline that my aim in this thesis was not to exhaust every possible metaphor or every instance of a metaphor's discursive utility, but rather to explore and question traditional assumptions on metaphor in the literature which tends to favor a monological account of organizational life.

Lastly, when analyzing the transcriptions from the private interviews, I recognize that the interviewees' responses could have been rhetorical maneuvers related to their position as teachers in relation to me, a student. From the outset, this thesis has prescribed to the fundamental notion that knowledge is constructed through discourse. An interviewee's response is a jointly constructed, interactional product, with myself as a central component of that product. Research is conceived as a conversation that involves the subjects, other communities of knowers, and the wider public in the world at large. The question, asked from a social constructionist stance, is not "are the metaphors and the conclusions drawn from their appearance true," but rather "are they useful for gaining insights into organizational life?"

Through this account I have attempted to foreground some observations about organizational metaphors in the context of the public and private domains of organizational life. My hope is that the telling of this account has engaged readers in a dialogue with themselves and others, and whatever I have left in the background will be brought forth to interact in creative and imaginative ways with what I have written in the preceding pages. Finally, I hope that for any individual involved in the sometimes complex and chaotic world of the organization, the words on these pages have made being a part of this world a little more interesting.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

How long have you been involved in the River's Edge Institute?

Describe how you first became involved with the group.

How would you describe the organization?

How would you describe the group?

If you could make an image of the group, what would that be?

What kinds of metaphors describe the organization?

What would outsiders say about the organization?

Does the group support your personal goals? If so, how? If not, why not?

Where would you like to see yourself in five years?

How would you characterize your relationship to the organization?

Do you enjoy being part of the organization?

Where would you say the group is headed?

What is the group's dream? Dream the group's dream.

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