

1

‘Culture’ in anthropology and organizational studies

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This book concerns the contribution of anthropology to the study of government, non-government (voluntary), and private sector organizations in the Third World and the West. The 1980s and 1990s have been a time of change for organizations in all sectors. The discrediting of modernization as a western domestic policy and as the basis for Third World development has been accelerated by the international reorganization of capital.¹ Production has become organized on an international division of labour with competition between First and Third World sites and the introduction of new management systems. Structural adjustment in the Third World and New Right policies in the West have reduced the role of the state, moving functions over to the private sector and relying more heavily on voluntary and non-government organizations. These changes have been accompanied by questions about different styles of organizing. The western model of bureaucracy is seen to have shortcomings: it is asked in the Third World, but not yet in the West, whether it is possible to build upon indigenous methods of organizing? Despite such widespread institutional change, some aspects of organizations have proved recalcitrant to alteration. Notably this concerns gender. Initially public sector organizations, and now more private sector companies have been concerned to improve opportunities for disadvantaged categories of people, especially women, and to maximize their potential in the labour market: but why have organizations proved so difficult to change? And who is benefitting? One theme running through these programmes is ‘empowerment’. But who is empowered by empowerment? Is it principally the intended beneficiaries, people in the Third World, women and customers or clients? These questions about changing ways of organizing through indigenous management, addressing gender inequalities and empowerment of clients are the focus of the three parts of this book.

In the search for new ways to manage organizations in these changing contexts, ‘the culture concept’ has become prominent. Organizational studies literature attributes the culture concept to anthropological sources (Geertz

1973, Turner 1974, Bateson 1972 and Douglas 1987). For an anthropologist reading this literature there are moments of recognition closely followed by the discovery of familiar ideas being used in disconcertingly unrecognizable ways. It is the aim of this introduction to explore the reasons for this and to clarify some of the ways the concept 'culture' is being used both in the organization studies literature and by anthropologists in the chapters of this book.

In organizational studies 'the culture concept' is used in four ways. First, it refers to problems of managing companies with production processes or service outlets distributed across the globe, each located in a different 'national culture'. Second, it is used when management is trying to integrate people with different ethnicities into a workforce in one plant. Third, it can mean the informal 'concepts, attitudes and values' of a workforce; or, fourth, 'company culture' can refer to the formal organizational values and practices imposed by management as a 'glue' to hold the workforce together and to make it capable of responding as a body to fast changing and global competition (Deal and Kennedy 1982:178, 193).

A 'strong company culture' has been deemed the *sine qua non* of success in the private sector and now no public or voluntary organization can be without its mission statement. Even these company cultures are of different kinds: one is strengthened Fordism while the other is a turning away from that idea. In the first case, an organization's 'culture' is converted from a mission statement into detailed practices, dividing each task into tiny details and specifying how each should be done. These are imposed on the workforce through training and disciplined supervision. This strengthens the Fordist management style of the modernization era whereby management was separate from the workforce which was divided according to clearly demarcated repetitive tasks. Some companies with international operations have used this system to institute a standardized way of performing tasks (the most quoted example is McDonald's). In opposite cases a 'culture' of flexible organization has been introduced. The Fordist division between management and workers has been revised, the role of middle management reduced, and the workforce organized in teams, with each member able to take on a full range of tasks. Instead of being adjuncts to a machine or to a predetermined sequence of paper movements, workers are 'empowered' to take initiatives and ensure operations are continually improved by communicating ideas directly to management. In this way workers' knowledge is to be harnessed in a flexible response to fast changing environments and to new or high standard demands from clients. Already it can be seen that 'culture' refers to diverse problems, ideas and styles of organizing.

How do these ideas connect with anthropological approaches to culture? One reason for introducing anthropological ideas about culture into organizational

studies was methodological. Organizational studies from its inception has had a close relationship to the thinking of practising managers, such that, as Calas and Smircich have pointed out (1992:223), organization researchers have played a central role in 'making' organizations.² The institutional changes outlined above inspired a search for new methods. In place of the modernist paradigm of organizations as rational and replete with objective facts which had dominated organizational studies, anthropological studies of culture offered a more interpretive approach through which to understand organizations as sites for constructing meaning.

However the paradigm shift does not seem to have been fully achieved. For example, Schein (1991) holds both an interpretive and a positivist approach to organizations in a way that appears contradictory to an anthropologist. He takes the anthropological argument that culture resides in conceptual categories and mental models. Therefore, he argues rightly, it cannot be researched through 'thin' description of its surface features which miss the holistic and systematic aspect of culture, or through questionnaires with their *a priori* assumptions and reliance on attitudes expressed out of context. But he also hankers for a 'real' positivist hold on a world of slippery intangibles, constructing culture as an object capable of standing free of its context: 'We cannot build a useful concept if we cannot agree on how to define it, "measure" it, study it, and apply it in the real world of organizations' (Schein 1991:243).

Schein returns to an interpretive approach when he explains that culture is 'deeper' than its symbolic manifestations, the rites, rituals and stories of origin on which Deal and Kennedy (1982) focused. Schein's 'deeper' level of culture is recognizable: it is systematic, permeating all aspects of daily life, persisting over time, and shared. However, his concluding definition of culture provokes further realization that what seemed like anthropological ideas of culture have been twisted into a different form:

If there is no consensus or if there is conflict or if things are ambiguous, then, by definition, that group does not have a culture in regard to those things...the concept of sharing or consensus is core to the definition, not something about which we have an empirical choice.

(Schein 1991:248)

'Culture' has become the property of a 'group' (both conceptualized as bounded and unitary), which 'persists over time' in the sense of being unchanging, and is 'shared' in the sense that there is consensus and no ambiguity.

This focus on consensus seems to be a key point of difference between organizational studies and anthropology. Initially, as will be explained below,

the two disciplines shared a concern with consensus. But its weakness was identified; it led the Hawthorne Bank Wiring study (see below), for example, to conclude that only management had 'rationality'. Subsequently, the Manchester shop floor studies focused on conflict. Now, to an anthropologist influenced by Geertz's ideas, 'sharedness' is more likely to imply a common repertoire of ideas which are reworked continually in imaginative ways that are systematic, explainable, but not predictable. Not only is ambiguity essential, as it provides the space for this reworking, but the process is political: meanings of concepts and symbols are not just not fixed, they are actively contested. In organizational studies literature which also uses Geertz, often only one, supposedly consensual definition of the situation is given. Culture has turned from being something an organization *is* into something an organization *has*, and from being a process embedded in context to an objectified tool of management control. The use of the term culture itself becomes ideological.

This literature provokes an anthropologist into realizing that culture has become one of the discipline's own 'taken for granted' categories or working assumptions.³ In order to explore its meaning it is essential to understand the methodological processes by which we arrive at culture as an analytical concept. Anthropology is best known for its fieldwork by participant observation, yet this is only part of the methodology. The distinctive anthropological process of 'problematizing' relies on continually testing the ability of existing ideas or theories about society to explain the detail of what is experienced in the field. Out of this interplay analytical concepts like culture are generated and progressively refined. Some of the chapters in this book look to anthropology more for its fieldwork methods (indeed a few of the authors might not call themselves anthropologists) while others develop the distinctive problematizing process of anthropology in their analyses.

All of the authors contributed papers to the conference organized by GAPP (Group for Anthropology in Policy and Practice) on the anthropology of organizations held at University College Swansea in January 1991. The aim was to bring together researchers and practitioners engaging with anthropology whilst involved in the extensive contemporary organizational changes in the Third World and the West. Their work clustered around indigenous management, gender and organizational change, and empowerment of clients, the issues represented in the three parts of this book. It was found that all used various concepts of culture in their research and analysis. Anthropologists treated this in a 'taken for granted' fashion, but practitioners and participants from other disciplines encouraged us to subject this analytical concept to far more scrutiny. The book is therefore designed to be approached in two ways. Firstly, specialists in any of the three substantive issues covered by this book will find each part has an introduction which sets out current thinking in that

field, followed by chapters taking different approaches to the central issues. Secondly, the book is to be read for anthropological analyses of culture in organizations. The introduction is written with this in mind. By providing an historical account of the development of anthropological studies of organizations, and of the research and analytical methods used, it contextualizes the approaches to culture to be found in subsequent chapters. These historical studies of organizations are largely missing from accounts of the development of the discipline and one aim of discussing them in detail is to give this work on organizations more visibility within anthropology itself. There have however been a number of interchanges of ideas between anthropology and organization studies during their parallel histories, and the second aim is to show how anthropological approaches to culture can contribute to current developments in organization studies.

EARLY ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES OF ORGANIZATIONS—THE HAWTHORNE EXPERIMENTS

There were three periods when anthropologists made particular contributions to organizational studies. These were the 1920s, when both disciplines were in their early stages of development; the 1950s and 1960s; and the present. Each period of interaction reflected the development of the discipline's methodology and of ideas about social organization and culture. Each raised a number of issues about participant observation, analysis of context and meaning, and refinement of analytical concepts, which continue to be relevant.

The history of organizational studies often starts with 'Scientific Management' (also called Taylorism, following Taylor's paper of 1911, incorporated into his 1947 text). This took a manager-centred or top-down view of how to get right the production system within an organization. Production processes were divided into strictly demarcated tasks. The details of each task were investigated, and if physical conditions for the work were correct, the appropriate human behaviour and performance were meant to follow automatically. Between 1927 and 1932 a study of the Western Electric Hawthorne Plant in western Chicago and in Cicero, Illinois, was to test these scientific management principles. But, the story goes, with the help of anthropologists, they discredited these principles by discovering the social organization of the workplace and establishing the Human Relations school which was to dominate organizational studies for the next twenty-five years.

At first the research methods were 'experiments' dislocated from everyday working conditions. The Hawthorne management was testing the impact of changing physical conditions on output. They called on Harvard University for

help, where a Committee on Industrial Psychology had been set up with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation. Elton Mayo, a psychologist, with a team of researchers from the university and the company, tested the effect of ten physical and incentive changes on fatigue levels of six women workers. They discovered the now disputed Hawthorne effect: the women's output increased whatever changes were made and even when the women were returned to their original working conditions. The researchers attributed this to the effect of the experimental conditions. The women were in a special Relay Assembly Test Room which did not replicate their usual working conditions. They formed a tightly knit friendship group, with much less 'apprehension of authority' (Roethlisberger and Dickson 1939:189) and took much more initiative in their relations with their supervisor than usual (Chapple 1953). In particular, the researchers took on a supervisory role and paid a great deal of sympathetic attention to the workers. The conclusion of the experimental work was that psychological factors were more important than physical conditions in achieving changes in output.

The second stage of the research adopted another method. To explore further the link between morale and supervision, and to provide materials for training supervisors, a large-scale interviewing programme was embarked upon. Between 1928 and 1930 a new Industrial Research Division in the company interviewed 21,126 workers (Roethlisberger and Dickson 1939:204). This programme ended with the lay-offs of the Depression. Whilst the Industrial Research Division waited for an upturn, they compared the results of this large-scale programme of single interviews with individuals, which had proved difficult to analyse, with repeated interviews of a small group. This produced a finding which had escaped them before: social groups on shop floors were capable of very strong control over the work behaviour of individuals (1939:379).

To study the social organization of work groups, the team entered a third stage and introduced a further method: anthropological direct observation study. Mayo, who was a friend of leading anthropologists Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, brought in one of the latter's students, Lloyd Warner. He had just returned from studying Aborigines in Australia and was keen to use anthropology in 'modern' societies. He helped the research team apply anthropological fieldwork techniques to the workplace (1939:389). The aim was to treat a shop floor as a small society in which every aspect of life was interconnected in a social system. However, because most shop floors consisted of more than a hundred workers they were too large and complex to study if 'technical, administrative, supervisory and personal problems are all mixed up into one interacting whole' (1939:385). Therefore three teams of three men who wired banks of switches for telephone offices, the three solderers who worked to them, and two inspectors (fifteen in all) were moved into a separate

room. In this Bank Wiring Observation Room the layout, the conditions of work, and the supervision replicated that on the shop floor. To test the impact of the experiment a base line study of output had been made in the preceding eighteen weeks.

The research was carried out by two staff from November 1931 to May 1932, although the later months were disrupted by lay-offs occasioned by the Depression. One researcher, the interviewer, remained an outsider to the group, believing this would enable the employees to talk about their attitudes. The other, the observer, stayed as unobtrusively as possible in the workroom and detailed the formal organization of the work process and the workers' informal organization, that is, their interactions, each individual's participation in groups, and expressions of solidarity. The aims were to treat the shop floor as a small society and to understand the function of the informal organization for the workers and its relation to the formal organization of the work.

Results of this research were analysed using Radcliffe-Brown's idea of a social system; that is, actual interactions between people form a systematic whole. The three work units formed two cliques which organized spontaneous games whenever there was a lull: bets and games of chance, group candy purchases and binges. Friendships and antagonism were also sited within and between these groups, although helping each other with work (against the formal rules) was not confined to work groups or cliques and integrated all the men. Variations and discrepancies in the workers' output were explained in terms of individual workers' positions within the informal social organization (1939:520). All elements of the social organization had a function in a coherent informal system.

The informal system contrasted with the company's formal system of rules and incentives which was designed to make it to the workers' advantage to strive continually to increase output. Company records showed instead that most workers maintained 'Straight line' output curves.⁴ Moreover, company records were at variance with the actual output recorded by the researchers. The workers went to great lengths to keep an even record of output, whilst carrying in their heads complicated yet accurate accounts of their under- and over-reporting. The workers had a shared idea of a standard day's work, and thought it to their advantage to maintain a constant daily and weekly output. If the workers had a shared idea which was opposed to the assumptions of management, how did the researchers deal with the expectation, embedded in their methodology, that there would be consensus between workers and management?

In Third World societies anthropologists were concerned to demonstrate that a social system was informed by shared ideas which were logical, even if based on different premises to those of western middle-class observers. This idea was not transferred to the study. Roethlisberger and Dickson showed that

the workers had a shared idea about constant output underpinning their social organization, but they called this idea 'sentiment', and denied that it was rational and logical. They reported that the workers refused to respond to the company's incentive scheme and kept to their constant output norms 'in case something happened'. Roethlisberger and Dickson called this irrational: the workers were 'non-logical' and 'not acting in accordance with their own economic interests' (1939:533–4). Yet, from their report, it is possible to discern a logical position on the part of the workers. They were worried about short-time working and job cuts in the Depression. They feared that if they attained a higher output rate it might be set as the new target, with pay rates reduced, so they would have to work harder for the same income. This they took as further subordination by management. By resisting the company's incentive scheme they were, as far as possible, 'controlling' the actions of management (1939:534). However, Roethlisberger and Dickson refer to this as non-rational 'sentiments': rationality remained the sole preserve of managers and researchers, reflecting the top-down stance of the analysis.

The interpretation was further confused when a social explanation of the workers' behaviour was supplanted by an individually-based psychological one. Mayo claimed the workers' irrational noncooperation with management was because of a frustrated urge to collaborate (Schwartzman 1993:14). Mayo concluded that the managers' role was to create the conditions for spontaneous cooperation between workers through which their commitment to the achievements of the organization could be secured. In Hawthorne this was sought through a 'non-directive counselling programme' which tried to reproduce the cathartic effect of the previous mass interview programme. This blocked any further Hawthorne research into the workplace as a social system (Chapple 1953; Whyte 1991:187–8).

After the Bank Wiring Observation Room experiment there was a ten-year gap before anthropologists resumed attempts to combine analysis of workplaces as social systems with the devising of practical solutions to organizational problems. In 1943 two anthropologists, Lloyd Warner and Burleigh Gardner, established the Committee on Human Relations in Industry at Chicago University. They were joined by Whyte in 1944 and by colleagues from other departments (Whyte 1991:89). The programme was funded by six industrial companies (at the small sum of \$3,600 each), later joined by Sears, Roebuck and Co (1991:89). The network of anthropologists spread. In 1946 Warner and Gardner set up a consulting company called Social Research Incorporated (Gardner 1977:172). Whyte went to the School of Industrial Relations at Cornell University. Warner's students, Arensberg and Chapple, further developed industrial research at Harvard. In 1941 they established a professional Society for Applied Anthropology which received reports on

industrial research. In the 1940s and 1950s there were ethnographies of technological change, incentive systems and social organization of shop floor productivity. For example, Richardson and Walker (1948) identified changes to the 'social framework' of factory life and how these affected productivity when International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) introduced technological changes and doubled in size. Whyte (1948a) studied the restaurant industry; an attempt to increase productivity in Bundy Tubing Company (1948b); and concentrated on collective bargaining and industrial relations, including a study of a long strike (1951). This work is summarized in Baba 1986, Chapple 1953, Gardner 1977, and Holzberg and Giovannini 1981.

One of the great strengths of this Human Relations research was the application of anthropological fieldwork methods to make fine-grained ethnographies of factory units. The Bank Wiring Observation Room study remains a classic in the use of observation and interview methods. In later studies anthropologists developed other methods systematically to record the flows of interaction and communication within the spatial layout of organizations (Chapple 1953). These methods were applied with a standard of rigorousness which some feel we can learn from today.

One of the weaknesses of the Human Relations school was that the studies were top-down. That is, the agenda was derived from senior managers for whom 'problems' existed on the shop floor. The results were presented as a consensus, and in ways which were more suitable for managers to act upon than workers. Managers were not problematized in the same way. The studies did not examine the irrationality of managers' ideas and actions from the point of view of workers, and did not produce results that workers could use to their advantage.

A further criticism is that the studies of social organization on the shop floor were not placed in a wider framework of social, political and economic systems. Whyte admits that they treated technology and ownership as constants rather than as capable of change (1991:90). In the modernization era, technological change and new management techniques in expanding industrial plants introduced contradictions and conflicts with which the prevailing equilibrium model of organizations could not cope. The studies did not speak to or critique these wider social processes. Both the top-down approach and the problem of conceptualizing small-scale studies in wider systems were treated differently by another school which started in Britain once Human Relations was well under way.

PROBLEMATIZING CONTEXT: THE MANCHESTER SHOP FLOOR STUDIES

In a series of studies by Manchester anthropologists in the 1950s and 1960s, fieldwork methods for studying shop floors were developed into full participant observation. Equally importantly, anthropology was not only associated with a method for creating ethnographic description; it was also a way of analysing detailed social situations so that they contributed to an understanding and theorizing of wider aspects of social organization. This was consciously critical and radical. The focus was on conflict and the problems of analysing context, two issues which remain relevant in current studies of culture. Gluckman, Professor of anthropology at Manchester University, was keen to try out social theories developed in Africa on diverse contexts, including industrial Britain. In 1953–4 Homans, Professor of sociology at Harvard, was visiting professor at the Manchester department. He suggested carrying on the Hawthorne work. In the transfer across the Atlantic, neither Mayo's ideas of an essential harmony of interests between workers and management, nor psychological individualism were imported (Emmett and Morgan 1982:140).⁵

Industrial sociology was already practised in Britain (Stansfield 1981). The Second World War had proved the value of Operational Research; Liverpool University's department of social science was studying Merseyside firms and the docks; the National Institute of Industrial Psychology was very active; and the Tavistock Institute, which had many connections in the United States, was developing Human Relations and 'socio-technical systems' approaches to industry. With the need to revive industry after the war, funding came via Marshall Aid through the government's Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. The Manchester department of anthropology and sociology gained funding for a series of five workshop studies to explain 'output norms' and their relation to informal group structure.

Tom Lupton (who later became the head of Manchester Business School) joined the department to direct the project and studied Wye's modernized waterproof garment factory which employed mainly women, and Jay's which employed men in the production of heavy electrical transformers. Sheila Cunnison studied Dee's, a small, traditional manufactory of waterproof garments, and Kay's multiple tailoring, both of which employed men and women. Shirley Wilson studied Avalco which employed women in valve assembly. In a second phase in the 1960s a further team studied the Citroën works from three different vantage points: Isobel Emmett studied the managers, David Morgan the assembly shop and Michael Walker the machine shop (Emmett and Morgan 1982).

In each of the five studies in the first phase, the researcher spent at least six months carrying out full-time factory work on the shop floor. This they called open participant observation. It was open because their fellow workers knew they were doing a study. In the Hawthorne experiments, 'participation' had been kept to the minimum needed to approach the objects of study sufficiently closely to observe them (that is, to listen to their conversations as well as to watch their interactions). Care had been taken to be unobtrusive and to interfere as little as possible with their 'normal' activities in the observation room. Observation was the main research method employed. Now in the Manchester studies, participation meant full involvement on the shop floor and required researchers to learn how to do the work, to learn the language and concepts workers used, and to understand their perspectives. Experiential learning was combined with observing and listening so that out of the evening note-taking about people's different versions of myriad incidents and interactions, the field-worker gradually unravelled the social processes of the workplace and the relations within groups and between categories of workers over time. While 'participant' meant becoming as much as possible an insider, 'observer' took on the additional meaning of not only watching and recording systematically but of being an outsider with a theoretical understanding of society, against which the detail of the field was being constantly held up (Emmett and Morgan 1982:161). The two roles of participant and observer were therefore held in tension.

Emmett and Morgan (1982:142) describe very well how out of this tension between the two perspectives of an insider and an outsider, as participant and observer, anthropological analysis commences through the discovery of 'problems'. These are not *a priori* hypotheses. They arise from the interaction between the anthropologist's wider understanding of social organization and the perspectives of workers learned in the field.

The 'problems' developed in the first Manchester studies took a very different line from the conclusions of the Hawthorne experiments. Tom Lupton from the start dropped the phrase 'workers "restricted" output', as such language carried a pro-management bias. He had no difficulty understanding how men at Jay's organized levels of output and earnings, and their rationality in combining to try and attain some control of their working lives. He had more difficulty in explaining why women at Wye's did not have this solidarity and 'will to control' their working lives. At Dee's, Cunnison found that whereas workers performing all the different production tasks operated as teams around a table, they did not keep up a steady flow of work for each other but engaged in 'militant individualism'. At Kay's, the women appeared to acquiesce individually to the output demands of management until they suddenly acted collectively in a crisis. In each of the five studies there was a range of informal organization

among the workers, and different relations with management—from acquiescence through to attempts to control their own work rates.

This was a 'problem'. What wider theories of social organization could be used or refined to explain this variation of patterns of accommodation between workers and managers? At Manchester there were many debates about how to relate the detail of a social situation to wider issues in society. Gluckman (1940) had established a model for this in a famous account of a social situation in Zululand. He began by first describing the ritual opening of a bridge in Zululand; second, by setting out a historical framework of social structure, and then by moving between the two to show how the detail of the bridge opening spoke to wider issues of Black-White relations in South Africa. The Manchester researchers saw the workshop as an analytically-central social situation on which similarly to focus social analysis of Britain (Cunnison 1982:135). The problem was what to take as the context.

Lupton's initial context was the economic and organizational structure of industries. He tried to argue that in sectors with large, heavily capitalized firms which had collusive rather than competitive relations over pricing, where there was a low ratio of labour costs to production costs and strong trade unions, workers would organize collective control over output. In sectors with the opposite features, workers would acquiesce to management output norms (Cunnison 1982:100). Based on deductive reasoning, this mechanical linkage between detailed workshop situations and macro industrial structures provided no space for unevenness. Most importantly it failed the anthropological test: it lost sight of the interaction between theory and field material and it did not hold true against other examples.

A second approach was to analyse the varied patterns of accommodation between workers and managers within the context of class in Britain. To relate the fieldwork detail to the social theory, the researchers drew on ideas of conflict which had been especially developed in Manchester anthropology. This replaced the Human Relations idea—that the 'natural' relation between workers and management is 'spontaneous cooperation'—only impeded by lack of communication. However, they did not replace this with workers and capitalists standing on either side of an unbridgeable cleavage (Frankenberg 1982:12). Within an unequal system, the researchers were interested in the 'cross-cutting ties', the paradoxes and unexpected alliances which maintained both the system and its inherent conflict over time, in what Gluckman called successive moments of 'equilibrium'. Rejecting this word for its connotations of functionalism, Cunnison (1982) analysed the first five studies in terms of the different styles of 'accommodation', with tentative and temporary overtones, between workers and management. Emmett and Morgan (1982), writing defensively in the light of the attack on early industrial sociology by later Marxist

writers, said that whereas international capitalism, national government, banks, and the structure of firms and trade unions in each industry set the limits for any struggle on the shop floor, that struggle was continuous, with a balance constantly changing in a 'daily running outcome'. They claimed that this rarely took the form of overt class struggle, but saw conflict instead in daily diverse and less obvious 'acts' of struggle, in singing, trying to extend tea-breaks, or in maintaining silence. Thus they would not call even the apparently acquiescent workers 'non-militant'.

A third way was to treat the workshop as a point of articulation of wider social structures in the surrounding community. Cunnison discerned variations in patterns of accommodation between workers and managers according to differences in the social context of each workplace. She argued against treating the factory as a closed system and brought 'external' factors into the analysis. The production system on the shop floor was only one of the structures in which workers had roles. Individuals held positions in a number of structures and systems of categories in 'wider society'. These included social class; whether the local community was close knit (that is, whether or not workers and managers were linked in a number of social relations outside the factory); sexual divisions in the family; age and ethnicity. It was assumed that the roles a person had in all these structures influenced their behaviour in the workplace. This model of ever-inclusive multiple roles from overlapping social structures was somewhat unwieldy.

One important outcome of this analysis of social context was in terms of what was then called 'sexual divisions'. Where a work group was made up of women subject to male managers, their interaction might be in terms of 'sex roles' imported into the work situation from their families. This was thought not to be the case with male workers and male managers. Perhaps the best example is Wilson's 'mock courtship'. In a crisis at Avalco two girls were resisting new standards of output until they engaged in a mock courtship with a new male trainee manager. Through explicitly phrasing the relationship in sex roles rather than roles in the system of production, they accepted the highly authoritative and pressured situation of unequal power (Cunnison 1982:117).

This search for a way of analysing the context in which workplaces were embedded began to identify limitations in the idea that society is made up of face-to-face contact between people in different roles in a social structure. The early work on sexual divisions, although still about sex roles, touched on the ways people work with ideological concepts. Towards the end of the series of five studies the emphasis on social structure was reduced. Cunnison says they were still interested in the interrelation between sex, class, and the productive system but emphasized 'how the meanings people brought into the work situation were expressed, how these meanings were drawn into the work

situation and integrated into the productive process' (Cunnison 1982:135). Emmett, Morgan and Walker tried to refine Cunnison and Wilson's approach further by using Goffman's idea of a 'semi permeable membrane'. In any workshop situation, or any encounter within it, not all the characteristics of all the individuals from all aspects of their lives are treated as relevant. Some are ruled irrelevant. Others are given prominence, regardless of their salience to the individual or group outside. Even those characteristics which are drawn into the workshop situation are not 'raw'; they are transformed in the process. It is as if the factory walls are a semi-permeable membrane through which this selection and transformation takes place. Thus 'some aspects of family life of women workers were brought in through the factory walls, but selectively and transformed in the process, to serve purposes peculiar to the workplace and interaction in it' (Emmett and Morgan 1982:156).

The Manchester shop floor studies had moved from the Harvard model of a factory as a closed system. They tried to situate the detail of the social situation of a workshop in wider social structures. Finally, in keeping with developments in anthropology at the time, they moved away from conceptualizing workshops and society as made up of structures, and towards an analysis of the way people make meaning in a particular situation out of an available cultural repertoire.

STUDYING UP

Anthropological methods in the 1960s, as has been shown in the above account, had changed from participation in order to observe, to full 'insider' participation, held in tension with 'outsider' observation in the light of current conceptualizations of society. Anthropologists were beginning to slough off scientism's pretence of being value-free. They were moving away from functionalism and the idea of society organized in terms of structures made up of social roles. They were moving towards an interest in symbolism and the construction of meaning in social events (parallel to what in sociology is called 'interpretative'). Organizational studies was moving in the opposite direction. Czarniawska-Joerges (1992) dates the parting of the ways between anthropology and organizational studies to Waldo's 1961 review of literature from both fields. Waldo said the future for organizational theory was to espouse the positivist paradigm; to think of organizations as objectively existing, capable of being studied by value-free science, and explained by analysing their constituent parts as elements of a functioning whole. He considered anthropologists to be neither scientific nor value free because they became part of a society in order to study it (Czarniawska-Joerges 1992:77).

However very few anthropologists continued to work on western organizations. There was no anthropological follow-up to the Manchester shop

floor studies and they, like other aspects of British urban anthropology, have been written out of the discipline's history. British anthropologists concentrated on Third World societies and those with an applied bent developed critical analyses of the process of modernization with studies of technological transfer, entrepreneurship, dual economies and the ways tribalism and ethnicity were ordering devices in the development of classes and trade unions. To a lesser extent they studied the formation of state bureaucracies which were also essential to the process (e.g. Cohen 1980; Fallers 1974). There were no anthropological studies of equivalent modernization processes in Britain—the growth of major industrial and public sector organizations and the restructuring of communities and urban spaces.

In the late 1960s national and world systems came to be viewed as the context within which to analyse ethnographies. There was a cry for anthropologists to study the institutions which controlled so much of everyday life both in western and Third World societies (Berreman 1968; Gough 1968). To include such world systems in the fieldwork and analysis required changing the unit of research. The functionalist paradigm was no longer adequate wherein a face-to-face 'society' (whether a tribe or a western factory) was treated as a bounded entity in which every aspect of social, political and economic organization had a function for the maintenance of the whole. 'Holism' could no longer mean studying a community or industry in isolation from national bureaucracies and international firms and agencies, which although invisible, influenced the local economy and politics. For example, in the Third World, Wolfe (1977) analysed Congo mining operations within world systems; Nash (1979) studied the cultural constructs and material conditions of Bolivian tin mining in the context of national and international political and economic processes; while Mintz (1985) traced different facets of the sugar industry. Traditional anthropological methods also came under attack for producing documents which might be used by those in power, but were not usable by those subordinated and governed. Participatory methods were advocated whereby those traditionally studied should help define research issues, collect and analyse data, and own the results, so that they could use them in negotiations with those in power over them (Huizer 1979).

An important influence on the methodological and conceptual issues was Nader's (1972) suggestion that anthropologists should 'study up' as well as down—including both powerful institutions and state bureaucracies in the idea of 'holism'. In 1980 she developed the idea of a 'vertical slice'. Looking at children in the United States, instead of emphasizing families as the sites of child development, she suggested looking at hidden hierarchies of industrial and government organizations which shape their food, health and housing:

corporations feed our children, clothe our children, and help determine their genetic legacy. The important link is between the child and General Foods, Gerber, and Beech Nut, as well as the Food and Drugs Administration. These are but facets of the hidden hierarchies.

(Nader 1980:37)

Such research had an avowedly political agenda: how could a democracy work if people in the First World knew so little about the organizations which affected their daily lives and if they had so little ability to cope with their manipulation (Nader 1972:294)? This kind of research rarely focused on the social organization of face-to-face communities. It involved studying 'the culture of power' (1972:289), the ways these hierarchies remain hidden, their distancing mechanisms, the cultural constraints members of the organizations feel in dealing with the public and the ways clients are manipulated.

Twenty years later most ethnography has remained single locale, and there are still problems about how to contextualize it in wider systems. Marcus (1986: 173), suggests the most successful strategy is 'inventing a representation of the larger order', by using the ethnography to explore one of the key concepts of Marxist theory—as Willis (1981) does for the cultural meaning of the production of labour. Otherwise the larger system is painted in as a background which externally impinges on but is not integral to the highlighted foreground. Such an analytical framework presents the effects of large-scale systems on daily life but does not have the ability to explain linkages between the macro and micro.

Pettigrew (1985) has gone further in trying to explain the influence of local and large-scale contexts on each other. He argues against treating context 'either just as descriptive background or as an eclectic list of antecedents which somehow shape the process [of organizational change]' (1985:36–7). He sees organizations as systems of political action (1985:26) and change as the legacy of struggles for power emerging through time (1985:24). The struggle involves both interest groups in the firm and their mobilization of aspects of the wider economic and political structure which they seek to adjust to obtain their ends. The key to his analysis is to track interactions between what is happening in the firm and in the wider context in a complex, dynamic and untidy mixture of processes occurring at various rates. He tries to introduce a causal or explanatory link between micro-and macro-contexts which is not mechanical and which leaves room for unevenness.

Nader and Pettigrew in different ways have interlaced levels or contexts in their analysis of organizations. In doing so both use the concept of culture. In Pettigrew's case, culture is the frame of reference by which individuals and groups attach meaning to their daily work and make sense of intra-organization

and external trends which they try to manage. However he does not regard culture as a unitary system of shared meanings. He acquires more purchase in his analysis from regarding culture 'as the source of a family of concepts' which are used in political processes through symbolism, language and myth to create practical effects (Pettigrew 1985:44). Both authors have moved the meaning of 'culture' beyond earlier descriptions of the routines, physical layouts, methods of keeping records, and other material aspects of interaction that underpinned social interaction (Chapple 1953). 'Culture' has become more associated with language and power, with systems of ideas and the ways they are manipulated in performance of interactions.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

It is around the idea of culture that anthropology and organization studies have just begun to resume a dialogue. However, culture has acquired multifarious meanings in the literature on organizations, and this section will unravel a few of them.

From the Hawthorne experiment's 'discovery' of informal systems onwards, most models in organizational studies have divided organizations into three components: formal system, informal system, and environment. This is also found in anthropology, for example in Britan and Cohen's (1980) review of anthropological studies of bureaucracy. The formal system is the map of the organizational structure, job descriptions, the hierarchy of decision making, the goals, rules and policies. The informal system is the way individuals and groups in the organization relate to each other, which might influence the formal system and achievement of the organization's aims. Where the formal system is associated with Weberian criteria for rational organizations (achievement of efficiency through an explicit hierarchical system, clear division of work into specified roles, separation of bureaucrats' working and personal lives, appointment on the basis of technical qualifications and promotion through regularized systems based on merit), it may be considered to be influenced by the informal system. Cullen (1992 and this volume) points out that when Third World bureaucracies are measured against Weberian criteria they are found to be 'corrupted' by nepotism or tribalism whereas when informal systems in western bureaucracies deviate from formal ones this is 'initiative' to improve the organization's ability to achieve its aim. In either case, the informal system is connected to members' lives outside the organization and is influenced by the 'environment'. Culture is therefore seen to reside both in the informal system and in the environment, but not in the—supposedly neutral—formal system.

Morgan (1986) argues that the formal systems of organizations are not immune from culture. He shows that formal systems have been based on three

models of organization, each resting on a 'root metaphor'. Each of these—organization as machine, as organism and as culture—enable people to understand organizations in distinctive yet partial ways, closing off other ways of seeing. Whereas in academic theory these metaphors form a historical progression (Burrell and Morgan 1979), in management practice they are all still current, informing the rules of organizations and the practice of managers. 'Organization as machine' framed the way organizations were set up and managed under classical or scientific management. Organizations in this sense are thought of as closed systems, with a segmental structure dividing up the overall goal of the organization into smaller and smaller tasks in a hierarchy of departments. The departments all have clearly defined relationships, with every part functioning in the smooth running of the whole. All are held together by managers' central control with workers expected to behave like parts or adjuncts of the machine. Morgan publishes a fast food company's checklist of the preplanned actions involved in counter staff serving a customer. For example there are three components to 'greeting the customer': smile, sincere greeting, eye contact. This checklist is for managers to evaluate staffs' standardized performance of even personal interactions. They are to behave with mechanical repetition and precision.

The metaphor 'organization as organism' derives from Human Relations and subsequent Systems and Contingency Theory. Borrowed images from biology and ecology inform the formal system of organizations and the language of management. The Hawthorne experiments recognized that workers had needs which had to be satisfied in order for the organization to perform effectively. Gradually the idea of needs was extended to envisage an organization as an open system depending on a satisfactory relationship with its wider environment to survive, satisfy its needs and develop. Organizations as organisms are broken down into subsystems (strategic, technological, managerial, 'human resources') each of which might have a different relationship with its environment but all also need to be interrelated. A successful organization is still thought of as seeking a 'healthy' state of equilibrium (in anthropology) or homeostasis (in organizational studies). The means to do this is not only through rigid hierarchies but also a matrix of cross-departmental teams to integrate the subsystems, especially when their environments are 'turbulent'.

A third metaphor, 'organization as culture', takes many forms. As was pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the culture of an organization is sometimes taken to be a list of attributes or shared values which glue a delineated group into a static state of uniformity and consensus. A variation on this concept is to think of a company as having one culture and the workforce as having another culture, or subculture (Turner 1971). Nicholson (this volume) contests the idea that cultures interact as monolithic, bounded units with fixed

attributes. She examines the interaction between western models of bureaucracy and indigenous systems of organizing in Papua New Guinea. These cannot be considered as two 'cultures', since the same bureaucrats were continually deciding when indigenous concepts should be incorporated to protect bureaucratic procedures and budgets (as when a staff member died on duty) and when they could appeal to western bureaucratic values to resist claims on resources (including their salaries) made in terms of indigenous forms of organizing. Instead of 'the culture of an organization' it is more useful to consider 'organization as culture'.

Organization as culture is used to question assumptions in both the scientific management and organism schools that organizations have an existence which is objective, material and unproblematic. For these writers, organization as culture problematizes the very concept of organization:

When culture is a root metaphor, the researcher's attention shifts from concerns about what do organizations accomplish and how may they accomplish it more efficiently, to how is organization accomplished and what does it mean to be organized.

(Smircich 1983:353)

Instead of presuming a thing called an organization with a boundary against its environment, the emphasis is on a continuous process of organizing (Pondy and Mitroff 1979). It suggests that even the most material aspects of organizations are only made real by being given meaning. This meaning-making is seen as a continuous process; they try to dispel the idea of an organization as static, in homeostasis or equilibrium. An examination of how people negotiate the meaning of their everyday routines is involved, and of the way they generate symbols through which organized activity is mobilized—including the construction of boundaries (Young 1989). Cullen (this volume) shows how aspects of daily routines, ideas of professionalism, gender identities and dress were combined and recombined in different ways to create identities within and boundaries between different units of the benefits services as they underwent repeated restructuring in Britain. As Smircich (1983) argues, culture is a process—it cannot be fixed into a checklist of attributes of a delineated group: that would be to treat culture as a thing. Smircich says that once theorists adopt this root metaphor for Organizations as culture', 'they leave behind the view that culture is something an organization *has*, in favour of the view that a culture is something an organization *is*' (1983:347).

But 'organization as culture' is itself a metaphor, just as much as organization as 'machine' and 'organism'. All three are ways in which people conceptualize organizations and are therefore cultural. Although both organization studies and

anthropology refer to culture as a process of meaning-making through symbols, there is a difference between their approaches. As referred to above and explored further below, in analysing these processes of negotiating meaning, anthropologists focus more centrally on issues of power.

CULTURE AS PROCESS AND IDEOLOGY

If organization is based on metaphors which inform the way people have structured the organization, the type of hierarchy, and the style of management, how has this cultural process of meaning-making, negotiating and organizing through the minutiae of daily life in specific social, economic and historical contexts been analysed?

An early attempt to conceptualize organizations as a continuous process of organizing and negotiating meaning was Strauss *et al.*'s (1963) treatment of a hospital as a 'negotiated order'. They show the aim of the hospital, to 'turn patients out in better shape', was adhered to by all, but masked discrepancies on how to achieve it. Formal rules were minimal and not widely known. A sense of order was achieved by the different professionals, lay staff and patients daily negotiating agreements over individual patient care. These became patterned understandings between staff who worked together for any length of time but were continually susceptible to change. When these negotiations broke down a crisis was solved by a committee making a formal decision which became a 'rule' until it was forgotten. Similarly, informal ward rules would be forgotten 'until another crisis elicited their innovation all over again' (1963:306). Both formal and informal spheres were part of a daily round of negotiating order. This action-oriented or transactional analysis locates 'culture'—the process of continuously organizing and negotiating order—in the surface of everyday activities.

Others see such rules and decisions as symbols and take culture to be a 'deeper' system of meaning 'underlying' and 'informing' these surface interactions. For example, Morgan argues that

the slogans, evocative language, symbols, stories, myths, ceremonies, rituals, and patterns of ritual behaviour that decorate the surfaces of organizational life merely give clues to the existence of a much deeper and all pervasive system of meaning.

(1986:133)

The phrases 'system of meaning' and 'shared beliefs' occur widely in organization literature. Weiss and Miller's critical review reveals that they are used interchangeably with 'cognitive maps', 'perceptions and norms', 'values'

and 'ideology' (1987:111). They find such phrases used to denote something which binds people together and maintains what an organization is (1987: 107). These usages lose sight of the processual, negotiated idea of culture and reassert the static, uniform and consensual concept of organization, though located at a 'deeper' level. How to conceptualize and analyse 'deep seated' metaphors or systems of thinking has been the subject of debate in anthropology. Two anthropologists with very different arguments, Douglas and Geertz, are often cited in organization texts but the full implications of their different approaches do not seem to have been taken up in organization studies.

Douglas (1987) is concerned with the ways 'institutions think', Institution, in Douglas' sense, is a much broader concept than organization (see McCourt Perring this volume). Douglas speculates that social solidarity evolves through cognitive processes or 'thought worlds' on which institutions are built⁵ That is, social groupings develop their own view of the world, a distinctive 'thought style' which sustains their patterns of interaction. This thought style is encoded in institutions through which major decisions are taken. Institutions then make classifications for us, they put uncertainty under control, and channel memory and perceptions into forms compatible with the relations they authorize, so that other things become unthinkable. An individual's cognitive processes become shaped by social institutions.

Asad (1979) criticizes anthropologists, including Douglas, who base their constructions of society on 'authentic culture', that is, an underlying system of essential shared meanings to which the researcher connects all actions and discourse in an integrated totality which self-reproduces through changing political and economic conditions. He argues that this makes individual experience, social interaction and collective discourse parasitic on the set of shared concepts. All are so tightly held together that transformation is impossible. For Douglas

a system of human meanings...has the function of rendering the structure of cultural experience and of political action isomorphic... the cultural and political preconditions for saying and doing things, as well as the meaningful statements and actions produced in those conditions, are neatly fused together. Nothing can be said or done with meaning if it does not fit into an *a priori* system, the 'authentic' culture which defines the essential social being of the people concerned.

(Asad 1979:618)

As will be discussed further below, Asad argues that instead of trying to devise an essential, authentic culture, the problem to be explained is how certain 'essential meanings' become authoritative in specific historical circumstances.

A more interesting part of Douglas' argument is that institutions are based on systems which classify types of people and the relations between them. Douglas points out that the great growth in collecting statistics and ordering them into labelled categories in the nineteenth century resulted in new kinds of people coming forward to accept the labels and live accordingly. These classification systems are legitimized by analogy with the way the natural or supernatural world is classified, for example metaphors drawn from parts of the body, head/hands or left/right are used. These are formal structures of equivalence which are loaded with patterns of hierarchy and dominance that fit the prevailing political order. Institutional stability relies upon naturalization of social classifications, so that the institution is seen to be founded on rightness in reason and in nature. Young (1991) has found the ideas of analogy and naturalization useful to reveal the metaphors, classifications and symbolic systems that he calls the 'deep structures' of the police as an institution of power and control in Britain. Fairclough (1985) uses 'naturalization' as a key concept while rejecting the idea of an organization as an authentic culture of essential meanings. He argues that within organizations there are several competing 'ideological discursive formations'. One becomes dominant when its ideology—with its associated classifications and behaviours—becomes 'taken for granted' and treated as real, normal and natural. He argues that new or minority ideological discursive formations have to de-naturalize the dominant one in order to contest it and accomplish any change. Douglas' approach, however, is limited by its emphasis on stability and assumption of consensus, so that there is no differentiation of people's relative power to resist or change institutions.

Whereas Douglas only has one deep-seated conceptual system for an institution, for Geertz there is a multiplicity in any organizational setting. He argues that it is the researcher's aim to interpret through cultural categories what is going on in a field situation. To establish his interpretive position he clears away alternatives. He argues against treating culture as if it is a thing with forces and purposes of its own; nor is it a coherent and impeccable formal system, reducible to a pattern in an identifiable community. Nor can culture be treated as a symbolic system

by isolating its elements, specifying the internal relationships among those elements, and then characterizing the whole system in some general way—according to the core symbols around which it is organized, the underlying structures of which it is a surface expression, or the ideological principles on which it is based.

(Geertz 1973:17)

To Geertz, what must be attended to is the flow of behaviour and social action, and this can only be described and perused to interpret the constructions we imagine people to place on what they live through 'in the informal logic of actual life' (1973:17). He describes a sheep raid in Morocco to show the different constructions placed on a sequence of events by a Jew, Berber tribesmen and French colonialists. The reader can discern the different conceptual structures involved in this interaction, and their systematic misunderstandings. He describes the process of analysis as using small facts from a fine-comb field study to think creatively with large concepts like legitimacy, modernization, colonialism, conflict. The aim is to sort out the structures of significance, their social ground and import. Put another way, once human behaviour is seen as symbolic action, the important question is, what is being said by the different people involved, and why? This is the background to the oft-quoted introduction to the article:

The concept of culture I espouse...is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man [sic] is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expressions on their surface enigmatical.

(Geertz 1973:5)

This quotation has a different meaning for anthropologists than is often found in organizational studies. Geertz is not suggesting all people are caught in the same way in one web. He did not use his example of the sheep raid to produce 'the Moroccan culture', either surface or deep. He described three people with different understandings of a sequence of actions. The argument can be taken further than it is by Geertz: the three people had different structural power and personal ability to impose their meanings on events so as to make their interpretation definitive and thereby accrue very material outcomes. It is this political process, a contest to assert definitive interpretations which produce material outcomes, that is the key to anthropological understandings of culture, of relevance to organization studies.

Geertz' notion of culture has been taken up by, but given very different significance within organization studies. After the discovery of 'corporate culture' (Deal and Kennedy 1982) and the claim that excellence derived from 'strong culture' (Peters and Waterman 1986), the above quotation has appeared in much organizational studies literature. The 'web of meaning' seems to be equated with a vision statement, implemented from the top of the organization with the aim of drawing into it the informal structures of different departments

and levels. Techniques are developed to self-identify these informal cultures and reflect on their difference from the corporate culture with a view to bringing them into line. 'Strength' is equated with 'coherence', the new word for consensus.

Curtis (this volume) contests this equation of strength with coherence. Provocatively, he uses Peters and Waterman's chapter headings to describe the organization of a major irrigation system in Nepal. This organization has all their characteristics of success, despite the 'incoherence' of its egalitarian principles in a highly stratified society. Interpretive anthropologists would argue that 'coherence' within an organization is impossible. The organization's equivalents of the Moroccan Jew, Berber tribesman and French colonialist will immediately begin to signify their own meanings of corporate culture through the way they act in a sequence of events. The process is essentially political, with people situated differently in any sequence of events trying to impose their definition and garner the outcome.

In organization studies, Linstead and Grafton-Small (1992) treat organizational culture as a political process but in a slightly different way. They distinguish between Corporate Culture and organization culture. The former they attribute to management—who devise it and impose it on the organization through rites, rituals and values. Organization culture they associate with workers, and unfortunately describe as 'organic' (1992: 332). Their aim is to explain that workers are not just passive consumers of Corporate Culture. In a way reminiscent of the Manchester shop floor studies' 'daily running outcome' between workers and managers (described above), they argue that workers engage in a creative process of producing culture from mundane details of their work and through innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of the dominant culture, adapting it to their interests. This approach accepts *a priori* that there is a dominant culture and that a category of managers acts as a dominant group. It is just this that is being problematized in anthropological concepts of culture which question the conditions under which, and the ways in which people situated differently in any sequence of events, try to make their definition 'stick', and to assert their dominance.

The need for this is recognized by Linstead and Grafton-Small when they conclude that

Researchers have inadequately considered the contours of the field of power relations against which symbolic determinations are played out in particular historical moments and which shape the coding possibilities which prefer particular meanings without limiting them.

(Linstead and Grafton-Small 1992:340)

To analyse this process of contestation and transformation, Asad (1979) opens up analytical space that has been closed down by both 'authentic culture' and determinism. As described above, the former seeks a unitary system of 'underlying' shared values to which all actions and discourses are connected in a self-reproducing totality. Determinists argue that ideologies are produced directly by elements of the class system to maintain their interests. To Asad, this is tautological, a point exemplified in organization literature by Weiss and Miller's claim that ideologies are 'sets of ideas that are predicted by social structure, and that promote the interests of those who promote them' (Weiss and Miller 1987:113). Asad is seeking to provide an analysis of historically specific processes of contestation, transformation and domination that is not made possible by either of these approaches. He did not, however go to the other extreme of some later postmodern writers whose accounts of people's multiple, open-ended and infinitely imaginative interpretations of a fractured reality, offer a spurious equality to disenfranchised voices (Marcus 1990), Asad asks how in particular social and economic conditions, certain forms of discourse become 'authoritative' (Asad 1979:619).

In the sense that control of discursive practices is integral to the reproduction of inequalities in class and gender relations, discourses are materially founded but not determined. It requires constant discursive effort continually to reassert the status of a discourse as 'true', objective, neutral or normal and to displace other emergent discourses, labelling them as abnormal, disordering or political. As Asad says, an authoritative discourse 'seeks continually to preempt the space of radically opposed utterances and so to prevent them from being uttered' (Asad 1979:621).

Yet, he adds

Even when action is authorised, it is as discourse that such action establishes its authority. The action is read as being authorised, but the reading and the action are not identical—that is why it is always logically possible to have an alternative reading.

(1979:621)

This is an approach to ideology which tries to combine ideas which break down totalizing views of 'reality', with a sense of material conditions and outcomes, much as Cockburn (this volume) does in her gendered critique of 'power'. It is an approach which is material in the sense that Collins (this volume) demonstrates for divorce court proceedings. Tinkering with 'surface' symbols of wigs and seating arrangements in no way increased the power of clients *vis à vis* legal professionals; nor did legal power derive from discourse alone: it was their

triangle of legal knowledge, command of procedures and discursive practices which gave authority to their definitions of a client's situation.

Ideology can be defined as systematic knowledge made up of materially-founded and related discourses that are claims to truth, believed, taken as self-evident or considered 'natural'—making alternative possibilities unthinkable, but rooted in historical conditions and subject to challenge. Pringle (this volume) identifies three discourses about secretaries, each founded in particular historical conditions. They describe boss-secretary relations in terms of sexuality and desire, relations of domination she calls hegemonic, in that they are so taken for granted that they are not enforced through coercion but maintained by consent and experienced as pleasurable.

Reinhold (1993), in a policy analysis revealing the way New Right ideology is constructed in Britain, shows how the terms of five connected discourses were transformed. She demonstrates the need for discourses to be uttered in institutional settings of the state in order to be asserted as authoritative. In this volume, in the radical restructuring of two very different British organizations—a community home for former patients of a psychiatric hospital and an insurance company—both McCourt Perring and Kerfoot and Knights identify that discourses about the 'family' were very important in the promulgation of new corporate identities. Family is a concept with multiple and contradictory meanings, for example, caring versus control; equal sharing versus hierarchies based on gender and age. It was the latter meaning from both of those pairs that was asserted in the corporate discourse, and contemporaneously in the discourse of the ruling 'party of the family'. Asserting these meanings of 'family' as authoritative has had very material outcomes for the women's wages and careers in the insurance company and for former patients and carers in the community homes. Yet ambiguities, contradictions and alternative meanings remain available for contestation of the authoritative discourse. Edwards' analysis (this volume) is of an organization whose identity rested on resistance to authoritative discourses within the state. She shows how the housing aid organization tried to assert a meaning for 'ordinary people' in opposition to 'bureaucrats' not only as a discourse about their ideal practice in individual case work, but also as a way of locating their work overall in a discourse about class inequalities and social transformation in Britain.

Culture as a process places emphasis on language and power, showing how the terms of discourses are constructed and contested and why, with what outcomes. Discourses are rarely made authoritative within one organization but are uttered and contested in several settings simultaneously. Treating culture as political process provides a theoretical approach to the problems identified in this chapter: it helps avoid conceptualizing organizations as bounded units, and deals with the problem of context by placing organizational settings within

national and international systems of relations which are ideological, as well as material.

CONCLUSION

Anthropologists are critical of their discipline's previous conceptualizations of culture—either as a checklist of surface characteristics of a bounded group, or as a 'deeper' set of shared authentic meanings. Both rely on an idea of 'shared meaning' without asking 'is it actually shared? to what extent? by whom? how does it come to be shared?' (Cowan 1990:11). A consensual notion is unhelpful. To answer these questions an individualistic model, or one based on unsituated multiple voices, loses sight of social relations. Relations and processes of domination are central to an explanation of how people—differently positioned—contest the meaning of a situation, use economic and institutional resources available to them at that historical moment to try and make their definition of the situation 'stick', and try to garner the material outcome. It has to be shown how a discourse which defines words, ideas, things, or groups becomes authoritative. This is culture as process. As Street says 'culture is an active process of meaning-making and contestation over definition, including of itself' (Street 1993:25).

At a time of capital restructuring and institutional reorganization, the claim to 'culture' in organizations is itself ideological. The meaning of culture is being negotiated: is organization culture to be defined as a set of fixed corporate attributes or a political process, contesting such definitions and relations of domination? The objects of social research such as those in this volume contribute to the process. In organization studies, according to Alvesson (1991), some writers implicitly share managerial, top-down perspectives and agendas, similar to that identified above in the Hawthorne experiments. Others, like Cockburn in this volume, seek to develop a concept of power to assist women in explaining and struggling against processes which reproduce inequality in organizations. The chapters in this book suggest that corporate definitions of culture have not yet become authoritative to the extent of being naturalized and taken for granted. Contesting the meaning and the ambiguities and contradictions in the terms of related discourses about 'family', gendered ideas of 'power', new formulations like 'indigenous knowledge' and the meanings of 'client', 'customer', 'citizen' and 'consumer' will have material outcomes for all concerned. Culture is double faceted. Culture is an analytical concept for problematizing the field of organizations; in that field, culture is an ideological claim, rooted in historical conditions and subject to challenge.

NOTES

- 1 Berman (1982) characterized modernization as continuous attempts to create order and control on a progressively larger scale, accompanied by wiping out preceding 'traditions' and by fending off fears that new concrete forms and social order may disintegrate. These ideas underpinned the expansion of industrial capital and development of support services through the state in both the West and the Third World.
- 2 I am indebted to Michael Roper for this point.
- 3 Cultural anthropology has always been an important element of the discipline in the United States. In Britain the emphasis was on social anthropology and on actual social relations. Until recently culture referred to material artefacts and dramatic performances. In the 1990s however, British anthropologists working on issues that cannot be contained by face to face relations like ideology, state policies and organization, and especially those who have made links with a parallel tradition of British cultural studies, have used culture rather than social as the embracing term for their work.
- 4 This disproved the Hawthorne effect. In the Relay Assembly Test Room the women's increased output was put down to the effect of researchers, taking a sympathetic interest in them. In the Bank Wiring Observation Room the men's output remained constant, and at the same level as before the experiment started, despite the presence of a sympathetic observer. Mills (1988:353) points out the gender blindness of not asking why the women organized themselves to increase output continually whereas the men organized themselves to limit it.
- 5 Douglas is contesting the position of rational individualists who argue that society can only be based on the unlikely altruistic relinquishing of self interest and independent action.

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