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MACHINES, FAMILIES, AND MILITARIES:
HOW ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS USE LANGUAGE
TO CONSTRUCT ORGANIZATIONAL REALITY

By

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ABSTRACT

MACHINES, FAMILIES, AND MILITARIES:
HOW ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS USE LANGUAGE
TO CONSTRUCT ORGANIZATIONAL REALITY

By

Catherine Lee Helms

The influence of language usage upon the perceptions
of organizational members and, subsequently, upon the or-
ganizing process is explored. Organizing is viewed as a
dynamic process in which members reduce equivocality by
actively and consensually structuring their environment.
Metaphor was selected as the pertinent linguistic device
in this process for its ability to clarify unfamiliar sit-
uations and still allow for diverse interpretations of an
equivocal event. Contrary to the hypotheses, it was found
that as communication among organizational members increased
the similarity of the linguistic features appearing in their
communication (e.g., metaphor) decreases. Furthermore, as
communication increased, the accuracy with which they pre-
dicted each others attitudes decreased. However, meta-
phorical similarity was found to be positively related to
the accuracy of members' attitudinal predictions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Process of Organizing

Organizing is a process composed of the patterned be-
havioral interactions of a number of individuals collectively
seeking to specify appropriate responses to their environ-
ment (i.e., to reduce equivocality)[1] (Deetz, 1982; Hunt,
1972; Monge, 1977; Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983;
Weick, 1979). The process notion of organizing has two im-
plications: (1) it is dynamic, constantly changing and
developing, and (2) it is complex, with many elements which
interact and influence one another simultaneously. The pat-
terned nature of organizational members' interactions point
to the presence of structured relationships (however flex-
ible) that guide and coordinate these interactions. The
search for efficient and effective responses to phenomena
is the motivating factor behind organizing.

The organizing process as outlined above often con-
strains perceptions of stability and predictability by an
organization's members. "Much of what happens in organiza-
tions to individuals, formal units, and informal groups is
chaotic. As members . . . communicate to set and achieve
goals, organize themselves into cohesive units, and establish
social ties and group identities, they often find their

here-and-now experiences confusing" (Bormann, 1983, p. 101).
In reaction to the dynamism of the organizing process, or-
ganizational members engage in sense-making behavior in-
tended to impose structure and, consequently, predictability
upon their world (Conrad, 1983). This structure is com-
prised of rules and procedures mandated by the organization
and its members either formally or informally.

Implicit in this conceptualization of organizing is
the idea that individuals actively structure and reinforce
their 'environment'. Not only do they construct and enforce
the rules and procedures enabling them to make sense of and
deal with their environment, they also actively influence
the perceptions (and evaluations) leading to these rules
and procedures. Snyder, Berscheid, and Decker-Tanke (1977)
claim that, "unbeknownst to the perceiver, the reality that
he confidently perceives to exist in the social world has,
in fact, been actively constructed by his own transactions
with and operations upon the social world" (p. 658). In
effect, people externalize their preconceived notions of
what should exist in the world by recognizing only those
events and objects which they've anticipated, and then be-
having as if these are the only events and objects which
actually exist (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Morgan, 1983).
Individuals not only select stimuli, they also manipulate
them to fit into their interpretational frameworks. The
meanings of phenomena are predetermined to a large extent.

The result of the organizing process is a decrease in
the equivocality perceived by organizational members. The

resolution of equivocality leads to feelings of environ-
mental stability (Festinger, 1954; Farace, Monge, &
Russell, 1977), which further engenders perceptions of
environmental control. Organizational members collectively
structure organizational reality, and with definition comes
a sense of control. Three key issues arise from the pro-
cess notion of organizing which the following sections
explore. Each of these issues involves a further breakdown
of how organizational members organize.

First, the definitional process engaged in by organi-
zational members is socially enacted. Social construction
of the environment is motivated by two underlying elements:
(1) the need to conform, and (2) the need to incorporate
'outside' information in developing attitudes.

Second, consensual definition of phenomena occurs on
two levels: (1) actual definitional agreement between or-
ganizational members, and (2) perceived definitional agree-
ment between organizational members.

Third, the definitional process, as outlined in the
preceding two sections, enables the organization to maintain
a sense of stability while retaining flexibility. These
three issues are discussed further in the following section.

Definitional Processes

In this section a theoretical explanation for why
social construction occurs is presented. Interpretation of
equivocal input arises from the cooperative efforts of a
number of individuals collectively musing upon the meaning
and implications of an act or event (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978;

Weick, 1979; Deetz, 1982). Social Information Processing
Theory, developed by Salancik and Pfeffer (1978), centers
on the collective manner in which much equivocal stimuli
are made sensible.

> The social information processing approach pro-
> ceeds from the fundamental premise that indivi-
> duals, as adaptive organisms, adapt attitudes,
> behavior, and beliefs to their social context
> and to the reality of their own past and pre-
> sent behavior and situation . . . The social
> context has two general effects on attitude
> and need statements: (1) it provides a direct
> construction of meaning through guides to
> socially acceptable reasons for action; (2)
> it focuses an individual's attention on cer-
> tain information, making that information
> more salient, and provides expectations con-
> cerning individual behavior and the logical
> consequences of such behavior.

Individuals develop many of their attitudes and per-
ceptions of the world on the basis of feedback from, and
interaction with, those around them. Those with whom in-
dividuals associate act as interpretational mediators,
focusing their attention on particular stimuli and influ-
encing the manner in which they attach meaning to that
stimuli.

Directed meaning is constructed, perpetuated, and
modified via communicative interactions among members. They
embark on collaborative efforts to (1) ensure conformity
for themselves in relation to others and of deviates
(Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Newcomb, 1953) and (2) obtain ad-
ditional attitudinal and perceptual input from others with
which to devise their interpretation of equivocal phenomena
(Deutsch & Gerard, 1955).

Further, the more equivocal events are, the more imperative socially processed definitions become (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Festinger (1954) concluded that the greater ambiguity of job characteristics, the more the worker will rely on social comparisons to assess them. Deutsch and Gerard (1955) discovered that "the more uncertain the individual is about the correctness of his judgement, the more likely he is to be susceptible to both normative and information social influences in making his judgement" (p. 630). White and Mitchell (1979) found that in the absence of objective information, employees relied more heavily on social cues in evaluating aspects of their work environment.

This brief review of the prevailing literature on social construction of reality focuses on two components: (1) individuals' need to conform to their social environment, and (2) individuals' reliance on others form the transactional activity of sense-making and interpretational reinforcement. The following section provides an explanation for how social consensus occurs.

Agreement and Perceived Agreement

Scheff (1967) developed a two-element model of consensus. He defines social consensus in terms of the levels of co-orientation achieved. The zero-order level represents actual agreement or disagreement. The first-order level refers to perceived agreement or disagreement. So, for example, if two groups of assembly line workers agree

that a new company policy is fair and equitable then there is a zero-order co-orientation. If each also believes that the other is in agreement with them, then there is first-order co-orientation. The model incorporates higher levels of consensus (for instance, at the second level groups recognize each others' perception of the other's position); however, the focus of this paper will be on the zero- and first-order levels.

Earlier, the dichotomy organizations face between order and adaptability was noted. It was posited that organizational members collectively arrive at a response to this issue. One mechanism used in organizations is to focus on the attainment of perceived agreement rather than on actual agreement; on first-order rather than zero-order consensus (Farace, Monge, & Russell, 1977; Eisenberg, 1983). If members believe they are in agreement with one another, regardless of their actual position, then the perceptions of stability and control so necessary to organizational survival are fostered. Tangentially, on the occasions where members perceive themselves to be in agreement when they are not, each will confidently act upon his or her interpretation of the situation. Rather than resulting in chaos, there is the potential for the organization to reap the benefits and select among a number of successfully carried through plans of action instead of becoming fixed to one standard operating procedure. Organizations are thus able to retain multiple options in their response to equivocal

stimuli and at the same time encourage perceptions of
stability by organizational members. Weick (1979) calls
this process 'split decision'. "It is the split usage of
retained content that enables the organization or organism
to fit into a particular environment, generate immediate
activity, and still detect the necessity for altered actions
to improve that fit" (p. 219).

> It's easy to assume that adaptation is promoted
> consistent acts emitted by a tightly run or-
> ganization. If people make that assumption,
> then evidence of ambivalence and hypocrisy is
> treated as a threat to adaptation and survival
> . . . the opposite is true. Ambivalence may
> guarantee adaptation in the short run and sur-
> vival in the long run. If some faction of the
> organization wants to act on the basis of pat
> wisdom and some other faction wants to act in
> ways that oppose the past, both factions are
> partially correct. More importantly, both
> factions should act on behalf of their beliefs.
> What is being observed here is simply another
> instance of the split decision pattern that
> allows the organization to retain both flexi-
> bility and stability (p. 244).

The next section introduces the function of multiple-order
consensus in the attainment of an effective stable/flexible
balance.

Stability v. Flexibility

An organization's struggle to mesh idiosyncratic
responses to equivocality invariably results in an attempt
to institutionalize the various attributional systems of
its members, making them more predictable and, therefore,
more controllable (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). If this auto-
matic response continues unchecked, an organization can find
itself so protectively padded by rules and regulations that

it is unable to sense or adjust to external changes. This
insularity works to retard internal growth as well.

In spite of the overwhelming strain toward the security
of tight control, organizations must somehow maintain a
balance between stability and adaptability, between control
and coordination, and between collective and individual
sense-making. They must develop and maintain a 'sense' of
themselves, their raison d'etre, so as not to be subsumed
by the larger social order or torn apart from within, and to
aid interpretational processes. Yet at the same time they
must remain sensitive enough to detect and react to exceeded
tolerance levels, both externally and internally.

It is through communication (e.g., how language is used)
that this is accomplished. It is the distance between zero-
and first-order consensus which largely determines an organ-
ization's ability to accomplish the above. An organization
which supports diverse attitudes (i.e., low zero-order con-
sensus) allows for a wide range of responses to its environ-
ment. An organization which maintains a strong sense of
purpose and cohesion (i.e., high first-order consensus) en-
genders feelings of stability and predictability. An or-
ganization which incorporates both (low zero-order and high
first-order consensus) has achieved a balance between
stability and flexibility.

The Role of Communication in the Organizing Process

The nature of an organization's sense-making agenda
determines the success of the organizing process.

Communicative acts are the means by which sense-making
agendas are constructed, diffused, and transformed. People
are motivated to communicate with others, and through this
communication, to develop stable, socially-derived inter-
pretations of events and their meanings (Festinger, 1954;
Jacobson & Seashore, 1951; Frost & Morgan, 1983).

> Social reality is defined by the language
> used by the members of the social system.
> Language does more than communicate infor-
> mation and more than enable the members to
> make sense. Language creates the reality.
> The 'organization' has no objective reality
> (in a positivistic sense), but rather is
> created daily by the linguistic enactments
> of its members in the course of their every-
> day communications between each other; that
> is, by the way in which its members talk,
> hold discourse, share meanings (Evered, 1983,
> p. 126).

The definition of a phenomenon is little more than
the culmination of terms used to describe it and names pre-
viously applied to it. "When people collectively try to
shrink the possible meanings attached to an equivocal in-
put, they essentially are negotiating issues of naming and
connection" (Weick, 1979).

Referring to previous passages, organizations and their
members have a tendency to 'over' define and 'under' re-
define. It is to be expected that the labelling procedure
activated by ambiguous stimuli consumes time and effort,
particularly when the variable interpretations of many are
involved. Moreover, once something has been satisfactorily
defined, it is no longer perceived of as uncertain and, sub-
sequently, a sense of control is generated. Consequently,

if unchallenged, many social perceptions (i.e., meanings attached to particular phenomena) would remain relatively stable.

However, the world is not stable and unchanging. For an organization to survive, its members must also be able to gauge and respond to needed changes in their previously satisfactory definitions.

An emphasis on attaining high first-order and low zero-order consensus of definitions is one mechanism that facilitates organizational sensitivity and flexibility. One effective strategy for fostering perceptions of definitional agreement (regardless of whether or not actual definitional agreement exists) is to use unclear language. The more ambiguous utterances are, the more room is left to infer the meaning which is in line with their own attitudes and values. "Strategic ambiguity is essential to organizing because it allows for multiple interpretations to exist among people who content they are attending to the same message (i.e., perceive the message to be clear) . . . Ambiguity is used strategically to foster agreement without limiting the number of possible interpretations" (Eisenberg, 1983, p. 9). "[Purposeful ambiguity] is a potentially useful message strategy for situations in which either the source has little information about the attributes of the audience or he is aware that the receivers have heterogeneous attitudes toward the message issue" (Wilson, 1971, p. 3). In one sense, the normative function of social consensus is

being fulfilled. Everyone perceives their attitude as
being reinforced simultaneously with the belief that every-
one else agrees with it. In another sense, the informa-
tive function of social consensus is satisfied.

If a group doesn't have a solidified attitude toward
a subject, yet is predisposed toward a general position, an
ambiguous message will provide them with enough information
to develop an attitude, albeit biased by the original per-
ceptual framework of the group. Steinfatt, Miller, and
Bettinghaus' (1974) research supports the idea that the
greater the ambiguity of a statement, the greater the chance
that one or more of the interpretations of it will not occur
to the receivers. They "would not necessarily be reasoning
with the intended materials, but rather with only those re-
lationships which have occurred to [them]" (p. 317). The
relationships and implications that become apparent to indi-
viduals are influenced by those with whom they communicate
frequently (i.e., the group of which they're a member).

Given an ambiguous statement, some will interpret it
to encourage a move toward change, while others will inter-
pret it as reinforcement for the existing order; all the
while believing themselves to be in agreement (Eisenberg,
1984). At one level, there is the freedom for individual
group interpretation which allows for organizational flex-
ibility. At another level, the perceptions of agreement
lead to a more cohesive organization.

Strategic ambiguity, then, is an important mechanism for coping with the following organizational paradoxes: stability v. predictability, and organizational v. factional interpretive frameworks. Metaphorical language is particularly useful in attaining strategic ambiguity.

Metaphor has long been the exclusive domain of poets and rhetoricians. Recently, however, social scientists have recognized the power and pervasiveness of metaphorical language in everyday communication, especially in the application of connotative meaning to equivocal episodes or behavior. "When people talk about [metaphor] they usually talk about its role as a decorative figure of speech, However, one of the main contributions of modern linguists is to show that once we penetrate beneath the taken-for-granted meanings associated with these words, we quickly see that their role and significance in language and thought is much deeper and more pervasive . . . Metaphor makes meaning in a primal way; its role is not just embellishment" (Morgan, 1983, p. 602).

Metaphor will be shown to be a potentially powerful communicative device in the organizing process. Its characteristics enable it to facilitate maintenance of organizations' stability/flexibility balance.

CHAPTER II

METAPHOR AS A POWERFUL LINGUISTIC DEVICE

Definition of Metaphor

Through the years, theorists have debated the definition, functions, and components of metaphor. A theoretical continuum has arisen which ranges from contentions that all language is metaphorical (that anything symbolic qualifies as a metaphor) (Carlyle, 1927) to claim that only those linguistic configurations that conform to rigorous standards are metaphoric (Searle, 1979). Whatever the stance one adopts, there seems to be general agreement that a primary purpose of metaphor is to equate two literally unlike things so that additional understanding and comprehension are brought to at least one of them (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1979; Fraser, 1979; Kreftling & Frost, 1984; Black, 1979; Ortony, 1975; Pondy, 1983).

Richards (1936) devised a succinct and comprehensive 'language' for discussing metaphors: 'Tenor' is the topic under discussion; 'Vehicle' is the metaphorical term being used; 'Ground' refers to what the tenor and vehicle have in common; and 'Tension' refers to the dissimilar characteristics of the two.

Searle (1979) discusses metaphor from a linguistic vantage. He distinguishes between the speaker's intention (what he calls the utterance meaning) and the literal meaning of the words, sentences, and expressions (termed the word meaning). Based on these two concepts he devised a strategy for interpreting metaphorical statements:

> (1) Where the utterance is defective if taken literally, look for an utterance meaning that differs from sentence meaning, (2) when you hear ' tenor ' is ' vehicle ', to find possible utterance meanings look for ways in which ' tenor ' might be like ' vehicle ', and to fill in the respect in which ' tenor ' might be like ' vehicle ', look for salient, well-known, and distinctive features of ' vehicle ' things, and (3) go back to the ' tenor ' and see which of the many candidates for the ground are likely or even possible properties of ' tenor ' (p. 114).

In other words, people exposed to a metaphorical statement first decipher it literally. If the literal sentence is nonsensical, then they search for metaphorical meaning by comparing the tenor and vehicle for insight into the ground and, consequently, comprehension of the figurative, or utterance, meaning.

This above position has theoretical support, but little empirical support (Fraser, 1979; Glucksberg, Gildea, & Bookin, 1982). An alternative explanation is presented by Black (1979) who adopts an interaction view of metaphor.

> In context of a particular metaphorical statement, the tenor and vehicle 'interact' in the following ways: (a) the presence of the primary subject the tenor incites the hearer to select some of the secondary subject's the vehicle properties; (b) invites him to

>construct a parallel implication-complex that
>can fit the primary subject; and (c) recipro-
>cally induces parallel changes in the secondary
>subject (p. 29).

Black's view has gained both empirical and theoretical sup-

port (Levin, 1979; Shon, 1979; Glucksberg, Gildea, & Bookin,

1982; Gardner & Winner, 1979). The interaction view suggests

two things: One, that the metaphorical influence is bi-

directional. That is, the tenor affects the meaning attri-

buted to the vehicle and is affected by the use of that

vehicle. Second, rather than determining figurative meaning

only after exhausting the plausible literal meanings, people

simultaneously take into account both the utterance and

word meanings of a sentence.

While attempting to conceptualize metaphors, many ty-

pologies and metaphor models have been deduced. Ortony (1975)

proposed a functional typology of metaphors. He claimed

that metaphorical language performed three functions:

>(1) Metaphor enables the prediction of a
>chunk of characteristics in a word or two
>that would otherwise require a long list
>of characteristics individually predicated
> the Compactness thesis . . .(2) Metaphor
>enables the predication by transfer of
>characteristics which are unnameable the
>Inexpressibility thesis . . .(3) Because
>of a metaphor's greater proximity to per-
>ceived experience and consequently its
>greater vividness, the emotive as well as
>the sensory and cognitive aspects are more
>available, for they have been left intact
>in the transferred chunk the Vividness
>thesis (pp. 47-50).

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have devised a metaphorical

typology in which (1) orientational metaphors are abstract

phenomenon conceptualized as bodily experiences of the physical world. Concepts are structured linearly (e.g., 'his spirits rose'); (2) ontological metaphors involve the projection of physical characteristics onto areas of experience which have a non-physical status (e.g., 'the idea was hard to swallow'); and (3) structural metaphors lay characteristics of one structured experience or activity onto another (e.g., 'time is money').

Fernandez (1972) developed a typology which focuses on aspects similar to Lakoff and Johnson's. According to Fernandez, (1) structural metaphors encourage translation between realms on the basis of some structural isomorphism or relational similarity of parts (e.g., 'rain of blows'); and (2) textual metaphors facilitate assimilation on the basis of similarity in feeling tone (e.g., 'inflamed passion').

Finally, a typology has been constructed which divides up metaphors on the basis of their novelty (Black, 1979; Paivio, 1979; Cohen, 1979). Black (1979), for instance, distinguishes between dormant metaphors (e.g., 'falling in love') and active metaphors (e.g., 'he fought like a tiger'). Dormant metaphors have become cliches while active metaphors are relatively unique. He contends that an active metaphor has two important variables: (1) emphasis; the degree to which the metaphor cannot be adequately replaced (similar to Ortony's Inexpressibility thesis); and (2) resonance; the degree to which the metaphor encourages implicative elaboration (parallel to Ortony's Vividness thesis). The

greater the emphasis and resonance of a metaphor, the stronger and more active it is.

There have been writings on both active and dormant/dead metaphors. Berggren (1962) warns against the abuse of metaphor (i.e., the creation of dead metaphors), defining it as the loss of tension between the tenor and vehicle. The metaphor is turned into, not only a literal truth, but the literal truth about the principal subject in question. For instance, the mechanistic metaphor of organizations qualifies as a dead, or dormant, metaphor because many of its users no longer recognize or acknowledge the dissimilarities between mechanical parts comprising a machine and human parts comprising an organization (i.e., the tension between the tenor (organization) and the vehicle (mechanical device) has disappeared). In essence, advocates of this metaphorical view of organizations perceive organizational members as unfeeling, replacable components of a machine; employees don't just resemble mechanical parts, they are mechanical parts.

Searle (1979), however, contends that dead metaphors "have become dead through continual use, but their continual use is a clue that they satisfy some semantic need" (p. 98). Black (1979) supports this with the statement that a purpose of metaphor is to "remedy a gap in the vocabulary" (p. 33). If the metaphor is apt then "the new sense introduced will quickly become part of the literal sense" (p. 33).

With regard to active metaphors, Paivio (1979) claims that there are three important concepts which determine the

strength of what he calls novel metaphors (to be used inter-
changeably with active metaphors); (1) the similarity of the
attributes of the tenor and the vehicle; (2) the propor-
tional relation of a number of elements in the statement;
and (3) the perception of a new entity which is distinct
from the related elements considered separately. Krefting
and Frost (1984) write that "novelty appears to depend on
both frequency of use and tension between vehicle and topic
. . . richness of implications is a function of the com-
plexity of the ground shared by vehicle and topic . . . the
more extended the metaphor, the more ground vehicle and topic
are likely to share" (p. 8).

In acknowledgement of the numerous disparate concept-
ualizations of metaphor, the definition to be used focuses
on the major integrating feature of metaphors. Metaphor is
the description of some phenomenon in terms of another, where
there are shared as well as distinct characteristics between
the two phenomena.[2] Moreover, for the purposes of this
paper, the interaction view of metaphor will be adopted.
Additionally, attention will be focused on the dormant/active
distinction of metaphors.

Metaphor and Homogeneity

There are many theorists who argue that the use of meta-
phorical language enables organizational members to success-
fully reduce equivocality by facilitating the social develop-
ment and perpetuation of a cohesive sense of organizational
reality (Asch, 1958; Ortony, 1975; Pondy, 1983).

The use of metaphors in organizational dialog
plays a necessary role in helping organization
participants to infuse their organizational ex-
periences with meaning and to resolve apparent
paradoxes and contradictions, and that this in-
fusion of meaning or resolution of paradox is a
form of organizing. In this sense, the use of
metaphors helps to couple the organization, to
tie its parts together into some kind of mean-
ingful whole; that is, metaphors help to or-
ganize the objective facts of the situation in
the minds of the participants (Pondy, 1983,
p. 157).

Metaphors facilitate the organizing process in two ways.

First, they are a useful device for moving from the known

to the unknown.

They allow the transfer of coherent chunks of
characteristics -- perceptual, cognitive, emo-
tional, and experiential -- from a vehicle which
is known to a topic which is less so. In doing
so they circumvent the problem of specifying
one by one each of the often unnameable and
innumerable characteristics; they avoid dis-
cretizing the perceived continuity of experience
and are thus closer to experience and con-
sequently more vivid and memorable (Ortony,
1975, p. 53).

Second, just as other communication forms serve to

socially construct reality, so metaphors perform the same

service more economically. As organizational members sift

through behavioral patterns, social and political situations,

and environmental events, they collectively enact parti-

cular sequences of stimuli. Together they search for a

sensible interpretation of these to reduce experienced equi-

vocality and enhance perceived stability. It is during this

process of searching that metaphors are especially powerful.

Salient characteristics of the phenomenon are metaphorically

articulated (Asch, 1958); a suitable encompassing metaphor

arises from this cumulative process; is seized upon (assuming it successfully alleviates perceived equivocality); and a snowball effect ensues (i.e., the diffusion of the appropriated metaphor). For example, a popular organizational metaphor is the military (Cooney, 1978; Weick, 1979). 'Military' organizations "do battle" rather than compete. Instead of hiring employees, they "recruit them". Events and situations are defined by the major metaphor; in this case, the military.

When the stimulus is encountered in the future, it is recognized in the terms previously predicated and, as such, is easily identified and interpreted. Moreover, organizational members are much more comfortable encountering the phenomenon because they can infer unobserved characteristics and categorize similar yet previously unknown phenomena, thereby increasing predictability and a sense of security in their now more structured world.

Given these characteristics, it logically follows that if unfamiliar phenomena are talked about via the original perceptual metaphor (Berggren, 1972), other organizational members will be provided with the same mechanism for interpretation; easing and homogenizing their comprehension of the unknown phenomenon.

In essence, theorists emphasize the role of metaphor in producing a clear and homogenous perception of equivocal events in organizations. Billow (1977) represents this position when he writes, "the creation of metaphors may lead to

greater intellectual clarity . . . unfamiliar or abstruse ideas can be more readily comprehended when expressed in terms of the familiar and more concrete" (p. 83).

In sum, the organization and its component groups define and are defined via the descriptive and evaluative comments being made about the situation. In this way organizational stability is established, and metaphor provides a facile means of accomplishing this.

Metaphor and Heterogeneity

Although metaphorical assertions induce organizational cohesiveness in the sense that everyone is attending to the same analogy, it can be superficial cohesiveness. (It is superficial in instances of perceived agreement and actual disagreement.) It is its very superficiality which simultaneously promotes organizational stability and organizational flexibility. Metaphors are strategically ambiguous in that they establish perceptions of agreement while at the same time preserve multiple interpretations. The various individual interpretations are heavily influenced by group beliefs and norms. Diversification is furtherd by the differing degrees of interest a group displays toward a topic (Newcomb, 1953). Pondy (1983) claims that "because of its inherent ambivalence of meaning, metaphor can fulfill the dual function of enabling change and preserving continuity" (p. 164). Along the same lines, Berggren (1962) holds that "metaphor constitutes the indispensable principle for integrating diverse phenomena and perspectives without sacrificing their diversity" (p. 237).

The conceptualization of metaphor's role in the organizing process as an arbiter between stability and flexibility fits in well with the interaction view of metaphor. Metaphor acts as a perceptual filter. It does not merely compare obvious similarities between the tenor and the vehicle, but introduces new meaning to both by construing the one in terms of the other (Black, 1979; Berggren, 1962). Taken one step further, metaphor interacts with the principle subject to produce new meaning, and also interacts with the individual's cognitive framework to flavor that new meaning. Moreover, as stated previously, a major determinant of an individual's perceptual framework, especially in an organizational context, is an individual's group membership(s). In other words, construction and interpretation of metaphor are influenced by the organization and the major metaphor it promotes, as well as by the composition and character of the group(s) to which individuals belong. Social consensus enacted by intimates is more compelling than that of strangers or acquaintances (Newcomb, 1953). As much as a major metaphor organizes perceptions of phenomenon there still exists personal proclivities, primarily structured through group ties, which react to that metaphorical organizing in different ways.

Metaphor, by its very ambiguity allows for a range of interpretations, which isn't possible in clear, literal speech. In doing so, it defines for individuals the socially accepted version as well as giving new information, both tempered by group perceptual frameworks. This, in turn,

facilitates diverse perceptions which lead to organizational flexibility.

Metaphorical allusion precludes and abets perceptual consensus (i.e., social conformity) which further leads to confidence in the organization's definition of itself (i.e., stability). It is the diverse, group-influenced interpretation of metaphor which allows for organizational adaptive responses.

Furthermore, diversity is enhanced as groups go about 'acting' on the basis of their perceptions, thereby reinforcing their particular interpretation of the metaphorical analogy. People attend to external stimuli to define and reinforce internal states (i.e., emotions, perceptions, attitudes, etc.). Therefore, individuals' own behavior serves, at least partially, as an indication and reinforcement of the perception which leads them to act in that way.

As such, metaphor is more than an effective method of arriving at diverse consensus. External stimuli determine metaphorical use which, in turn, determines the recognition of external stimuli. "When we describe the workings of emotions, ideas, or trends of character, we almost invariably employ terms that also denote properties and processes already observable in the world of nature . . . We say that a man thinks 'straight'; that he faces a 'hard' decision; that his feelings have 'cooled'" (Asch, 1958, p. 86). Subsequently, "the metaphoric assertions men make about themselves or about others influence their behavior" (Fernandez,

1972, p. 42). In other words, the objects or activities from which metaphorical terms are chosen are bounded by what actually exists in the environment. In turn, the metaphorical terms adopted restrict and guide what is perceived in the environment, how it's interpreted, and what behavior follows in reaction.

The issue arising from this discussion, one which needs to be empirically tested, is whether metaphors in fact do contribute to the forming and processing of perceptions and attitudes in a group setting. If so, do they operate in accordance with the following theoretically prescribed model?
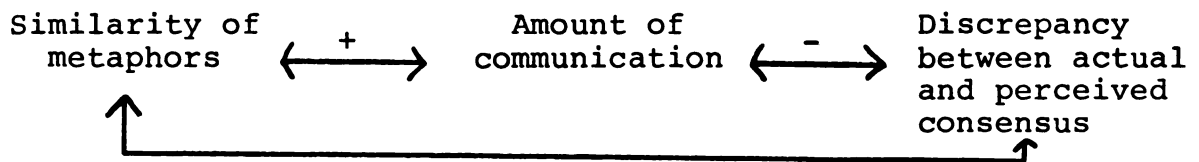
Figure 1. Illustration of the Theoretical Model to be Empirically Tested

In the next section, the proposed model is broken down into hypotheses and the specified variables are operationalized. Also included is an explication of the statistical analyses to be performed upon the data and a description of the subject pool from which data is to be gathered.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Hypotheses

        Assuming that metaphorical language functions within

the organizing process as theorized, the following three

relationships are hypothesized. The first two hypothesis

deal with amount of communication and metaphoric similarity:

Hypothesis #1:   The degree of similarity between members'
                 perceptions of metaphors will increase
                 as the amount of communication between
                 members increases

Hypothesis #2:   The degree of similarity will increase
                 more for active metaphors than for dor-
                 mant metaphors as communication increases

The relationship between amount of communication and simi-

larity of active and dormant metaphorical language points

up the ambiguous nature of metaphors. Dormant metaphors

have become cliches through their continual usage. This

usage points to members' perceptions of these metaphors as

particularly apt expressions of salient aspects of their

organizational environment. Dormant metaphors are typically

organizations' central metaphor(s). Becuase of their embed-

dedness, dormant metaphors aren't expected to vary dramati-

cally across group boundaries.[3]

        On the other hand, active metaphors would seem to be a

response to specific and relatively idiosyncratic events

within the organizational environment. The 'uniqueness' of the event produces perceptions of equivocality in the members facing them. The equivocality causes the enactment of the definitional process. As members integrate new information, they talk about it. Their talk is influenced not only by already existing major metaphors of the organization, but also by the unique characteristics of the focal event. This uniqueness prompts the creation of new and unique metaphors. Due to the consensual nature of the defining process, these active metaphors will be shared by those who have participated in the talk. Additionally, those who communicate with one another more frequently are likely to engage in defining activities with one another more frequently. They are thus exposed to the same sets of active metaphors.

The coexistence of relatively similar sets of dormant metaphors and diverse sets of active metaphors illustrates the accomodating nature of metaphors. Dormant metaphors interact with the various group environments resulting in differential focusing and interpretation of an organization's major metaphors. This in turn leads to a branching effect apparent in the different active metaphors the groups develop to cope with the events occurring around and within them.

Hypothesis three focuses on the relationship between amount of communication and the discrepancy between zero- and first-order consensus.

Hypothesis #3: As the amount of communication among
                members increases, the distance between
                their actual and perceived (zero- and
                first-order) consensus decreases

Previous research has indicated that as individuals com-
municate more their attitudes coalesce, either as a function
of attraction, intensity of attitude, or both (Newcomb,
1953; Scheff, 1967). As individuals communicate they are
also being exposed to additional information about the other
person and his or her attitudes. It follows from these two
premises that attributional accuracy (e.g., a low degree of
discrepancy between actual and perceived consensus) will in-
crease as communication increases.

The final two hypotheses concern the relationship of
metaphoric similarity and the distance between actual and
perceived consensus.

Hypothesis #4: As the degree of similarity of members'
                perceptions of metaphors increases, the
                distance between their actual and per-
                ceived consenses decreases

Hypothesis #5: The degree of similarity will increase
                more for active than for dormant meta-
                phors as distance decreases

Assuming that similarity of active metaphors varies closely
with amount of communication, then those that are frequently
communicating with one another are exchanging and sharing
the same active metaphors. They are not only focusing upon
the same phenomena, they are also interpreting it in the
same manner. Given these similar orientations, the accuracy
with which they ascribe attitudes to one another will in-
crease.

Conversely, those individuals who seldom communicate have different sets of peculiar experiences, and use different active metaphors to describe them. They attribute attitudes to one another using more general information. They base these attributions upon stereotypes which may or may not be accurate when applied to specific individuals. So their perceptions of the other's attitudes, being grounded in more general level information, do not systematically correspond with the actual degree of consensus.

Organizational cliches (i.e., dormant metaphors) are shared by all organizational members and, because of their deep-seatedness within the organizational culture, they are relatively stable over time and across situations. Therefore, the sharing of a dormant metaphor does not differentiate individuals and groups from each other, and does not indicate that additional information is selectively available to particular individuals and groups with which to improve attributional accuracy.

Operationalizations

To test the proposed model, the four variables need to be measured and their relationships analyzed. The following operationalizations were used in this process.

Operationalization of the first two variables (similarity of metaphors and degree of novelty) was accomplished in two stages. In the first stage, approximately ten percent of the organization was asked to describe the information flow within their organization in interviews.

The interviews were transcribed and the metaphors occurring in the interviewees' talk identified.

In the second stage a set of questionnaire items were constructed which asked the respondents to indicate their perceptions of each metaphor identified in the interviews as either new and unique (active) or old and well-worn (dormant). (All members of the organization participated in the second stage.) This section of the questionnaire was presented in a matrix format, where the list of identified metaphors appeared down the side and the categorical headings ('novel' and 'cliche', respectively) were placed across the top. The respondents were charged with indicating (1) whether each metaphor actually occurred in conversations among housing staff, and if so, (2) if they perceived the term to be a creative description (active) or an old and much used description (dormant).

The variable 'degree of metaphorical similarity' was then calculated by tabulating both the number of metaphors with a checkmark in the 'novel' column and the number of metaphors with a checkmark in the 'cliche' column. The variable 'degree of novelty' was computed by taking the difference between the number of checkmarked dormant metaphors and the number of checkmarked active metaphors; the higher the value, the greater the degree of novelty (or activity). In both cases, the task was performed only for those pairs of respondents who had identified each other as being fellow communicators in the communication section of the questionnaire.

For operationalization of the 'amount of communication' variable, all members of the organization were asked to list the seven staff members with whom they talked the most.[5] They were then asked to indicate the number of hours per month they communicated with each person on the topic in question (e.g., information flow). The number of communication hours specified served as the 'amount of communication' variable value.

The fourth variable (discrepancy between actual and perceived consensus) was operationalized in the following manner: All employees were asked (1) to indicate their attitude toward the topic on a 7-point Likert scale, and (2) to predict the topical attitude then by each communicatee listed on their communication roster (also on a 7-point Likert scale).[6] Actual consensus was computed by subtracting a respondent's own attitude score from the attitude score indicated by that respondent's communicatee on her/his own survey. Perceived consensus was computed by subtracting a respondent's communicatee prediction score from that communicatee's prediction score for the respondent. Discrepancy was calculated by subtracting the 'actual' difference from the 'perceived' difference. A visual demonstration of this process is below:[7]

(other attitude score) - (respondent attitude score)

=

Actual consensus

(other prediction score) - (respondent prediction score)

=

Actual consensus

(perceived consensus) - (actual consensus)

=

Discrepancy

"Degree of novelty" also appeared in the fifth hypothesis and was operationalized in the same manner as in the second hypothesis. (See Appendix A for an illustration of the questionnaire.)

Sample

Data were gathered from 36 full-time and part-time employees in the University Housing Department of a large Midwestern university. They were the staff of two dormitories; one large (27 employees) and one small (9 employees). Occupations covered included Resident Director, Graduate Advisor, and Resident Assistant.

Procedure

Two staff people (a Resident Director and a Resident Assistant) were interviewed from the smaller dormitory and three staff people (a Resident Director, a Graduate Advisor, and a Resident Assistant) were interviewed from the larger dormitory. These individuals were chosen by their superiors on the vasis of their volubility. The objective of the interviews was to elicit talk about the information flow within the organization. The metaphors of the interviewee occurring during this talk were noted and later incorporated into the survey questionnaire.

The questionnaire was composed of three main sections. The first section was the communication roster. The second section consisted of the attitude items. The final section included the list of metaphors and required their identification by respondents.

A set of surveys were sent to the Resident Director of each hall who then distributed them to the Graduate Advisors and Resident Assistants at their weekly staff meeting. Collection of the completed surveys occurred the following week at the next staff meeting.

The data coding process began with the assignment of identification codes to each respondent. Then, for each communicatee listed by the respondent, the number of similar active and dormant metaphors was calculated. The two attitude items and the communication item were in numerical form initially so no transformations of calculations were needed prior to data entry.

The data were entered onto floppy diskettes with a Radio Shack Model IV microcomputer using a data entry software program developed by Jim Resh and Richard V. Farace (copyright 1983). Once all of the data for both halls were entered and their entry-accuracy verified, the files were uploaded to a mainframe computer. The statistical analyses were performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Content Analysis

Although the actual metaphors generated in the inter-
views were not directly used in testing the hypothesis, it
is interesting to review them. A number of themes were
apparent in the metaphorical language occurring in the in-
terviews. (In the sense used here, 'themes' refer to areas
of concern and/or attitudes toward information flow.)

TABLE 1

Frequency of Responses Within Each Thematic Category

Theme	Novel	Cliche
Obtaining/Relaying	148	212
Way it Was Used	108	130
Structuring	85	73
Overload	55	90
Necessary Info.	50	80
Useless Info.	23	50
Underload	18	21

The most popular theme was Obtaining and/or Relaying
Information. It was reflected by such terms as 'grapevine',

'shoot the bull', 'spoon-feeding', and 'get straight from the horse's mouth'. Note that many more of these terms were considered cliches than were considered novel. This may be due, in part, to the frequency with which this concern arises in people's talk. It is also interesting to note that the two Resident Directors' speech was where the majority of these types of metaphors were generated. Is the metaphor's popularity, then, a reflection of 'management's values and concerns or vice-versa?

The next most popular theme was the Manner in Which Information was Used once obtained. This concern was apparent in terms like 'stay on track', 'evaluative tool', 'enforce rules', and 'down the road'. Here, too, there is a discrepancy between the frequency with which these terms were considered novel and the frequency with which they were considered cliche. Again, the amount of time spent communicating this concern may be responsible for the greater number of cliches. The generation of these terms was fairly equally shared by all the interviewees.

The three themes which followed next in preference are, respectively (1) the Way Information is Structured, (2) the Presence of Too Much Information (i.e., information overload), and (3) the Necessity and Usefulness of Certain Information. Terms reflecting this first theme were 'see things as black and white', 'chain of command', and 'filtered information'. Interestingly, the number of terms considered novel and the number of terms considered cliche were similar.

This could be because certain sets of people are much more concerned with this aspect of information flow than other sets. The people for whom this theme was more of a concern would discuss it more which would account for greater integration of certain metaphorical items into their vocabulary (e.g., a high percentage of cliches). Those people for whom this theme wasn't a great concern may still have regular contact with their 'concerned' peers which is why they've heard the terms before, but don't consider them to be common terms. This reasoning is somewhat supported in that only one interviewed individual provided the majority of the metaphors appearing in the questionnaire.

Metaphorical terms in which the fourth theme is apparent are as follows: 'keeping head above water', 'burnout', and 'flooded'. Terms reflecting the fifth theme were 'practical how-to', 'know what's up', and 'what's the scoop'. The difference between the amount of novel and cliche responses were similar to the amount in the second most popular theme, probably for much the same reason. The metaphors displaying the fourth theme were generated equally by all five interviewees, while metaphors reflecting the fifth theme were generated in a fairly concentrated manner by two of the interviewed individuals.

The final two themes are somewhat similar in content. They are (1) Information Which is Useless, and (2) the Absence of Information (i.e., information underload). Examples of metaphorical language displaying the former theme

are 'garbage mail', 'waste of time', and 'bible that no-body reads'. The discrepancy between the number of novel and cliche responses follows the pattern of the first, second, fourth and fifth themes. Just as there were relatively few responses to this theme's metaphors, so there were very few metaphors reflecting this theme appearing in the interviews. (Note that the one condition may have excerbated the other' that the fewer metaphors appearing in the interviews, the lesser the opportunity to respond to this theme in the questionnaire.) The least popular theme was represented in such words as 'information gaps' and 'cut-off from things'. Here, too, there's little discrepancy between the number of novel and cliche responses along with the generation of these metaphors by only a few individuals.

Overall, there were consistently more metaphorical terms checkmarked as cliche than as novel. Also, there was a propensity for some respondents to checkmark a very large proportion of the listed metaphors as occurring in their talk and for others to checkmark only a very few. The question then arises whether, given the questionnaire format used, the responses were actual representations of amount of metaphorical usage; whether individuals differ that markedly in their use of figurative language. Another interesting avenue of questioning is whether the popular metaphors and themes are dictated by the upper levels of the organization; whether they originate at the lower levels and spread up; or whether they spread horizontally.

Statistical Analyses

Scatterplots were constructed for each relationship and it was apparent from these that all of the relationships shared the following qualities: (1) they are linear (which validates usage of regression techniques) and (2) there are several outliers (which depress the correlational values for each relationship).

Alpha was set at $p \leq$ .10 because of the exploratory nature of this study. The hypotheses were tested using regression techniques. This analytical method was chosen for two reasons: (1) Regression analysis is more appropriate for survey research where there are no manipulated variables, and (2) The variables are continuous rather than categorical and so are more compatible with the regression technique (Pedhazur, 1982).

In the first hypothesis a positive relationship between similarity of metaphor sets and amount of communication was proposed. This was not supported in the data. The correlation between the two variables is -.08 (p=.24). When a partial correlation is calculated, controlling for the influence of the interaction between amount of communication and degree of metaphorical novelty, the correlational value is -.31 (p=.003) for the hypothesized relationship. In other words, as the degree of similarity between members perceptions of metaphors increases, the amount of communication between members decreases to a statistically significant degree. The effect size of the similarity and communication

relationship, to be reported in terms of R^2, is .09 (i.e.,
9% of the variance in metaphorical similarity is explained
by degree of communication). The confidence interval (set
at 95% confidence level) around the correlational value is
P ($-.61 \leq r \leq -.01$).

The second hypothesis is an interaction hypothesis;
predicting that as communication among members increases the
degree of active metaphorical similarity will increase at
a faster pace than dormant metaphorical similarity. Ac-
cording to this hypothesis, degree of metaphorical similarity
is dictated by the interaction of two variables: amount of
communication and degree of activity. As the amount of com-
munication increases, the distance between the degree of
active and dormant metaphorical similarity becomes more pro-
nounced. This hypothesis' prediction of a positive relation-
ship between degree of overall metaphorical similarity and
the interaction variable (amount of communication by degree
of activity) was not supported. The correlation between the
two variables is -.42 (p=.001). This means that as communi-
cation increased and the degree of metaphorical novelty in-
creased, the degree of overall metaphorical similarity de-
creased. The effect size of this relationship is R^2=.17.
The confidence interval around this value is P ($-.69 \leq r \leq -.15$).

In the third hypothesized relationship, amount of com-
munication is negatively related to the distance between
actual and perceived consensus. The calculated correlation
of .01 (p=.465) does not support this hypothesis. However,

when the two interaction variables are controlled for
through partial correlation (the interaction between com-
munication and activity variable, and the interaction be-
tween discrepancy and activity variable), the hypothesized
relationship is significant with a correlation of .32 (p=
.002), although not in the hypothesized direction. So, as
communication increases, the distance between members' actual
and perceived consensus also increases. The effect size for
the communication and discrepancy relationship is .10 and
the confidence interval around this value is P (.02 $\leq r \leq$
.62).

Hypothesis four predicts a negative relationship between
metaphorical similarity and consensual discrepancy. This
relationship is strongly supported in the data with a cor-
relation of -.34 (p=.001) and an effect size of .11. Thus,
as hypothesized, as the degree of metaphorical similarity
increases the distance between members' actual and perceived
consensus decreases. The confidence interval around the
correlational value is P (-.63 $\leq r \leq$ -.05).

The last hypothesis proposed the following relation-
ship: as the degree of consensual discrepancy decreases the
increase of active metaphorical similarity will be more
dramatic than the increase of dormant metaphorical similarity.
Initially, the data did not support this hypothesis. The
correlation between overall metaphorical similarity and the
interaction between discrepancy and activity was -.28,
contrary to the positive relationship expected. However,

with degree of metaphorical activity controlled for, the
partial correlation is .19 (p=.04). In other words, as
degree of metaphorical similarity increases, the size of
the interaction between consensual discrepancy and meta-
phorical activity also increases. The effect size of this
relationship is .04 and the confidence interval around the
correlation is P (-.13 $\leq$ r$\leq$ .51).

It wasn't possible to correct for correlational atten-
uation due to measurement error in any of the relational
values because three of the variables (communication, active
metaphor sets, and dormant metaphor sets) are measured with
single items and the correction equation requires multiple
item measurements.

It also wasn't possible to calculate reliability scores
for three of the operationalized variables, again because
they were single item measurements. The reliability coef-
ficient for the two-item attitude scale is .28.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted in an effort to uncover some
factors influencing the way in which organizational members
construct and act out organizational reality. It was pro-
posed that as communication among members increases the
similarity between the metaphors that they use in their com-
munication also increases, particularly for active metaphors.
Furthermore, as communication increases the discrepancy
between how members perceive each others' attitudes and
what those attitudes actually are diminishes. Finally, the
magnitude of this discrepancy is also negatively influenced
by the similarity of members' metaphor sets, especially
active metaphor sets.

Revising this model to fit the data, it appears that
as communication among members increases their perceptions
of metaphorical similarity decrease, particularly for dor-
mant metaphors. Moreover, as communication among members
increases the distance between actual and perceived atti-
tudinal advocacy also increases. The degree of this dis-
crepancy decreases as metaphorical similarity increases,
especially for active metaphors. The modified model is pre-
sented next.

41

Similarity   Amount of   +   Discrepancy

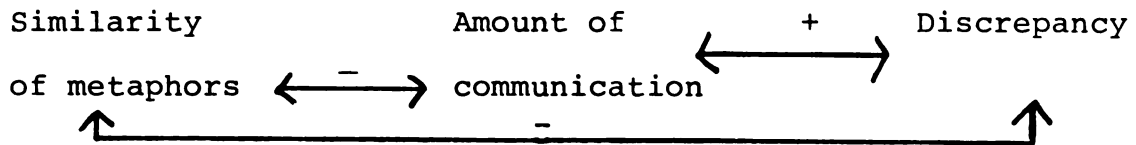of metaphors ←——→ communication

Figure 2.   Illustration of the Revised Model
            Based Upon the Data Collected

Limitations

     There are a number of limitations in the manner in which

this study was constructed and implemented which should be

considered before the implications of the findings are dis-

cussed. First and foremost is the relative lack of general-

izability due to (1) non-random sampling (all staff members

of each dormitory were asked to participate), (2) a small

subject pool, and (3) non-representativeness of the subject

pool (unlike typical organizational members, the respondents

were all under 25, the majority were full-time students and

worked part-time, and because of the nature of their job,

they lived at their place of employment). Because of the

small sample size, which reduces statistical power, the

probability of a Type II error is increased (i.e., of not

finding an effect when one actually exists).

     Another potential problem is that the people inter-

viewed were selected by the two Resident Directors as

being especially articulate and influential individuals.

It would have strengthened the study if the interviewees

had been randomly selected. It might have provided a more

representative set of metaphors.

Additionally, there was some indication that the complexity of the questionnaire confused some respondents and prevented them from completing it accurately.

Implications

Amount of communication was expected to be a significant factor in the proposed theoretical model. This was the case, but not in the predicted relational directions; the expected positive relationship with metaphorical similarity was negative and the expected negative relationship with discrepancy was positive. The cause for this could be located in the methodology. For instance, the responses to the communication item were prompted by a request to specify the number of hours spent communicating on information flow per month. The definition given for information flow was considered by a number of respondents to be vague and ambiguous. The amount of room evidently left in the provided definition for individual interpretation could have influenced the hypotheses in which communication was a variable. Also influencing the communication variable value was the fact that it was measured with one item, and if that item was flawed in any way, the value obtained is inaccurate.

However, due to the strength of the relationships of which communication is a part, the cause is probably theoretical in nature. For instance, rather than there being an increase in metaphorical similarity as communication increases, it might be the case that the less individuals

speak to one another the greater reliance upon, and so
attention to, the metaphor as an orientation device (e.g.,
a way of discovering another's topical position and/or
establishing some common ground). This interpretation re-
ceives support from the results of the second hypothesis; the
less individuals communicate, the more dormant metaphorical
similarity, rather than active metaphorical similarity, be-
comes prevalent. In other words, not only is there greater
reliance on the metaphor as a linguistic device for reducing
uncertainty when speaking with someone infrequently communi-
cated with, but the metaphors used are the cliched ones;
the ones in which there's more of a chance for recognition
and familiarity by one's communication partner. When speak-
ing with someone communicated with frequently there is a
greater pre-established base of similar knowledge and ex-
perience. One does not need to fall back on, or even pay
attention to, figurative language to communicate effectively.
And new or unique metaphors, unless very powerful, either
escape notice or are forgotten because of their relative
infrequency. Thus, the reduction in importance and acknow-
ledgement of metaphorical language. It is also possible
that idiosyncratic events, rather than impelling members to
create new metaphors, cause heavier reliance upon the old
metaphors, or that by the time active metaphors are diffused
throughout the group, they are no longer considered active
by group members.

It was predicted that as communication between individuals increased, the more accurate would be their predictions of each others' attitudes. According to the data, the opposite is true. The cause for this could be due to the methodology employed, as discussed earlier, but it is more likely due to the variables' relational conceptualization. For instance, it has been shown in previous research that similar individuals are more attracted to each other and so communicate more. If so, then it's possible that as people communicate more and more with those they consider attractive, they over-assume their similarity. They may focus on attitudes they share, generalizing to both the intensity of similarity and to the content of attitudinal similarity (i.e., assume that they have similar attitudes on other topics as well). If this is true then the respondents' prediction of each others' attitudes on information flow (a topic which may not be commonly discussed) may be more of a reflection of what they think the others' attitudes are due to their interpersonal attractiveness than an objective evaluation based on others' known characteristics.

The relationship between attitudinal discrepancy and metaphorical similarity (relative to the amount of metaphorical activity) was as hypothesized.

At this stage in the investigation into the types of language constructs occurring in peoples' communication (such as active and dormant metaphors), it may be more appropriate to adopt a research method which utilizes respondents

<u>perceptions</u> rather than providing the investigator with actual conversational transcripts and giving him/her the responsibility to distinguish between the types of language constructs appearing in peoples' talk.

<u>Future Research</u>

Further research into the influence of various language constructs upon reality construction is valuable and worthwhile. The alternative variable relationships discussed in the previous section need to be further investigated. Do unfamiliar communicators rely upon figurative language to establish a common orientational base? Do familiar communicators ignore the figurative language that ideas are couched in and attend more to content? Do familiar communicators over-generalize attitudinal similarity?

Comparative studies could include investigation into a number of different linguistic constructs to determine not only their relative influence but also how they interact, counteract, and are embedded within each other. For instance, one could devise a study about the influence of myths, stories, and metaphors upon perceptions of organizational culture where metaphors are abbreviated references to stories and stories are outward manifestations of myths. Another example is a study which investigates whether story-telling and metaphor-making are primarily individual traits, group traits, or organizational traits.

There are strong relationships between the linguistic and communication behavior constructs apparent in this study.

Not only do these relationships need to be further explored, but so do relationships between other linguistic and com-munication behavior constructs.

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NOTES

[1]Equivocality, in this context, refers to the number and complexity of the available interpretations of and responses to a phenomenon or an event. As the amount and complexity of potential responses increases, equivocality increases.

[2]It should be noted that other figures of speech are encompassed in this definition, specifically, simile and analogy. This is a deliberate and not unprecedented inclusion (see Morgan, 1983, pp. 602, 605).

[3]'Groups' is loosely defined as sets of individuals who communicate frequently with one another.

[4]'Management style' is an example topic. The actual topic used will be determined by its perceived importance to organizational members.

[5]Rogers and Kincaid (1981) found that a 7-person roster was the most effective length for a sociometric survey. It is short enough to prevent respondent fatigue, but long enough to adequately represent the respondent's personal network.

[6]The 'attitude' scale will consist of only two items: one item aimed at measuring the perceived importance of the topic, and the other item a general attitude measure. The scale is brief because each respondent will be using it repeatedly (e.g., for every listed communicatee). The inclusion of a perceived salience item allows the researcher to statistically control for any confounding effects of perceived topical importance.

[7]For example, suppose Respondent A specified an attitude score of 5 for himself and predicted an attitude score of 6 for Respondent B. Respondent B, on the other hand, indicated an attitude score of 3 for herself and predicted an attitude score of 7 for Respondent A. The actual consensus

between Respondents' A and B is '5 - 3', or '2'. The per-
ceived consensus between them is '6 - 7'. or '1' (the
absolute value is used). The discrepancy variable value
is '2 - 1'. or '1' (again, the absolute value is used).

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

Example of the Survey Questionnaire Completed by Respondents

In the following pages you will be questioned on the

topic of the information flow system as it exists among the

hall staff and University Housing administrators. As used

in this survey, information flow refers to (1) where a piece

of knowledge originates, (2) how it is passed along (i.e.,

speed of transmission, accuracy of relayed information, mode

of transfer, telephone, face-to-face, staff meetings, etc.),

and (3) how it is used or implemented.

Below is a set of directions to follow in completing

the survey:

I. Communication Section

    A. Write your name on line 1 under the first
        column. On the same line, under the second
        column, indicate the approximate total num-
        ber of hours you spend talking about infor-
        mation flow (per month).

    B. Then, on lines a - g, list the seven indi-
        viduals you speak with most frequently,
        and the amount of time you spend per month
        talking with each of them on information
        flow.

II. Attitude Section

    A. On line 1, indicate your own responses to
        the two statements (placed at the top of
        the two columns) using the coding scheme
        provided.

B. Then, on lines a - g, indicate your pre-
    diction of the <u>listed</u> <u>individuals</u> responses
    to the same two statements.

III. Descriptive Language Section

A. The instructions for this section are on
    the first page of the section.

III.

Below are a list of terms used to describe the information
flow among the staff of the University Housing Program.
Please indicate (by a checkmark in one of the two columns)
the descriptive terms that you are familiar with (i.e., that
either you use when you talk about information flow or that
others use when they talk about aspects of the information
flow system).

The column with the heading "Novel" refers to the uniqueness
or inventiveness of the terms. Place a checkmark in this
column (l) if the term(s) on that line actually occur in con-
versations among staff, and (2) if you think the term(s) are
creative descriptions.

The column with the heading "Cliche" refers to the triteness
of the term(s) on that line (i.e., they are well-worn). Place
a checkmark in this column (l) if the term(s) actually occur
in conversations among staff, and (2) if you think the term(s)
are old and much used descriptions.

If the term(s) on a line don't occur in conversations about
the information flow in the University Housing Program, don't
place a checkmark in either column.

NOTE: These terms are all taken out of context so if you
        aren't familiar with them they may not make sense.
        If this is the case, simply skip that term and go
        on to the next one.

TERM(S) REFERRING TO THE INFORMATION FLOW	NOVEL	CLICHE
1. garbage mail		
2. grapevine		
3. up to speed		
4. evolution of procedures		
5. fluke		
6. best thing since sliced bread		
7. gaps		
8. pick up on information		
9. formal information gathering/ dissemination		

TERM(S) REFERRING TO THE INFORMATION FLOW	NOVEL	CLICHE
10. informal information gathering/ dissemination		
11. one-on-one's		
12. keeping your head above water		
13. cut-off from things		
14. under public scrutiny		
15. boxes everything up		
16. important to pass on		
17. see things as black and white		
18. shoot the bull		
19. break things down to their common denominator		
20. stay on track		
21. sticking by closely		
22. evaluative tool		
23. bible that nobody reads		
24. bottom line		
25. slip by/slipped my mind		
26. going behind peoples' backs		
27. off the wall		
28. chain of command		
29. agenda		
30. gripes		
31. spoon feeding		
32. get straight from the horse's mouth		
33. liaison		

TERM(S) REFERRING TO THE INFORMATION FLOW   NOVEL   CLICHE

34. the big picture _____

35. cost of mistakes _____

36. telephone tree _____

37. waste of time _____

38. running hall like a business _____

39. practical how-to _____

40. know what's up _____

41. trial and error _____

42. carried out _____

43. screwed up _____

44. what the scoop is _____

45. in a bind _____

46. keeping up _____

47. hounding people _____

48. down the road _____

49. up-to-date _____

50. what's going on _____

51. burn-out _____

52. enforce rules/procedures _____

53. word of mouth _____

54. information spreading _____

55. junk mail _____

56. step over the edge _____

57. ramming down peoples' throats _____

58. filtered information _____

TERM(S) REFERRING TO THE INFORMATION FLOW	NOVEL	CLICHE
59. flooded		
60. breakdown		
61. channeling information		

I

II

A. NAME

B. NUMBER OF HOURS SPENT
COMMUNICATION ON IN-
FORMATION FLOW (per
month)

0 = Don't Know
1 = Strongly Agree
2 = Agree
3 = Disinterested/Ambivalent
4 = Ambivalent
5 = Disagree
6 = Strongly Disagree

To indicate your response, please circle
the appropriate number under each state-
ment.

A. The issue of in-
formation flow is
a crucial one in
this department.

B. Information flow
in this depart-
ment is effective
and efficient.

	A.	B.
1. I'm	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
a.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
b.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
c.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
d.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
e.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
f.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
g.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6