

Using Ethnographic Simulations with Business Professionals to Master Cultural Analysis and Change Management in Organizations

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Contemporary organizations exist in a dynamic global reality that requires constant change. Understanding organizational culture has emerged as a pivotal factor determining the success of change initiatives. The ability to understand and manage the influence of cultural dynamics on change implementation has thus become an essential competency for business professionals. The utility of ethnographic simulations for developing competencies in cultural analysis is explored within the theoretical framework of social cognitive theory. Excerpts from simulated ethnographic interviews illustrate the efficacy of using simulations to develop leaders' facility in apprehending, interpreting and managing the impact of organizational culture on processes of implementing strategic change.

Keywords: organizational ethnography, cultural analysis, change management, video simulations, training and development, active learning

INTRODUCTION

Twenty-first century organizations exist in a dynamic global reality that requires constant change (By 2005; Friedman, 2005). Adaptation to diverse environmental conditions requires attention to variations in both internal and external factors affecting organizational success (Schein 2004). Organizational culture has emerged as a pivotal element in determining the success of the organizational change initiatives required to adapt in this competitive environment (Heracleous 2001). Institutional norms, values and belief systems have been found to mediate the sense-making processes that determine organizational responses to change (Howard-Grenville 2006).

Process models of organizational change have been modified to incorporate organizational culture as a key component of managing successful change (Burke & Litwin 1992; Bate, Khan & Pye 2000; Latta 2009a; Wilkins & Dyer 1988). Utilization of these models calls for a comprehensive awareness of the cultural and sub-cultural factors affecting organizational performance (Asree, Zain, Razalli, 2010). As internal facilitators of organizational change, business professionals have an increased need to master the language and techniques of cultural analysis as a means of enhancing consideration of cultural factors that mediate change implementation (Fairbairn, 2005).

Techniques for conducting and representing the results of cultural analysis are increasingly valuable tools for business professionals serving organizations striving for success in dynamic global environments (Graddick-Weir, 2005). Human resource management professionals have taken particular note of this trend. Ulrich, Kryscynski, Ulrich and Brockbank (2017) recently reported the “ability to make change happen and manage organizational culture” (p. 37) emerged as one of three core competencies embodied

by high performing professionals working in human resource management. Grossman (2007) identified the "cultural steward" dimension as "the second highest predictor of performance of both HR professionals and human resource departments" (Grossman, 2007, para. 17).

Other scholars have identified cultural competence is an essential element of managerial success for all business professionals. In the context of the global business community, "cultural competence comprises all those human abilities and organizational factors that promote and encourage the utilization of cultural capital in human interaction and production" (Wilenius, 2006, p. 43). This includes "the ability to create an organizational culture that allows the emergence of creative and innovative solutions" (p. 45). In this national study of corporate competitiveness conducted by the Futures Research Centre in Finland, enhancing the cultural competence of business professionals was held up as the essential link between a burgeoning global economy and achieving competitive advantage in a society that increasingly values creativity and innovation. Other studies of leadership competencies have concluded management development is essential for business leaders in areas of organizational culture to ensure corporate strategy is aligned with institutional values, beliefs and behavioral norms (Garrett, 2018).

Cultural analysis in organizations is grounded in social science methods of observation, discursive analysis and ethnographic interpretation (Fetterman, 1998; Alasuutari, 1995). These techniques are designed to surface the largely tacit (i.e. unconscious) dimensions of organizational life that determine behavior (Thompson & Luthans, 1990), motivate social interaction (Schein, 2004), facilitate communication (Kegan & Lahey, 2001), drive decision making (Neumann & Bensimon, 1990) and enable meaning making (Peterson & Smith, 2000) in organizations. Understanding the elements of organizational culture and mastering ethnographic techniques of analysis are thus essential components of a competent business professional's pedigree.

Mastering the ethnographic techniques of cultural analysis for application in organizational settings requires opportunities for practice, feedback and reflection, in a non-threatening, internally consistent and relatively contained environment. This suggests simulation may be a potentially effective didactic tool for teaching these anthropological tools to business practitioners. Since culture is a distinctive feature of organizations (Schultz, 1995; Trice & Beyer, 1993), one of the challenges to teaching cultural analysis is that management trainees do not typically have a common experience of culture outside the instructional environment to draw upon for discussion. Case studies are inadequate for demonstrating cultural analysis techniques because the interpretation of cultural artifacts is inherent to any presentation of the organizational context required to understand the case. Video-based ethnographic simulations provide a viable alternative pedagogical platform for imparting these essential business skills.

Simulations are often employed as a means of "abstracting elements of a social or physical reality so that a person can enter into it and learn" (Davis & Davis, 1998, p. 343). This article explores the pedagogical utility of employing ethnographic simulations to introduce four essential components of cultural leadership in organizations:

1. Identifying component elements of organizational culture
2. Creating an integrated cultural profile of an organization
3. Understanding elements of organizational culture that facilitate change
4. Overcoming cultural resistance to organizational change

A series of prototypical ethnographic simulations designed for this purpose will be described, as well as training exercises, both of which can be created in-house, to provide business leaders opportunities to practice and hone their ethnographic sensitivities. The simulations are appropriate for didactic use either online or in classrooms, seminars and professional workshops. The training tools can be employed either as stand-alone modules focusing on discrete aspects of cultural analysis, or as an integrated unit, illustrating the application of cultural analysis within the context of planning, implementing and facilitating organizational change.

THE NATURE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Organizational culture implicitly governs everyday behavior in organizations. Transmitted inductively to new organizational members, adherence to these cultural norms affords predictability and regularity to business processes and interactions among employees (Schein, 2004; Schultz, 1995). Numerous definitions have been offered by scholars conducting empirical research on culture in organizations to enhance our conceptual knowledge about its nature and function. Martin (2002) provides one of the most comprehensive overviews of these competing frameworks. A review of available research and practice on organizational culture suggests that a comprehensive definition encompasses the following concepts:

- Shared Meaning
- Behavioral guidelines
- Patterns of thinking
- Common expectations
- Underlying assumptions
- Institutional values
- Aid to interpreting events
- Guide to decision making
- Determinants of collective actions
- Guardians of institutional stability

The following working definition, incorporating these concepts, provides a foundation for understanding the complex task of conducting a cultural analysis, as addressed in this article:

Patterns of thinking, behavior and shared expectations reflecting the underlying values and assumptions adopted by members, or subgroups of individuals, within an organization as a means of assigning meaning to events, governing behavior and decision making processes, and coordinating collective responses to internal and external challenges to institutional stability.

The Challenge of Interpreting Organizational Culture

Cultural knowledge is largely tacit, difficult to articulate, requiring elaborate techniques to elicit. As Schein (1999) notes,

What really drives culture - its essence - is the learned, shared, tacit assumptions on which people base their daily behavior. It results in what is popularly thought of as "the way we do things around here." But even the employees in the organization cannot without help reconstruct the assumptions on which daily behavior rests. (p. 24).

The largely tacit nature of organizational culture presents fundamental challenges for both researchers and business professionals who want to understand the influence of these implicit belief systems on organizational processes, performance and productivity. How do we assess this tacit knowledge?

Basically two approaches to cultural analysis have been applied within the organizational context: normative and idiomatic (Latta, 2009b). Normative approaches to cultural analysis rely upon inventories, scales and projective techniques to elicit elements of culture along *a priori* dimensions. This approach facilitates comparisons across organizations, but tends to obscure cultural idiosyncrasies that give organizations their distinctive character. Idiomatic approaches utilize observations, interviews and group discussions as the basis for constructing unique cultural profiles that more nearly reflect the language and priorities of members of an organization. Idiomatic cultural analysis provides greater insight, but requires specialized skills of analysis and interpretation not typically part of a business professional's education.

Scholars of organizational culture have taken these dualistic perspectives into account, as reflected in Hatch's (1993, 2000) model of cultural dynamics and Schultz's (1995) comparison of functionalist and symbolic cultural theory. Because of the complementary strengths of these approaches, Rousseau (1990) advocates for the use of multiple methods in conducting cultural analysis in organizations.

Cultural Analysis in Organizations

Organizational culture has emerged as a significant factor effecting organizational leadership and effectiveness (Deal & Kennedy, 2000). More recently, culture has been recognized as having a significant impact on processes of organizational change (Latta, 2009a; Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Attention to cultural dynamics in organizations has thus become a mainstream component of development among business professionals (Faribairn, 2005; Graddick-Weir, 2005; Grossman, 2007). The analysis of organizational culture in organizations focuses upon "the beliefs, values and meanings used by members of an organization to grasp how the organization's uniqueness originates, evolves, and operates" (Schultz, 1995, p. 5). Drawing upon decades of research on cultural dynamics in organizations, Driskell and Brenton (2005) cataloged the many elements of culture that constitute the object of cultural analysis. Trice and Beyer (1993) make a distinction between *ideological* and *concrete* elements of culture. The former refers to beliefs and values, while the latter encompasses an extensive array of artifacts (which they label "cultural forms"). Cultural artifacts are further classified into four categories: symbols, language structures, narrative forms, and ceremonial practices. Table 1 provides definitions and exemplars of the most common elements included in an analysis of organizational culture.

TABLE 1
ELEMENTS OF CULTURAL ANALYSIS IN ORGANIZATIONS

Elements	Definitions	Exemplars
Artifacts	visible symbols of what is valued in an organization	symbols, heroes, myths, or physical characteristics
Rituals & Rites	events and occasions that shape group behavior & afford collective identity & meaning	formal ceremonial events & informal procedural exchanges, symbolic action, public decorum
Behavioral Norms	expectations governing individual behavior, inter- action & decision-making	institutionally sanctioned ways of thinking, behaving, communicating and interacting
Values	attitudes, priorities & commonly held views about attitudes, what is important and why	underlying determinants of goals, aspirations and priorities that motivate and curb self-interest
Basic Beliefs	underlying assumptions about human nature, purpose, ends & means.	fundamental principles relating to the nature of reality; tend to be revelatory when surfaced

Deal and Kennedy (2000) identified a core set of cultural elements associated with high performing companies. These organizations were found to have clearly articulated values and beliefs that had been inculcated by leaders who had attained "hero" stature and that were continually reinforced by institutional rites and rituals. Subsequent studies on the connection between organizational culture and effectiveness identified adaptability as an essential component of strong organizational cultures (Kotter & Haskett, 1992; Collins & Porras, 1994). These studies suggest the ability to embrace change is an essential component of the connection between organizational culture and effectiveness (Roberts & Hirsch, 2005). This line of research reflects the influence of Trice and Beyer's (1984; Beyer & Trice, 1987; Trice, 1984) earlier work on the role of rites and rituals in both sustaining and revealing an organization's culture. Although the specific values, beliefs, norms, and rituals that manifest in individual companies vary greatly, the strong association between these cultural elements and measures of institutional effectiveness reinforces the notion that understanding cultural dynamics in organizations is an essential component of building organizational capacity and leveraging human capital (Burud & Tumolo, 2004).

Mastering the techniques of cultural analysis has become an essential skill for business professionals and human resource officers (Roberts & Hirsch, 2005). As Pfeffer (2005) observes: "HR has, at times,

been described as one of the important keepers and analysts of an organization's culture. Culture is a crucial determinant of many dimensions of organizational performance, and HR's cultural role is significant" (p. 171). Pfeffer (2005) suggests an even more important role for organizational development professionals in shaping the beliefs and assumptions that motivate the leaders' behavior and drive their decision-making. Similarly, by focusing on "the symbolism and interpretation of leaders by other members of the organization", Hatch (2000, p. 245) points to a broad cultural role for business professionals in facilitating organizational sense making and change. By analyzing and raising awareness of how leaders' behavior is interpreted within the broader context of organizational culture, change management professionals support and facilitate processes of implementing strategic innovation.

The process of cultural analysis involves both the apprehension and interpretation of the underlying elements of organizational culture (Rousseau, 1990). Schein (1991, 2004) arrayed the basic elements of organizational culture in a hierarchical, nested model, with each layer representing a discrete level of abstraction. Latta (2009b) denotes how these levels of abstraction reflect layers of epistemological meaning in organizations, progressing from observed reality (artifacts and behavioral norms) through stated reality (espoused beliefs and narratives) to cognitive reality (values and basic assumptions). Conducting a cultural analysis involves a complex dialectic directed at understanding the interplay among these layers of cultural reality. The process often begins with the observation of visible layers of culture, before proceeding to consideration of more abstract cultural forms. The interpretation of cultural meaning, conversely, begins with the most elemental cultural forms (basic assumptions), which must be understood before the significance of more visible elements of culture can be accurately construed (c.f. Schein, 1991).

Latta (2009b) identifies two fundamental conceptual tasks that business professionals must master in order to effectively conduct cultural analysis in organizational settings. The first task is to acquire proficiency in apprehending, discerning and documenting culturally relevant elements and dynamics within organizational contexts. The second task involves gaining facility deciphering and interpreting the meaning systems embedded in these various cultural forms. These represent basic competencies for business professionals working to help organizational units understand and manage basic institutional processes pertaining to human resource management (Grossman, 2007).

For leaders working to facilitate organizational development (OD) in the turbulent environment of 21st century organizations, a third cultural competency emerges in relation to managing the process of implementing organizational change. Organizational culture has emerged as a pivotal variable determining the success of change initiatives (Hatch, 2000; Heracleous, 2001; Bate, Kahn & Pye, 2000; Wilkins & Dyer, Bate, 1988). Process models of change implementation increasingly reflect this recognition of the influence of culture on change (Burke, 2007; Latta, 2009a). The facility to understand and manage the influence of cultural dynamics within the context of implementing organizational change has thus become an essential competency for business professionals involved in facilitating organizational development.

This article explores how simulations can be effectively employed to facilitate the development of these important competencies among business professionals. In the next section, the theoretical underpinnings of simulations will be discussed, prior to exploring the application of this didactic technique to the separate tasks involved in developing competence among business professionals for conducting cultural analysis in organizations.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SIMULATIONS

Simulations capitalize upon the strengths of social cognitive theory (SCT), which posits that people learn from observing and modeling the behavior of others in a social setting (Bandura, 1986). Vicarious learning lies at the heart of this approach to andragogy, which relies heavily upon observation and modeling behavior to shape learners' mastery of complex skills (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Observing others with whom the learner identifies successfully execute the skills one seeks to master increases efficacy and motivation through processes of social identification:

Modeling influences do much more than simply provide a social standard against which to appraise personal capabilities. People actively seek proficient models who possess the competencies to which they aspire. By their behavior and expressed ways of thinking competent models transmit knowledge and teach observers effective skills and strategies for managing environmental demands (Bandura, 1997, p. 88)

Modeled behavior, vicariously absorbed and subsequently practiced, can then be stored until circumstances create the motivation to translate what has been learned into action (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007).

Four sub-processes combine to render SCT an effective approach to learning complex, skill-based behavior: attention, retention, production and motivational processes (Bandura, 1997). Attentional processes determine what information is selectively observed and extracted from the social environment that constitutes the context for vicarious learning in SCT. Attributes of both the learner and the learning environment influence the nature of these attentional processes (Bandura, 1997). Subsequently, cognitive processes must be engaged to facilitate the retention of observed experiences. In social cognitive learning, retention is a deliberately active process involving the symbolic transformation of observed events into mental representations that integrate newly acquired information with existing memory structures (Bandura, 1997). Production processes conducted in a social environment are then employed to elicit the behavioral manifestations resulting from social cognitive learning. Representational guidance and corrective adjustment are utilized to shape successive approximations of learner mastery of modeled behavior. Conceptual models employed during this phase help learners gauge the correspondence between observed and exhibited behavior.

Finally, SCT relies upon underlying motivational dynamics relating to both intrinsic and extrinsic processes to facilitate the acquisition of modeled behavior. Three major types of incentive motivators are recognized: direct, vicarious and self-projected (Bandura, 1997). Learners are incentivized to the extent that they are presented with social cues which cause them to identify with the observed actors, perceive the modeled skills to be consistent with their self identity, and likely to result in meaningful rewards (Bandura, 1997). These observational, cognitive, behavioral and motivational processes combine in SCT to create powerful incentives for mastering complex, skills-based, experiential knowledge acquisition.

The video-based ethnographic simulations created to impart anthropological tools of cultural analysis to business professionals are described in this article. These tools capitalize upon the strengths of SCT to promote understanding and acquisition of skills in analyzing organizational culture. Video technology is commonly employed in simulations to promote behavioral learning, through repeated viewings and analysis, using the tape to focus attention on particular aspects of a situation, role or behavior (Davis & Davis, 1998). Video simulations are particularly effective when combined with role play to allow learners to practice assuming roles modeled in the video. Davis and Davis (1998) assert that videos are the "preferred technology" for extending the value of role play in a simulated environment. Videos may be used either to set up the environment of the role play (as in learning activities described in this article), or to record learners' successive approximations of modeled behavior. In the simulations described below, videos have been used to facilitate the attentional and retention processes involved in SCT, while role play serves to facilitate processes of production and motivation.

SIMULATING ETHNOGRAPHIC CULTURAL ANALYSIS

Simulations capitalize upon the strengths of social cognitive learning theory to create an effective didactic platform for helping students master the skills of ethnographic cultural analysis in organizations. In conducting an analysis of organizational culture, human resource professionals must assume the peculiar attitudinal and analytical stance of an ethnographer in relation to their organizations (Sackmann, 1991). Ethnographers relate to the objects of their analysis from a unique vantage point, allowing them to understand cultural dynamics from both an insider (emic) and outsider (etic) perspective simultaneously (Fetterman, 1998). This dual lens is absolutely essential for cultural analysis because it affords both a

subjective and objective interpretation of culturally significant dynamics (Hatch, 2000). That duality constitutes the heart of cultural analysis, but, it requires insight, self-monitoring, self-regulation and practice to master. Simulations afford a uniquely structured learning environment in which to develop these disciplines.

The prototypical ethnographic simulations described in this article are based on cultural data collected in conjunction with a study of strategic change in large organizations in the United States (Latta, 2006). The target institutions featured in the simulation were all in various phases of implementing comprehensive strategic change initiatives, thus providing a rich context for exploring the interplay of cultural dynamics and change management. Each video segment consists of a simulated ethnographic interview with a senior administrator, department head, employee or change agent in a top 25 ranked organization in the industry.

The simulations were developed to introduce business leaders and human resource developers to a model of organizational change in cultural context that delineates the mediating influence of organizational culture at every stage of the change process (Latta, 2006; 2009a). The OC³ model of organizational change incorporates theoretical advances in understanding the tacit influences of organizational culture on the process of implementing change initiatives. The simulations can be used either to introduce the application of the OC³ Model, or as an aid to understanding other process models of change (Burke, 2007; de Caluwe & Vermaak, 2003; Porras & Silvers, 1991; Kotter, 1996; Lewin, 1947).

A number of didactic elements important for developing a sophisticated understanding of cultural dynamics can be built into the simulations (Alasuutari, 1995; Fetterman, 1998). The video segments provide a platform for exercises that simulate:

1. Representing the hierarchical relationship among visible cultural artifacts and underlying basic assumptions (Schien, 2004; Sackmann, 1991; Rousseau, 1990);
2. Understanding the interplay between an organization's dominant cultural profile and its various subcultures (Martin, 2002; Howard-Grenville, 2006; Sackmann, 2007);
3. Considering elements of culture that facilitate strategic organizational change (Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Latta, 2009a);
4. Resolving competing cultural commitments that contribute to the emergence of institutional immunity (resistance) to change (Kegan & Lahey, 2001; Wagner & Kegan, 2006).

The relevance of each of these components of cultural analysis is explored with respect to the business professional's role in promoting organizational development and change.

Apprehending Organizational Culture

The ethnographic interpretation of organizational culture is grounded in an understanding of the basic elements in which cultural meaning resides, and the hierarchical relation among culturally relevant dimensions of organizational life. The first challenge in acquiring skill in analyzing organizational culture is discerning and documenting these relevant dimensions of organizational life as embodying cultural meaning. There are four primary ethnographic skills business professionals must master if they wish to utilize these techniques to analyze the cultural dynamics in their organizations and organizational groups or units: Conducting an ethnographic interview, adopting a reflexive attitude, engaging in iterative hypothesis testing, and interpreting cultural dynamics (Fetterman, 1998; Heracleous, 2001).

Conducting ethnographic interviews requires insight into establishing rapport, managing dynamic interrogation, sensitivity to contextual cues and cognitive self-monitoring (Van Maanen, 1988). The reflexive attitude essential for conducting cultural analysis requires simultaneous awareness of oneself as both an observer (recorder) and respondent (interpreter) to culturally relevant artifacts, behavioral norms, attitudes and perceptions transmitted within the organizational environment (Fetterman, 1998). Iterative hypothesis testing involves translating one's own reactions to observed cultural dynamics into plausible explanations that must be subsequently verified or refuted through careful probing and experimentation (Alasuutari, 1995). Finally, the interpretation of cultural dynamics must unfold in a manner that weaves the layers of meaning into a coherent whole (Alvesson, 2002).

Simulation affords the ideal social cognitive learning environment for transmitting these skills. Through videotaped interviews of actors conducting simulated ethnographic interviews, business leaders can be exposed to the full range of techniques and skills involved in extracting culturally relevant information. By compressing culturally relevant content typically obtained over extended interview sessions with multiple informants into a few exemplary videos, these simulations model effective techniques in an environment richly saturated with ethnographically relevant data. This provides a context for learners to practice the attentional and retention processes called for by the social-cognitive learning paradigm:

By observing others, people acquire knowledge, rules, skills, strategies, beliefs, and attitudes. Individuals also learn about the usefulness and appropriateness of behaviors by observing models and the consequences of modeled behaviors, and they act in accordance with their beliefs concerning the expected outcomes of actions (Schunk, 1996, p. 102).

Watching the videos, viewers are able to witness the process of attending to culturally relevant cues within the context of ethnographic interviews. Consistent with the precepts of social cognitive theory, this serves to raise awareness of the attentional filters that shape learners' own biases with respect to what aspects of the environment are identified, selected for relevance, and committed to memory (retention).

Combining the videos with subsequent individual and group-based learning exercises engages participants in activities that facilitate the processes of retention and production integral to the social cognitive learning paradigm. Role play exercises in which management trainees interact with each other, using their own organizational contexts as the objects of analysis, can be used to extend the simulation beyond the focus of the simulated environment. Encouraging learners to practice the behavioral and cognitive skills they have seen modeled in the videos enhances identification with the role of the ethnographic interviewer, tapping sources of motivation that complete the social cognitive learning cycle. Specific exercises can be designed to give working professionals opportunities to practice new skills in a safe environment, including:

1. Identifying culturally relevant elements evident in the interviews
2. Recognizing examples of researcher reflexivity modeled by the actors
3. Analyzing the consequences of iterative hypothesis testing
4. Categorizing and arranging elements of culture into hierarchical layers of abstraction
5. Deriving culturally relevant hypotheses to assess in subsequent interviews

The following excerpt from one of the video interviews provides an example of how the simulation environment serves to model ethnographic reflexivity and hypothesis testing:

- Interviewer: So, do you think this institution has really changed because of this new administration and its strategic plan?
- Informant: Well, this administration is a lot more open. It used to be that decisions were made without explanations. We never knew why things happened. But now, the president holds monthly briefings for the entire campus community, where he provides an update on progress implementing the strategic plan. Have you attended any of these?
- Interviewer: Yes, I've attended a couple. The president presented an update on organizational benchmarks, but what really struck me was that no one asked any questions. At one of these forums, the chief operating officer laid out a new strategic initiative relating to diversity, and even then, when invited to ask questions, no one did. I noticed the same thing at a senate meeting where the president spoke. I've never observed that sort of thing at an organization before, and I've been tempted to ask a question at one of these functions, just to see what would happen! Can you provide any insight?

- Informant: Employees tend to be pretty respectful of administration in this organization. It's "the [organization name] way".
- Interviewer: I've heard that phrase a lot here. What exactly does it mean?
- Informant: It's kind of hard to put into words, but even the customers know what it means. For one thing, no one likes to engage in endless debate here, and meetings are expected to end on time so people can get back to work.
- Interviewer: Does that reflect a general reluctance at this institution to challenge the status quo?
- Informant: Well, it is true that there is very little open disagreement between middle managers and administration. But I don't think it is the case that staff are just sheep and will go along with anything administration proposes. There are some settings in which employees are more inclined to ask questions and engage in discussion. But even then, we have a tendency to agree to disagree. If we know there is no hope of reaching common ground, there is general resignation to the fact that there is no point in debating the issue.

After viewing the simulated interviews, management trainees ought to be encouraged to develop their own cultural hypotheses, and to formulate interview questions designed to test these perspectives. The simulation environment may be enriched over time by creating videotaped segments in which students role play themselves testing their alternative hypotheses. Creating videos that feature divergent responses can afford a realistic analogy for the dynamic process of iterative hypothesis testing in the context of ethnographic cultural analysis.

Interpreting Cultural Meaning in Organizations

Cultural analysis does not end with the identification and hierarchical arrangement of culturally relevant dimensions of organizational life. These hierarchical frameworks must be interpreted with respect to the systems of cultural meaning they embody (Hatch, 1993; Schulz, 1995). It is not the cultural frameworks themselves that reveal the inner workings of the organization, but how these frameworks are employed by individuals within the organization to impose meaning on events, and make sense out of experience (Alvesson, 2002).

The interpretation of cultural meaning in organizations has been guided by a variety of perspectives (see Hatch, 2006 for a recent review). A tendency among many of these researchers and practitioners has been to look for evidence of cultural uniformity (Ashkanasy, Broadfoot & Falkus, 2000; Deal & Kennedy, 2000; Cameron & Quinn, 2006; Dennison, 1990). Such approaches rely upon the imposition of normative cultural frameworks derived for purposes of highlighting commonalities and facilitating cross-institutional comparisons. But, the search for internal consistency reflects the myth that strong cultures lack ambiguity (Meyerson, 1991; Feldman, 1991). This monolithic understanding of culture has since given way to more nuanced approaches to cultural analysis integrating both objectivist and subjectivist perspectives (Hatch, 1993), and simultaneously acknowledging the dynamics of integration, differentiation, and fragmentation inherent in any cultural setting (Martin, 2002).

Martin (1992; 2002) advanced a three-perspective approach to cultural analysis as a corrective against normative approaches that tend to obscure the cultural inconsistencies that exist within organizations. An analysis resulting from this multiple perspectives approach simultaneously acknowledges the threads of uniformity, diversity and discontinuity that co-exist within the cultural fabric of an organization. By recognizing that multiple, sometimes conflicting, cultural dynamics operate on many levels within an organization concurrently, such an approach, "obviates the need to develop cultural typologies to account for differences within the organization's meaning making systems" (Latta, 2009b: 58). Instead, these differences can be accounted for without implying cultural inconsistency (Hatch, 2000).

Applying a multiple-perspectives approach to cultural analysis requires the ability to view cultural evidence as embodying a variety of levels of meaning. Rather than seeking to extract the one definitive interpretation of each cultural artifact or element of cultural evidence, multiple lenses are applied for the

purpose of extracting alternative interpretations. The three interpretive lenses defined by Martin's (1992, 2002) three-perspective approach are the integration, differentiation and fragmentation perspectives. The integration perspective asserts that organizational culture is a set of unambiguous norms that are consistently reinforced, about which there is organization-wide consensus. The differentiation perspective focuses on the identification and delineation of organizational subcultures. According to this view, organizational culture consists of multiple, distinct, but inconsistent and often conflicting, subcultures each existing within well-defined boundaries. Finally, viewed from the fragmentation perspective, organizational culture manifests as ambiguous, inconsistent and fluctuating norms reflecting a lack of organizational stability, integration or consensus.

Employing a multiple-perspectives approach to cultural analysis affords advantages to human resource professionals operating within the context of large, complex organizations. Although broad organization-wide cultural values and assumptions have relevance, it is the local behavioral norms and values that have greatest impact on the performance of individuals and the functions of organizational units. Implementing organizational change depends upon being able to affect the thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and behavior of individuals working in individual departments, teams and work groups. Ethnographic simulations afford particular advantages as a didactic technique for fostering the conceptual flexibility required to view organizational culture through a multi-perspective interpretive lens.

After viewing each video segment, separate groups of students can be assigned to interpret the cultural evidence elicited in a single interview, from one of the three interpretive perspectives. Reporting their separate analyses to the entire class provides a means of highlighting the threads of evidence supporting each cultural perspective. Similarly, this approach affords the opportunity for learners to witness how particular cultural elements can be reinterpreted to reflect multiple layers of cultural meaning. This exercise affords powerful insight into the multi-dimensional nature of organizational culture and provides experiential evidence to support the exercise of caution in construing cultural meaning. An overly constrained or delimited approach to cultural interpretation risks overlooking significant nuances of meaning.

Simulation is a particularly effective means of demonstrating for business leaders the utility of this three-dimensional analysis for understanding the implications of complex cultural dynamics in their organizations. The following example serves to illustrate this point:

- Interviewer: I noticed a lot of new buildings north of the main quad, can you tell me what part of the organization's mission those are dedicated to?
- Informant: Oh yes, those are our newest research laboratories dedicated to supporting interdisciplinary research. But no one hardly uses them.
- Interviewer: That seems surprising. Why is that?
- Informant: So, those buildings were funded by the recent capital campaign led by the president. The idea was to build state of the art research laboratories to help us bring in external funding to fuel our interdisciplinary research and development agenda. We were all excited about this, and so was the community until after the buildings were built. That's when we found out there were a whole new set of conditions for utilizing that space.
- Interviewer: It sounds like things were going well. What happened?
- Informant: Well, historically, research space has been allocated to every viable project regardless of whether it generated external funding, but the new laboratory space is only available for use by those scientists who have an external sponsor for their research. And once that funding source is exhausted, they lose access to the space whether their research is completed or not.
- Interviewer: It sounds like that would be quite a change for the members of this organization.
- Informant: It's a huge change! So much so that researchers have refused to move out of their existing, often dilapidated labs which they know they will be able

- to continue using regardless of their source of funding.
- Interviewer: So what does the president think of all this?
- Informant: He's not happy! In fact, I heard he recently toured the building and asked. "Where are all the researchers?" I think they are realizing they are going to have to change the rules back to the way things were, if they expect us to use the new facilities. Guess we'll see....

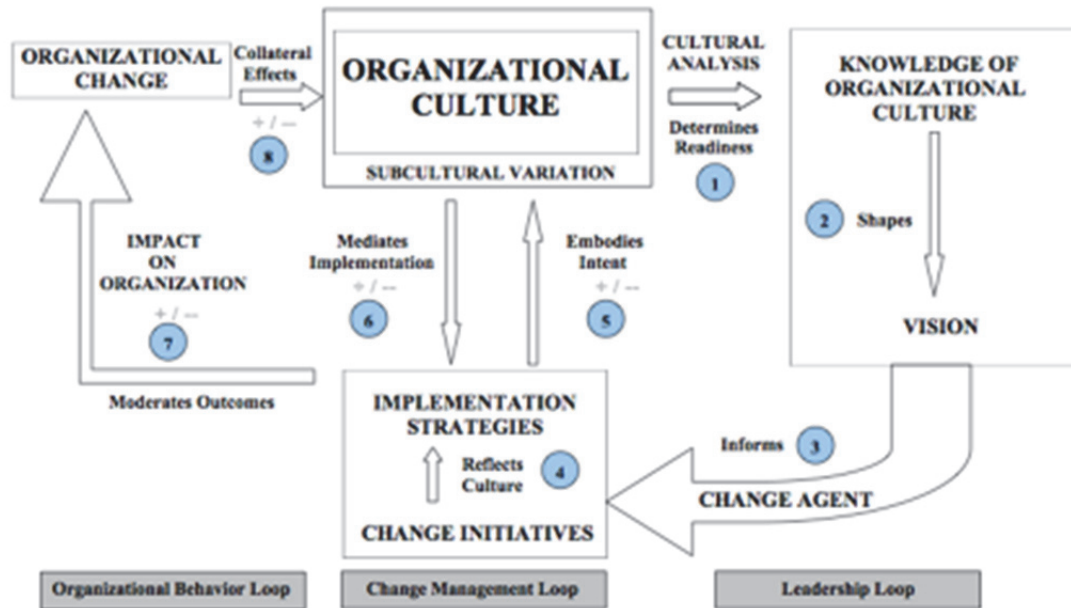
Interpreting this interview from an integrationist perspective, it is certainly possible to make a strong case that the members of this organization share a common overarching value on research and the employees who conduct it. But this interview also reveals differences in the underlying behavioral norms governing use of laboratory space and equipment embedded in the subcultures of the organization (differentiation). There is also evidence the current administration is perceived to be violating underlying basic assumptions embedded in the culture of the organization governing implied employee contracts (fragmentation). On the one hand, research scientists consider the organization obligated to provide adequately furnished laboratory space as a condition for fulfilling their contractual responsibilities, while administrators are signaling they consider access to these facilities to be contingent on the scientists bringing in external research funding. Thus, with respect to its research mission, this organization simultaneously bears evidence of cultural integration, differentiation and fragmentation.

This example also provides insight into how ethnographic simulations can facilitate business professionals' understanding of the interplay between an organization's dominant cultural profile and its various subcultures (Martin, 2002; Howard-Grenville, 2006; Sackmann, 1997). A differentiation perspective might further explore the extent to which research is valued differently by researchers and administrators throughout the organization, reflected differentiation among the ranks of employees within these respective subcultures. Adopting a cultural differentiation perspective might lead business leaders to seek further clarity regarding the status of research within particular subcultures of the institution. Perhaps there is evidence that research is valued for its intrinsic value by researchers, but is only valued for its instrumental value by administrators responsible for resource allocation decisions in the organization. Once again, business professionals can be encouraged through this simulation to practice various leadership and decision-making roles in the organization, acting as a cultural ethnographer, formulating decisions, and role playing various approaches to implementing strategic change. The simulation provides an environment for exploring alternative interpretations of cultural dynamics derived from this multiple perspectives approach to cultural analysis.

UNDERSTANDING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN THE CONTEXT OF CHANGE

A leader's ability to understand how organizational culture affects the success of organizational change initiatives is of particular importance in the current global business community. Organizational culture has been found to have a strong influence on efforts to affect strategic change at every stage of the implementation process (By, 2005; Hatch, 2000; Kezar & Eckel, 2002). The influence of organizational culture on change implementation is most comprehensively represented in the OC³ Model of Organizational Change in Cultural Context (Latta, 2009a). Others have considered the cultural context of change in various types of organizations (Burke, 2006; Hatch, 2000; Heracleous, 2001; Kezar & Eckel, 2002) but the OC³ model is the first to delineate the interplay of organizational culture at every stage of change implementation (See Figure 1). The OC³ model outlines the reciprocal influence of organizational culture on the planning and implementation of planned change (Latta, 2009a). It differs from other approaches by focusing on both processes and conceptual change, and it uniquely reflects both the cultural facilitation and resistance to change at every stage of change implementation (Latta 2015).

FIGURE 1
OC3 MODEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE IN CULTURAL CONTEXT



Source: Latta, 2009a

According to the OC³ Model (see Figure 1), organizational culture plays a strategic role during planning in determining readiness for change, shaping the vision for change, and determining both specific change initiatives and implementation strategies. During implementation, cultural dynamics in an organization may explicitly serve to either reinforce or modify change initiatives, while tacit elements of culture further mediate the institutionalization of change. Forces of cultural resistance or facilitation triggered by the change ultimately determine the overall impact of the intervention.

Key to applying the OC³ process model of change is understanding how organizational culture can both facilitate and serve as a source of resistance to change in organizations. Organizational culture facilitates the implementation of initiatives that are consistent with existing norms. However, these norms can become a source of resistance to change initiatives that threaten basic tenets of organizational culture. Effective human resource professionals increase their effectiveness at facilitating institutional change by mastering the ability to discern dimensions of organizational culture, and developing the facility to navigate these currents within the context of change. Simulation environments have particular utility for illustrating the ways in which organizational culture mediates these processes of change implementation in organizations.

Understanding the Cultural Facilitation of Change

When the goals of a strategic change initiative align with the values and behavioral norms of an organization, these cultural dynamics can exert a powerful facilitative influence on the progress and pace of implementation. Business professionals who invest in conducting a thorough assessment of organizational culture position themselves to serve as internal consultants to help shape change initiatives in ways that maximizes the potential for success. Even when organizational change is directed at altering some ingrained aspects of institutional culture, aligning implementation with other cherished values and assumptions embedded in the culture of the institution can ease the process of affecting new behaviors. The multifaceted dimensionality of organizational culture increases the likelihood that change will impact a variety of behavioral and attitudinal aspects of organizational life. Understanding the interplay of these

dynamics can help business leaders anticipate the impact of their strategic initiatives and facilitate necessary change.

Simulations offer a rich contextual environment in which members of the business community can gain insight into the complex interaction of organizational culture and institutional change. After using the videos to gain perspective on the basic dimensions of organizational culture and construct multi-dimensional profiles that capture these dynamics, new simulations can be introduced that provide opportunities for analyzing the impact of culture on specific change initiatives. Several examples of how organizational culture facilitates the implementation of change can be featured in the simulations, derived from research and real world examples of strategic change. Aptitudes particularly relevant to developing cultural competence among business professionals include: increasing diversity, promoting ethical decision-making, countering institutional paternalism, and improving the mission visibility. Exercises designed around the OC³ Model of organizational change can help managers identify aspects of organizational culture that facilitate the implementation of strategic change initiatives.

Understanding Cultural Resistance to Change

Another critically important competency for business professionals to master relates to developing an understanding of the dynamics of organizational culture that engender resistance to organizational change. Resistance to change is one of the most challenging dynamics leaders face in 21st century organizations. Business leaders are increasingly being recruited to help manage and overcome the obstacles to achieving strategic goals (Hasselbein, 2005; Fairbairn, 2005; Graddick-Weir, 2005). The following excerpt illustrates how simulated ethnographic interviews serve to sensitize students to the sometimes subtle ways in which cultural resistance manifests in organizations:

Interviewer: I know one of the goals of the strategic plan is to increase interdisciplinarity in your research and development teams. Your department seems to have been particularly visible in its efforts to engage in cross-departmental initiatives. What is your impression of how these efforts are going?

Informant: It's true, as statisticians, we sort of naturally reach out to assist others with their research. So, we've tried hard to respond to the mandate to increase our institutional competitiveness by creating interdisciplinary research teams. For instance, we have a number of grants with the folks over in engineering and other colleges. Plus, we've made some joint appointments from the provost's pool of new employee lines. These positions are specifically targeted for interdisciplinary hires.

Interviewer: It sounds like your department has become really engaged. Have you been directly involved in any of these interdisciplinary research efforts?

Informant: Well, yes, I am working on a grant with a bunch of engineers. I've been working on the project for about nine months, and it's been interesting.

Interviewer: Oh really, how so?

Informant: Well, I'll tell you a story. We were working on this one problem last spring, and we got to a point where the engineers reached an impasse. I said, "I think that's a problem we can help you with." So, I got together with some colleagues in my department, and we came up with a solution. Then I went back to the group and said, "Hey, we think we've developed an application that solves your problem!" The engineers looked at us and said, "Oh, we don't need that anymore. We just figured out a work around."

Interviewer: So you spent your time working out a solution that you thought would contribute to a joint effort, and in the meantime, they just figure a way around the problem.

- Informant: Yeah. It was like they weren't really interested in generating new knowledge relating to the problem, they just wanted to get on with developing an application using existing techniques. So, we wound up wasting our time, when we thought we were being helpful.
- Interviewer: You sound disappointed.
- Informant: I am. We are. I guess you could say we're a little soured on working on interdisciplinary initiatives as a result.

After viewing a video segment such as the one described above, training participants would be able to utilize the OC³ Model of Organizational Change in Cultural Context to deconstruct the interplay of organizational culture at every stage of the change implementation process (Latta, 2015). In this instance, business professionals could use the OC³ model to diagnose sources of resistance embedded in the conflicting subcultures of two organizational units willing to work together, but not understanding their differing underlying values and basic assumptions. An astute business professional trained in cultural analysis would be able to pinpoint the cultural roots of these misunderstandings and devise an intervention to promote understanding and accommodations to preserve the working relationships. Without such managerial insights, these two employee groups would create an impenetrable wall against any future collaborations, to the detriment of the entire organization and its common purposes.

Overcoming Immunity to Change through Cultural Analysis

Sometimes in the midst of implementing planned change, organizations find themselves at an impasse, and business leaders often struggle to diagnose the underlying causes of these barriers to implementing strategic initiatives. There is increasing evidence to suggest the root causes of such failures may lie in the underlying cultural dynamics of this organization (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Cultural analysis can provide a means for business professionals to identify these underlying impediments to progress, so solutions may be crafted that address root causes. Adopting this application of simulated cultural analysis has the potential to go beyond promoting learning goals, to foster maturational development among managerial professionals (Hoare, 2006). The following ethnographic dialogue illustrates this application of cultural simulation:

- Interviewer: I understand you have encountered some challenges in implementing your change agenda in one of your production divisions. Tell me about that?
- Informant: It's true. I just don't understand what the issue is. Every time I speak with the division head, she makes such unreasonable demands.
- Interviewer: Could you give me an example to help me understand?
- Informant: Well, for instance, she constantly claims they do not have enough space to carry out their mandates. They demand more office space and complain about their facilities.
- Interviewer: Isn't that the unit that was slated to get a new building a couple years ago?
- Informant: You're right, it was. They were on the master plan to move into the new complex when it was completed, but after I took this position, I could see the engineering division needed that space more than they did, so the facility was reassigned to that unit.
- Interviewer: That's the same unit you worked for previously, correct?
- Informant: It is. And that unit is most central to the organization's mission, so it must be given priority. It's just accepted here that resources have to be allocated first to the divisions responsible for maintaining our position in the market. Other division managers who don't accept that do not reflect the organization's core values. If this division head continues to be unreasonable, I may have to replace her.

This exchange reveals an immunity to change that is rooted in the competing cultural commitments of the organization. The senior administrator being interviewed is blind to the cultural basis for the conflict she is having with her division manager, and the bias reflected in his own decision to advantage the unit he previously served. Kegan and Lahey (2009), refer to this type of resistance as “immunity to change”, and illustrate how overcoming it requires revealing underlying conflicts in the cultural fabric of the institution. Gaining experience with cultural analysis through training in a simulated environment could help business managers become skilled at recognizing and resolving such conflict in their own organization when they arise. Doing so would not only promote organizational advancement, but foster maturational development among business leaders as well (Moshman, 2003).

Wagner and Kegan's (2006) strategy for resolving cultural immunity to change is introduced as a basis for engaging training participants in exploring ways to overcome the resistance to change. This process involves identifying the underlying basic assumptions embedded in the existing culture of the organization that contrast with the cultural values inherent in the proposed change initiatives. In order to keep the primary learning objective focused on the development of change management skills, the emphasis on these exercises should be focused on enhancing understanding of the nuances of cultural dynamics, rather than on the particular merits of proposed solutions.

STRENGTH OF SIMULATION FOR TEACHING CULTURAL ANALYSIS

Experience utilizing simulated cultural interview and group exercises similar to those described in this article suggest a number of advantages for employing simulations as a means of developing skills among business professionals in cultural analysis and managing organizational change. Cultural analysis is a complex professional competency requiring mastery of both cognitive and behavioral skills. Simulations capitalize upon the strengths of social-cognitive learning theory to develop these skills. Research suggests that SCT is a more effective approach to teaching adult learners than other didactic strategies such as case studies, because it capitalizes upon the potential to foster double-loop learning (Friedman, Lipshitz & Overmeer, 2001).

Simulations capitalize upon dimensions of vicarious learning to heighten processes of attention, retention, production, and motivation. Coupling observational learning (ethnographic videos) with structured group project and role playing creates a learning environment that promotes risk taking, skill development and reflective learning. Ethnographic exercises designed to promote cognitive (analytical) skills are combined effectively with activities for practicing behavioral mastery of interview techniques and interpretative procedures. A simulated environment permits the process of developing these cognitive and behavioral skills to be segmented and sequenced to highlight separate aspects of the ethnographer's process that in practice take place simultaneously, rather than in a linear fashion. Focusing sequentially on the component aspects of cultural analysis enables students to both discern and master discrete methodical tasks, while constructing a holistic understanding of the iterative nature of eliciting and interpreting cultural meaning.

Future Enhancements of the Simulation Environment

The simulations described in this article were designed for use in either online or management development workshop settings. They are predominantly visual and experiential, emphasizing group process, face-to-face discussion and role play. Utilizing such simulations with various learning groups in a workshop setting has proven to be an effective way to develop understanding and skill in cultural analysis among business leaders and professionals, by tapping affective dimensions of learning and blurring the lines between work and play (Davis & Davis, 1998; Proserpio & Gioia, 2007). Adapting these resources for online delivery represents an opportunity to extend the strengths of this simulation-based learning experience into a virtual environment.

The potential exists for reaching a broader audience by converting these curriculum models to computer mediated instructional units suitable for an interactive online environment, designed to meet the needs of a "virtual generation". Computer mediated simulations have been used to facilitate learning

about organizational behavior among business professionals since the early 1960s (Bonini, 1963; Forrester, 1961). The advantage of computer mediated environments is that they afford potential for modeling processes of both human cognition and organizational behavior (Hedberg & Wolff, 2001). According to Proserpio and Gioia (2007), using simulations in an online environment would maximize the potential to reach a new generation of learners adapted to the high-touch, interactive experiences facilitated by internet-based technologies. Their assertion, based on the notion that learning is maximized by aligning teaching methods with learning styles, is that "risk-free, interactive simulations, in which it is possible to play, experiment, and learn, are, in our view, a good fit with the out-of-classroom experience of V-Gen students" (p.79). This would maximize the pedagogical advantage of simulation by aligning with the virtual generation's preferred learning style.

Proserpio and Gioia (2007) recently identified three design principles to guide the creation of virtual learning environments for the virtual generation. Their analysis stipulates that simulations should facilitate students' ability to create connections dynamically along three dimensions: content connections, interpersonal connections, and conceptual connections. A brief exploration of how each of these might apply to the development of facility conducting cultural analysis among business professionals suggests several avenues for further development.

The value of using simulation to develop skills in cultural analysis could be enhanced in an online environment by allowing participants to search for and create dynamic links among the threads of cultural meaning they discern within the ethnographic interviews. Simply making the existing ethnographic interviews and exercises available online would not fully maximize the potential for creating these content connections. Providing a map of the interview content, however, so that workshop participants could search for and select interviews based upon cultural themes, would facilitate the process of finding and understanding the relationships that exist (or can be created) within the linear dialogue of the videos. This enhancement would transform the observational dimension of the simulated environment from a passive to an active experience, thus increasing user engagement and heightening attentional processes (Bandura, 1997).

Similarly, affording management trainees the opportunity to interact with others in an online environment for purposes of practicing interview skills and exchanging insights about interpreting cultural evidence would enhance the interpersonal nature of the simulation. This speaks to the propensity for members of the virtual generation to prefer learning in a social community of their own creation (Proserpio & Gioia, 2007). Incorporating this enhancement could be particularly beneficial as a means of fostering depth of understanding with respect to interpreting cultural content simultaneously from the integration, differentiation and fragmentation perspectives. Adding the potential for learners to create and contribute their own simulated interviews exploring alternative hypotheses would further enrich the versatility of the simulated environment over time.

The greatest potential advantage to be gained from adapting the ethnographic simulations for a virtual environment perhaps lies in the possibility of promoting the creation of more robust conceptual connections among learners. Proserpio & Gioia (2007) noted that the most effective commercial simulation products on the market "allow student to combine system variables to generate higher level effects and dynamics" (p. 78f.). In the context of cultural analysis, these conceptual connections are integral to the quality of the learning outcomes. Incorporating tools to enable students to track the conceptual connections they derive from the simulated interviews would support these higher order learning objectives. More importantly, appropriating technological advances in a virtual environment could enable management trainees to practice negotiating cultural dynamics of facilitation and resistance to change.

Providing a risk-free context for learners to explore the consequences of alternative outcomes of these negotiations would capitalize upon the strengths of the virtual environment for supporting simulations (Davis & Davis, 1998). At the same time, incorporating tools to enable students to track the conceptual connections they derive from the simulated interviews would support these higher order learning objectives (Proserpio & Gioia, 2007). One strategy for accomplishing this enhancement might be to integrate content analysis and mapping tools into the simulated online environment. This would enable

students to gain a visual appreciation for the cultural knowledge they extract from the interviews. It would also promote skill development in the use of software tools that support cultural analysis, a professional competency not addressed in the current classroom-based simulations.

CONCLUSIONS

Understanding organizational culture has emerged as a pivotal determinant in the success of organizational change initiatives. Mastering the techniques of cultural analysis has thus emerged as a core competency for business leaders working to facilitate and manage organizational change (Grossman, 2007; Graddick-Weir, 2005). This article illustrates the utility of developing video-based ethnographic simulation modules and training exercises to promote fluency among change agents in utilizing techniques of cultural analysis in all types of organizations. The examples provided from existing ethnographic research demonstrate how simulations can promote progressive levels of conceptual knowledge and skill development among business professionals, pertaining to the apprehension and interpretation of organizational culture, and its relevance to implementing organizational change interventions. Organizations can use similar techniques to create simulation modules that reflect elements of their own organizational culture as a context for management training and acculturation of new employees.

The potential to transmit these modules for access in a virtual learning environment holds promise for extending the utility of such management training resources to business professionals beyond the classroom and professional development workshop environments. Whether facilitated face-to-face or mediated online through a virtual environment, Proserpio and Gioia (2007) assert the importance of an instructors' presence, noting "instructors are still important because of their ability to shed light on the complex web of relations underlying simulated problems" (p.79). Regardless of the delivery mode, simulations provide an effective means for exploring the full range of supportive, facilitative and direct intervention strategies business professionals are called upon to adopt with respect to conducting cultural analyses in their organizations, while serving as executive coaches, organizational developers and change agents (Losey, Meisinger & Ulrich, 2005). Opportunities exist for utilizing simulations to promote advances in other areas of organizational theory and practice to meet the demands of the 21st century global business community (Losey, Meisinger & Ulrich, 2005).

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