NOW WE'RE A UNIVERSITY COLLEGE:
A KALEIDOSCOPE OF MEANINGS

By

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Abstract

I conducted a case study at Multisite (a pseudonym), an established community college that is becoming a university college. I explored and attempted to understand (a) the organizational culture, and (b) how faculty members interpret this transition. I conducted prolonged observations and interviews with 39 faculty members.

I explored the culture by means of what I label the themes of family, of participation, and of institutional mission. I also explored it using multiple perspectives, especially a fragmentation perspective (Martin, 1992). I used the metaphor of a kaleidoscope to signify shared frames of reference without consensus on meanings.

I modified Geertz’ (1973) sensemaking perspectives and developed a framework. It entails three elements: (i) a perspective, (ii) a symbol or issue, and (iii) the interpretation of (ii) within (i). It is consistent with Weick’s (1995) description of organizational sensemaking.

An individual may focus on (a) traditional (e.g., communal and participatory) cultural values, (b) emergent (e.g., academic) cultural values, or (c)
pragmatic interests. The interpretation may be positive, negative, neutral, or postponed, depending on the perceived status of the cultural value or of the pragmatic issue. Interpretations seem not to be associated directly with objective characteristics, such as length of service, program affiliation, or academic credentials attained.

Fragmented meaning systems are associated with fragmented interpretations; fragmented interpretations are associated with fragmented patterns of organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Faculty who use a traditional cultural perspective indicate that they or their colleagues retain their level of commitment or have lost it, according to whether traditional values seem retained or lost. If they are uncertain what will happen to traditional values, they are uncertain whether they or their colleagues will remain engaged. Faculty who use an emergent cultural perspective indicate an increased job satisfaction; they may indicate decreased organizational commitment. Faculty who use a pragmatic perspective may see the transition positively and express enthusiasm for their work; they may see it negatively and express low levels of organizational commitment. I suggest that factors in the external environment have precipitated changes in organizational values which, in turn, have precipitated changes in organizational commitment and job satisfaction.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING THE STUDY

An experiment in institutional restructuring is taking place in the post-secondary sector in British Columbia (Dennison, 1995, p. 134). A number of established community colleges have been granted university college status. This means these institutions are adding the third and fourth year courses of the baccalaureate degree to the first and second year "university transfer" courses that have long been a part of their curriculum. They will offer degrees in cooperation with one or more of the established universities for a period of several years. At some later time, they will do so independently. They continue to be classified as college sector institutions, along with the province’s community colleges and institutes.

Becoming a university college is seen to be an inherently difficult process. The university college structure is an attempt to combine the conventional
university and the comprehensive community college, two different types of institutions with two fundamentally different sets of institutional values (Dennison, 1992, 1995). To a student of post-secondary education, this transition is interesting in itself. How this new institutional type evolves, for example, may well be significant in how the college sector evolves.

My primary interest in the transition, however, is not in the change itself but in the context it provides for interpretive research. Interpretive research emphasizes personal, interpersonal and organizational meanings (Putnam, 1983, p. 31). An interpretive approach assumes that human understanding and action are based on the interpretation of information and events by the people experiencing them (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 435, citing Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979). How organizational members make sense of (i.e., interpret and come to understand) what is happening influences what happens. To a student of organizational sensemaking and organizational culture, the transition provides a rich research opportunity.

I report here a case study conducted at Multisite (a pseudonym), a community college that is becoming a university college. I describe and explore how faculty interpret what is happening at a particular time in the transition period. I use the nested perspectives of organizational sensemaking and
organizational culture as an exploratory frame. I outline the study’s purpose and significance and I provide an overview of this document in the rest of this chapter.

The Research Purpose and Underlying Assumptions

In this study, I have two related purposes. I intend to explore, describe and attempt to understand (a) the organizational culture at Multisite, and (b) what the transition to becoming a university college means to faculty members at Multisite. This is the overarching research question: How do faculty members at Multisite make sense of (i.e., interpret and come to understand) the transition to becoming a university college?

I plan a case study on the basis of the following assumptions and guidelines. People in organizations are engaged in ongoing attempts to understand what is happening around them. They ascribe meaning to, or impose meaning upon, experience and use the imposed meaning as a basis for subsequent understanding and action (Gioia, 1986, p. 50). Sensemaking is important because it is intrinsically linked to organizational action and to understanding organizational action.
The meanings members ascribe to what is happening are guided by interpersonal and organizational meanings. Organizational culture functions in helping members interpret what is happening (Kuh & Whitt, 1988); it is a means of collective sensemaking which guides people to understand their experience in distinctive ways (Morgan, 1986). This is a core assumption made by many organizational theorists, including Bartunek, 1984; Conrad, 1983; Daft & Weick, 1984; Frost, 1987; Gioia, 1986; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Morgan, 1986; Smircich, 1983. Hence, a focus on personal interpretations in an organizational setting implies an exploration of the organizational culture (e.g., Smircich, 1983c; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

Theorists do not agree on how to define culture, but they do agree that meanings (a generic category, including understandings, values, beliefs, and assumptions) are critical elements. Meanings are understood to exist within networks or systems, sometimes described as value systems (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), coherent meaning systems (Louis, 1983) or contextually-based systems of meaning (Morgan, 1990). Organizational meanings (i.e., contextually-based systems or networks of organizational meanings) are the essence of organizational culture; this is another core assumption.
Significance of the Study

In this study, the research interest is in how a particular group of organizational members interpret their organizational experience. Their interpretations are important because they underlie their attitudes and organizational actions. A key issue for understanding organizational behaviour thus becomes one of understanding how meaning is derived (Gioia, 1986, p. 51).

In the most general terms, then, this study is likely to make a contribution to our understanding of organizational behaviour.

More specifically, this study is likely to make a contribution to a number of areas neglected in the literature. These include gaps in the overlapping literatures of educational administration, higher education, organizational analysis, and organizational culture. In educational administration, for instance, the experience and interpretations of members are recognized as critical in how an educational organization deals with change and hence are of great importance to educational administrators (Miklos, 1992, p. 172). Miklos (1992) labels this the interpretive aspect of change and describes it as under-researched.

In the study of strategic change in organizations, more generally, the meaning systems of participants are an area of fundamental importance (Gioia &
Chitttipedi, 1991). Any substantive change will lead to the alteration of existing meaning systems (Gioia, 1986). This study is likely to make a contribution to our understanding of how those meaning systems change.

A number of theorists (e.g., Gioia & Chitttipedi, 1991; Morgan, 1986), note that understanding subjective organizational phenomena requires being grounded in the organizational culture. Yet, there are no clear guidelines on how a researcher gains this grounding (as Kuh & Whitt, 1988, observe). In the study of subjective phenomena in colleges and the study of the culture of Canadian colleges, there are few published reports. Elsewhere (Owen, 1995), for example, I identify only five recent studies (two of which are mine, including the project reported here) that deal with organizational culture in a Canadian college context. This study may contribute to what we know about studying organizational culture by offering an account of a long-term effort to describe and explore a particular college culture. It also may contribute to what we know about organizational culture by offering a rich cultural portrait of one post-secondary institution.

A cultural portrait may offer something of value to those with a pragmatic interest in understanding what happens in their workplaces. Louis (1983, p. 40) suggests that a greater appreciation for cultural aspects of organizations is an asset for new members. Writing of a time characterized by a rising rate of voluntary
turnover, she suggests that persons entering organizations as new members are coming to recognize the need to become acculturated, to "learn the ropes."

Thinking of the present, in which workplaces are characterized by a rising rate of involuntary turnover and by a pervasive sense of insecurity on the part of many employees, I suggest that a cultural portrait may be an asset for members of any length of service. Greater appreciation for cultural aspects will not guarantee continuing employment or career advancement, of course. It could allow better understanding of what is happening, however, thereby allowing more successful adaptation to the situation.

The study may prove informative to practitioners and policy makers in educational organizations, especially in post-secondary educational organizations. The post-secondary sector is characterized by an extended period of constrained resources and a rapidly changing environment. Post-secondary educational organizations are making major organizational changes, such as the transition, to attempt to respond to societal demands (e.g., Cameron, 1984; CSSHE, 1992; Levin & Dennison, 1989). They are likely to continue to do so, since the demands show no sign of abating; in fact the demands seem likely to increase (Dennison, 1995). This study may contribute to our understanding of change in these institutions.
Also, the particular change of interest here, that of adding degree programs to an institution offering non-degree programs, seems likely to continue to occur. As this study was being conducted, for example, a number of other institutions in British Columbia began to offer degrees, either with a university college structure or under another arrangement. There is continuing pressure to provide more access to degrees and to provide new kinds of degrees to respond to changing technology-driven workplaces nation-wide (Dennison, 1995, p. 135). This seems likely to mean more attempts at complex and innovative restructuring of post-secondary institutions, including more attempts to house together programs that traditionally have been housed apart. The once nearly dichotomous distinction between college programs and university programs is crumbling; the ensuing period is marked with uncertainty about how best to understand this shift. This study may contribute to that understanding.

This study can contribute towards understanding and appreciating behaviour in organizations, especially post-secondary educational organizations. Administrators are unlikely to find guidelines on how to direct or control behaviour here, however. Traditionally, organizational analysis focuses on how organizations can be more efficient at what they accomplish. Priority is given to principles of prediction, generalizability, causality and control. In contrast,
interpretive analysis attempts to explore the phenomenon of organization as subjective experience and to understand how organization, being organized, is accomplished and maintained. Priority is given to a subjective orientation, issues of meaning and organizational processes (Smircich, 1983a).

This study, then, is likely to contribute knowledge of a particular type, a type sometimes not seen as science. I intend here to underline the distinction between (i) knowledge arising from scientific analyses that concern cause and (ii) knowledge arising from interpretive strategies that seek comprehension. Roth (1991) notes that these two forms of knowledge usually are labelled explanation and understanding. He illustrates the distinction between them, as it usually is understood, as follows.

An explanation of a particular car radiator’s cracking might consist of citing the water in the radiator, a drop in ambient temperature, how water reacts in such conditions, and so forth. An understanding of the cracked radiator might plausibly involve, inter alia, an appreciation of inconvenience caused, acceptance of an excuse for lateness, or tolerance of a bad mood. (Roth, 1991, p. 179, see Note 1)

Seeking understanding in a study of an organization encourages appreciation of the depth and complexity of organizational life. This quest is

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1 This author, in fact, develops the argument that his discipline (psychoanalysis) resists classification within that traditional dichotomy. Nevertheless, I find his example of the radiator a useful heuristic.
consistent with the research interest: the perspectives of members on their subjective experience of organization.

Overview of the Dissertation

In chapter 1, I introduce the study and outline the organization of the dissertation. In chapter 2, I offer background information on the institution of Multisite and on the theoretical perspectives of organizational sensemaking and organizational culture. In chapter 3, I describe how I plan, conduct, and write the account of the study. In chapter 4, I describe the first phase of the study, in which I act as an observer. In chapter 5, I begin to describe and explore the organizational culture at Multisite on the basis of the descriptive account in chapter 4. I identify statements of belief that I tentatively label cultural themes. This is the beginning of the thematic analysis that is the focus of the next three chapters.

In chapters 6 through 8, I describe and explore what I come to think of as the three cultural themes of Participation, Family, and Mission. These are more fully developed from interviews, as well as from ongoing observations, conducted in the second phase. In chapter 6, I begin to describe what people say about
participation and find I am exploring sets of beliefs that concern decision making. In chapter 7, I begin to describe what people say about being family and find I am exploring sets of beliefs that concern social relations. In chapter 8, I begin to describe what people say about mission and find I am exploring sets of beliefs that concern institutional purpose.

In chapters 9 and 10, I respond to the study’s two purposes. In Chapter 9, I describe and explore a cultural portrait of meaning systems at Multisite. In chapter 10, I describe and explore what people say about the transition and I attempt to understand how they interpret the transition. In Chapter 11, I summarize the study and I describe and explore some personal reflections on it.
CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter, I provide substantive and theoretical background to the study. In the first section, I describe Multisite, the institution where the study is done, as it was at the time the study was conducted, and I describe community colleges and university colleges as institutional types. In the second section, I describe the theoretical perspectives of organizational sensemaking and culture. Finally, I outline the nested perspectives that serve as an analytic frame for this study.

A Focus on Multisite

I offer three sets of comments as substantive background to the study. The first set of comments describes the institution of Multisite itself; the second, the
institutional form it has been historically; the third, the institutional form it is becoming.

**Multisite**

Multisite was established as a community college in the 1970s. It serves a large region. It has two main campuses in two different communities and a number of smaller centres in various locations. In its early years, all the centres were small, relative to many urban centres in the province, and the region was rural in character. More recently, a rise in population in the region overall, and increasing urbanization, especially in some population centres, characterize the region. Agriculture continues to be a significant factor in the regional economy, although not as dominant as it once was.

Multisite has enjoyed a good reputation in the college sector since it was founded. It is seen by insiders (members of the organization) and outsiders (including academics who study colleges and instructors and administrators who work in other colleges) as a "good" college. The report of external evaluators, for example, notes the open and participatory style of management. It describes the college as one of the best, if not the best, in the province, in terms of the history of good labour-management relations (Evaluation Working Group Reports, 1987).
Multisite's history of relatively harmonious labour - management relations is well known in the college sector, a sector in which poor labour relations (as demonstrated by strikes, for example, and votes of non-confidence in administrators by faculty unions) are not uncommon. Some faculty members (and other organization members) at Multisite speak of an open and consultative management style as a given, rather than as a goal to be attained. Some persons associated with other colleges note that Multisite's representatives to various provincial committees and tasks forces often speak as representatives of the whole organization, rather than as persons representing administration, faculty, or the union. This is in contrast to representatives from other institutions, who tend to emphasize role affiliation.

At the time the study began (early 1993), the total number of employees (teaching and non-teaching faculty, staff, and administrators) was just over three hundred. This represents an increase of fewer than 20 people over the previous year. However, it is almost double the total number of employees at Multisite in 1985, eight years earlier. In that eight year period, institutional documents show an increase of 134% in teaching faculty, 83% in staff, and 22% in administrators. The document shows the increase in administrators in larger font than the other numbers. In comparison to other college sector institutions, Multisite is seen to
have relatively few administrators and a "flat" (i.e., few levels of hierarchy) structure.

The term administrator is used at Multisite to mean those who are members of the management group, which includes the President, Bursar, and the Deans of various divisions. Some faculty hold administrative positions, such as head of department or program. They are not described as administrators, however, either conversationally or formally (i.e., they remain faculty members by contract). During the course of the study, a number of administrative positions were eliminated, including three persons with the title of associate dean. Those individuals were called administrators during their tenure in those positions. For a period of time after it was known these positions would disappear, the term senior administrator was used to distinguish those members of the management group who would remain members of Management from those who would not.

Multisite has three divisions which offer instruction, the Careers Programs, Academic Studies and Continuing Education divisions, and a fourth non-instructional division, Educational Support. Most faculty are in either Careers or Academic programs; these divisions often are referred to as the two instructional divisions. They are of approximately the same size. It seems important to underline that each of these divisions offers both degree programs and non-degree
programs. This is in contrast to some institutions, for example, where all degree programs are offered by a unit labelled Academic. The Academic Division at Multisite offers a variety of subjects and diploma programs (e.g., International Studies, Theatre) as well as several Bachelor degree programs (e.g., Arts, Science, Computer Systems), offered in cooperation with another institution. The Careers Division includes a variety of certificate and diploma programs (e.g., Accounting, Marketing, Nursing) as well as a number of degree programs (e.g., Business Administration). Some Careers programs more often are called Technical Programs; others, Trades Training.

Employees in Continuing Education who are classified as faculty members often are involved more in programming (i.e., in organizing courses) than in classroom instruction. Continuing Education programs include part-time business or vocational courses, general interest courses, and cultural events organized in cooperation with community groups. Finally, the Educational Support Division has a number of employees, including librarians and counsellors, who are classified as non-teaching faculty members.
A Community College

Multisite, an established community college, is better understood within the context of the history of that institutional type. Community colleges were established in Canada in a period (1960s to 1975) of post-secondary expansion. They "were founded upon ideals of democratization of opportunity, accessibility, adaptability, and comprehensiveness" (Levin & Dennison, 1989, p. 41). These founding ideals are interrelated and mutually supportive; indeed, they sometimes are difficult to tease apart. Access is the goal of providing the opportunity of post-secondary education. Democratization of opportunity emphasizes that educational opportunities are made available to a broad cross section of the people in the region (Levin & Dennison, 1989, p. 43). Comprehensiveness is a means of broadening access and creating educational opportunity for more people (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986, p. 159).

The importance of access, as a symbol of college ideals, is difficult to overstate. Most of the nine characteristics of community colleges (as identified by Dennison & Gallagher, 1986) are oriented to enhancing access for all members of the community. The characteristic of operational flexibility enhances access when classes were organized so that a shift worker could attend up-grading courses on a drop-in basis, for example. Other characteristics that enhance access include an
orientation to student heterogeneity, to open admissions, and to student services, and a focus on teaching and learning. Also, an orientation to the community can mean instructors work with community members to set up programs and activities in the community, thereby reaching people who might not come to the institution.

However, the characteristic most closely linked with access is the comprehensive curriculum. Dennison describes this curriculum as the integration of academic and vocational programs and as “an institutional arrangement that attempts to preserve equality of status among all programs” (1992, p. 111). It includes a mix of vocational and trades training programs, career, technical and para-professional programs, upgrading, general academic and general interest/non-credit courses. In British Columbia, it includes the first two years of many university degree programs, often described as university transfer courses. This variety of programs was intended to offer something for everyone, or nearly so, and also to encourage mobility among programs. An individual might register in a non-credit course, for example, and later feel comfortable registering in courses in which progress was assessed formally.

As the community colleges evolved and expanded through the 1970s, they "pushed the concept of accessibility to the point where the range of courses and community services offered went well beyond what the original planners had
anticipated" (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986, p. 161). On the basis of government funding and institutional creativity, colleges were able to reduce greatly financial, geographic, and social barriers to post-secondary education (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986, p. 163).

Throughout the 1980s, two contradictory factors emerged in the social context. One was a steady narrowing of access as a result of reduced funding, beginning with the economic downturn of the early 1980s (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986). The pattern of responses to this downturn included reducing public funding, passing more costs on to learners, and an emphasis on evaluating programs in terms of cost effectiveness. These and other responses to economic pressure reduced the capacity of colleges to pursue their traditional goal of accessibility (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986, p. 164, 165).

The other factor was the public attitude toward accessible post-secondary education. "By the early 1980s, many Canadians assumed that subsidized access to the kind of education and training they wished to have was their right by practice if not by legislation" (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986, p. 161). This public expectation seems a major influence in the socio-political context in which university colleges are being created.
A University College

Multisite has recently sought and attained university college status and so is better understood within the context of that institutional type. In 1988, the Ministry (i.e., the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training, British Columbia, as it was then titled) set up a committee to report on opportunities for access to post-secondary education in the province. The committee’s report identified a low provincial participation rate in post-secondary education (i.e., provincially 33 FTEs per 1000, nationally about 45 FTEs per 1000) and low provincial degree completion rates (e.g., ranked ninth nationally and at half of Ontario's rate, Dennison, 1992, p. 110).

One result was that an "Access to All" strategy was developed and implemented to respond to social and political concerns with access to post-secondary education. Specific to concerns with access to degree programs, the report recommended that a number of community colleges in large, non-urban centres (i.e., excluding the Vancouver and Victoria areas, already served by established universities) be given degree granting status. In 1989, the Ministry granted university college status to three community colleges. A number of other institutions were granted university college status in following years. In all these cases, the college institution worked with one or more of the established
universities to organize their degree programs. For the first several years of holding university college status, the degrees are awarded under the aegis of the university. Later, the university college will grant degrees in its own right (Dennison, 1992, 1995).

As already noted, the transition from being a community college to becoming a university college is seen as a difficult organizational change. This change means an attempt to combine two different institutional types with two fundamentally different sets of institutional values and two quite different institutional mandates (Dennison, 1992, 1995).

These points can be fleshed out as follows. In Canada, the university tradition emphasizes research and scholarly activity and an orientation to one’s discipline rather than institutional loyalty (Dennison, 1995, p. 135). The curriculum is academic, with a strong emphasis on theory. The orientation is to the production and dissemination of knowledge. Admission is selective, based on previous academic performance. Contribution to knowledge is emphasized in evaluating faculty performance. Faculty members in universities have substantive input in matters of governance (Dennison, 1992).

In contrast, community colleges have a primary emphasis on teaching and student service, a comprehensive curriculum, and an orientation to responding to
the changing needs of the community. "Open door" or at least less restricted admission is preferred. Teaching and student service are emphasized in evaluating faculty performance. College faculty have no formal role in governance; they have advisory power, at best (Dennison, 1992).

The preceding discussion is intended to explain why the transition from community college to university college is seen as difficult. What is missing are the positive points that have been identified so far in the evolution of this new institutional form. With the addition of degree programs, for example, some instructors in university colleges speak with enthusiasm about new challenges (Dennison, 1992, p. 114; Owen, 1993). Many university college instructors say they are happy to offer degrees within their region, because people value that opportunity (Owen, 1994b, c). A major positive factor is that there is, in fact, more access to degree programs, and more access to particular groups of students, including those disadvantaged by geography or other barriers (Dennison, 1992, 1995). It is reasonable to suggest that people who would not have had the opportunity to attain degrees now have that opportunity. The historical precedent here seems salient. The community colleges were established to provide access to post-secondary education and attained a great deal of success in doing so. The
university colleges were established to provide access to degree programs. So far, they seem to be doing so.

A Focus on Meanings

In this study, I take an interpretive approach to organizational research and use the theoretical perspectives of organizational sensemaking and organizational culture. In this section, I do not intend a comprehensive review of the literature (although I do a selective review on organizational culture elsewhere: Owen, 1995). I intend to outline how I understood that approach and those perspectives, relevant to what I intended to do, as I began the study.

An Interpretive Approach

In this section, I describe what I mean when I describe this study as interpretive. Because social and educational inquiry is, in the words of Lofland and Lofland, “a terminological jungle” (1984, p. 3), it seems worthwhile to consider briefly what meanings are associated with the term, as well as to indicate how I use it. I also describe what I mean by a perspective-seeking approach, a description that explains why I see my research question as analogous to a riddle.
An interpretive tradition. There are various schemes for classifying research practice. The most common classification is the use of a dichotomous typology, with all research designs placed in one or the other category. For example, Smith (1989) identifies two major research traditions or paradigms and labels them empiricist and interpretive inquiry. Another influential typology consists of four paradigms of social theory and organizational analysis, including one labelled the interpretive paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). This typology is cited frequently, often being used to define what is, in fact, another dichotomous treatment. In organizational analysis, for example, a distinction between the interpretive and functionalist paradigms is made on the basis of this typology (e.g., Putnam, 1983).

Regardless of typology, an interpretive research approach implies certain assumptions about the nature of reality, of knowledge, and of human nature. Smith (1989) describes an interpretive approach in terms of internalist, rather than externalist, assumptions. Burrell & Morgan (1979), in terms of subjectivist, rather than objectivist, assumptions. The subjectivist view (or equivalently, the internalist view) implies the following. Reality is seen to be (or can be seen to be) mind-dependent. "Social reality is a constructed reality, the product of the meanings people give to their interactions with each other and of the meanings
inquirers give to their interactions with subjects and with each other" (Smith, 1989, p. 8).

In this view, the social world is seen as being of a much softer, personal and more subjective quality than the natural world (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 2). When the social world is understood this way, the inclination is towards what Burrell & Morgan (1979) label an ideographic methodology. “The ideographic approach emphasizes the analysis of subjective accounts which one generates by ‘getting inside’ situations and involving oneself in the everyday flow of life” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 6).

In this view, there is no independently existing external reality to be discovered. There is the opportunity to engage in the double hermeneutic: to attempt to provide second-order interpretations of the first order interpretations people give to their daily lives. Knowledge is subjective and based on insight and experience. One consequence of this epistemology is that correspondence is not appropriately defined or characterized as truth. Truth is a matter of the internal coherence of our interpretations and a matter of what we can agree is true.

As indicated by the contrasts made between research traditions, a subjectivist view is just one way of looking at organizational phenomena. There is no consensus on the relations among the various ways of looking at such
phenomena. Sometimes the assumption that research paradigms represent mutually exclusive alternatives is declared or implied (e.g., Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Other times, the assumption is that these different perspectives are not polar opposites, necessarily, but in fact can complement one another (e.g., Hunt, 1994; Putnam, 1983). This debate, sometimes labelled "the paradigm wars," remains an unresolved and pervasive tension in the literature on organizational research. I take this view: that certain sets of assumptions may be more useful in attempting to answer certain research questions and other sets of assumptions may be more useful in attempting to answer other research questions.

On that basis, an interpretive approach seems a reasonable choice for this study, because the interest is in subjective phenomena, such as interpretations and beliefs. However, there is the possibility of overestimating the extent to which organizational reality is a social construction (Ranson, Hinings, & Greenwood, 1980, p. 9). Organizational members do not exist in a vacuum; individuals and groups always are limited by environmental and organizational constraints (Ranson, Hinings, & Greenwood, 1980, p. 9). Organizational members do interpret organizational events, information, and processes subjectively; however, those events, information, and processes do have some objective reality to them
which affects how they are interpreted (this follows what Dutton, 1993, p. 196, says on the more specific topic of constructing organizational issues).

In the preceding, I described what is meant by an interpretive approach and I indicated my position with regard to an ongoing debate. I do not defend or further elaborate this position, however. My task here is to report on a particular study that takes a particular approach.

**An interpretive study.** The term interpretive itself denotes an emphasis on meanings. Implicit in its usage, often, is the assumption that people are actively engaged in seeking and constructing meanings (Gioia, 1986; Putnam, 1983). This study is interpretive in a number of senses of the term, each of which is consistent with that core denotation. It is interpretive in the sense that it is analytic as well as descriptive (Merriam, 1991). I interpret and attempt to understand what is happening, as distinct from simply reporting it.

Different senses of the term focus on different levels of meaning construction. Miklos (1992) uses the term at a rather specific level when he writes of the interpretive aspects of change, for example. His interest is in how those experiencing an institutional change interpret that change.

In a broader sense, an interpretive approach to organizational research assumes organizational members are engaged in a search, not necessarily
rationally or consciously, for meaning; they are involved in the social construction of reality. Members "do not engage in the process of discovering some existing reality but of creating it and/or learning it from others who are mutually involved in its construction" (Gioia, 1986). An interpretive approach to organizational research focuses on how organizational members interpret what is happening around them, generally. It assumes that the interpretations of organizational members are critical to understanding organizational reality, because how people interpret underlies how they understand and how they act.

An interpretive approach is concerned with understanding the way the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world, with understanding the world at the level of subjective experience (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, pp. 3, 28). This concern with subjective experience is consistent with what Langenbach, Vaugh, and Aagaard (1994) describe as a perspective-seeking approach to research. I outline the distinction they make between that and the more traditional truth-seeking approach, because I think they offer a useful metaphor.

In a truth seeking study, the researcher usually starts with a theory and proceeds deductively to test it. The intention is to discover the solution to the research problem. This design assumes that the world being investigated is like a giant jigsaw puzzle: there is one best way to fit everything together. In contrast, in
a perspective seeking study, the researcher usually starts with a question and proceeds inductively to investigate it. Theory may not come into play until one looks for explanation or confirmation after gathering the data. The intention is to explore the multiple perspectives of those involved. This design assumes that the world is like a riddle: there may be a number of plausible answers (Langenbach, Vaugh, and Aagaard, 1994).

I make the preceding distinction explicit so that my understanding of the research question is neither missed nor misunderstood. The perspective-seeking approach requires qualitative sources of data and qualitative techniques of data analysis as well as a subjectivist view of the social world. However, some qualitative techniques sometimes are used in studies with a truth seeking perspective and an objectivist view. Hence, the reader familiar with using interview transcripts as the primary source of data may not be familiar with an approach that uses thematic analysis rather than content analysis. The reader may not be familiar with an approach in which the research question is understood more as a riddle than a jigsaw. Such an approach has different sets of rules and more loosely constructed rules than a more conventional approach (Langenbach, Vaugh, and Aagaard, 1994). These rules will be outlined in Chapter 3.
Sensemaking Perspectives

Sensemaking means literally what it says; it concerns making sense of events and experience; sensemaking is meaning construction (Gioia, 1986, pp. 60-61). The term sensemaking expresses the commonsense recognition that people monitor, interpret and attempt to understand what is happening around them. Organizational members create meanings to make sense of their world; they reflexively monitor their experience and thus remake and recreate that experience (Ranson, Hinings, and Greenwood, 1980, p. 4).

In the following passage, Conrad (1983), with an emphasis on understanding behaviour, describes how sensemaking happens. He identifies key aspects of sensemaking, including those commonly identified across theorists. I cite him here at some length because I like the clarity of the following passage.

A person chooses to act in particular ways in certain situations. Although his or her choices may be highly individualized, they are not random. They are guided and constrained by a person’s perceptions of what actions are appropriate in a particular situation, perceptions influenced by an individual’s memories and interpretations of present and anticipated actions. People constantly monitor the actions of other organizational members to construct meaningful explanations for those actions. Through a complicated sense-making process, they gain an understanding of how and why people act as they do and a conception of how they should and should not act. Their frameworks for interpreting human action constrain their own behavior by defining some responses as nonsensical and others as sensible and appropriate to the situation. Of course, most people are not aware of their interpretative frameworks nor of the processes through which they choose among alternative actions. ... Normally the guidelines and constraints implicit in their interpretive schemes remain “preconscious” or “tacit.” ... This depiction of interpretive frameworks focuses almost entirely on the sense-making and choice-
making processes of individuals. This picture, however, is incomplete because it omits the social situation in which individuals make choices. Employees neither act nor attribute meaning to their actions in a vacuum. They interpret actions in part by observing other people's behavior and by uncovering interpretations that other people make of these actions. People observe that individuals exhibit recurring patterns of action and explanation (Mead, 1934). These recurring patterns provide members of a culture or organization with a sense of which actions and interpretations are sensible and appropriate. Once an individual detects recurring patterns of action, he or she can predict and explain others' actions and can provide sensible explanations for his or her own actions. Observing patterns of actions allows employees to construct structures through which their organizations makes sense. Social structures thus have a dual relationship to the actions of organizational members. ... People's actions simultaneously create, sustain, and revise interpretive structures; these structures in turn guide and constrain actions. (Conrad, 1983, p. 184; italics in original)

Consistent with many descriptions of sensemaking, Conrad writes of interpretive frameworks as he attempts to explain how sensemaking happens. Other key aspects of sensemaking are that the individual's frameworks are influenced by the social context, past and present.

Over time, observers have inferred that people organize and store information about how things happen. Interpretive frameworks are an abstraction to explain the means by which they do so. Interpretive frameworks or interpretive schemes often are described as structures that organize and store the information that people accumulate over time about how things happen (e.g., Bartunek, 1984; Conrad, 1983; Frost, 1987; Gioia, 1986; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Ranson, Hinings, and Greenwood, 1980). Frameworks are "the cognitive schemata that map our experience of the world" (Bartunek, 1984). They are composed of a
network of expectations learned from experience, "a built-up repertoire of tacit knowledge that is used to impose structure upon, and impart meaning to, otherwise ambiguous social and situational information to facilitate sensemaking" (Gioia, 1986, p. 56, citing various authors).

Interpretive frameworks can refer to both the individual’s and the group’s means of comprehension of organizational life. "Interpretive schemes operate as shared, fundamental (though often implicit) assumptions about why events happen as they do and how people are to act in different situations" (Bartenuk, 1984, p. 355). The idea of multiple levels of sensemaking suggests three related points. First, organizational sensemaking can be analyzed at a number of different levels. Second, organizational sensemaking actually occurs at multiple and mutually influential levels. Third, organizational culture is an especially salient level of organizational sensemaking.

Two examples illustrate the first point, that sensemaking can be analyzed at various levels. Gioia (1986) describes organizational sensemaking as the process whereby people attempt to construct meaningful explanations for situations and their experiences within those situations (p. 61). He focuses on symbols and scripts as the means by which people understand their situation. His interest is an
elemental or personal level of sensemaking: how the individual makes sense of the organizational context.

In contrast, Schneider (1990) describes organizational sensemaking as the process by which organizations gather and interpret information regarding environmental events. She focuses on how strategic issues are validated and prioritized in different countries. Her interest is in an institutional level of sensemaking: how the organization makes sense of its national context (Schneider, 1990).

Implicit in those examples is the second point: Regardless of level of analysis, sensemaking, in practice, always entails multiple levels. For example, Daft & Weick (1984), among others, write of organizations as “interpretation systems.” In this view, organizations seek information, make interpretations, and base organizational action on that information. “Individuals come and go, but organizations preserve knowledge, behaviors, mental maps, norms, and values over time” (Daft & Weick, 1984, p. 285).

Daft & Weick (1984) assume that the organizational interpretation process is something more than what occurs among individuals; yet they identify sharing information and interpretations among influential members, especially managers, as the distinctive feature of organizations as sensemaking systems. Sensemaking
at the organizational level requires that individuals communicate, elaborate and negotiate interpretations at the personal level. Daft & Weick (1984), like Schneider (1990), study a macro level process and acknowledge the importance of microlevel interpretive activity.

In a related way, those who study the sensemaking of individuals acknowledge the importance of the interpretations that are embedded in the organization’s structure. Ogawa (1991), for example, writes of a “collective mind” in which the individual’s interpretations are nested.

Individuals make sense of the daily stream of organizational life by filtering perceptions through mental structures, or schemata, that are developed on the basis of interpretations of prior experiences. But, sense-making in organizations is not entirely idiosyncratic, for individuals are nested in organizations that, themselves, exist as collective minds (Daft & Weick, 1984). From this perspective, organizations comprise schemata that have developed through the interpretation of the collective experiences of organizational members and are embedded in organizations’ social structures (Daft & Weick, 1984, p. 285). Individuals’ interpretations of organizational events, then, are shaped in large measure by schemata that comprise the organizational mind. (Ogawa, 1991, p. 32)

Frost (1987), as a final example, says people have three different means of deriving meanings about what they observe in organizational settings. One is the interpretive schemes people bring to the organization. Another is based on what people see in the present, in terms of the interactions that take place every day. The third is the “deep structure” meaning which consists of the “socially structured and culturally patterned behavior of groups and practices of
institutions" (Frost, 1987, p. 506, citing Lukes, 1974, p. 22). This is consistent with the patterns of action which Conrad (1983), above, describes building up over time. These meanings are tacit, often imperceptible; they may only become identified in crises. They are expressed through symbols, such as logos and stories and especially through metaphors (e.g., Frost, 1987, p. 508; Gioia, 1986, p. 53). These symbols "are ways of seeing and means for defining a consensual reality; they are also the stuff of organizational culture" (Gioia, 1986, p. 53).

Emergent in the preceding discussion is the third point: Organizational culture frequently is identified in organizational studies as important in organizational sensemaking. It is an especially significant level of sensemaking in itself and is mutually influential with other levels. The idea that the individual's sensemaking and the organizational culture are intrinsically linked recurs.

Ogawa (1991), for example, notes that a few recent studies examine how organizational members make sense of succession in administrative positions. He links what he labels "this emergence of an interpretive perspective" with an increased interest in the cultures of organizations in general and in the cultures of educational organizations in particular (Ogawa, 1991, p. 31). He refers to a nested view of organization, by which he means the individual's sensemaking is embedded in and shaped by collective or shared schema.
The idea that organizational culture is a means of collective sensemaking also recurs. (Arguably, that statement is just another way of expressing the idea of intrinsic linkage noted in the last paragraph.) Kuh & Whitt (1988), for example, say that culture serves as "a sense-making device that guides and shapes behavior" (p. 10). Morgan (1986) says that culture is sensemaking.

Shared meaning, shared understanding, and shared sense making are all different ways of describing culture. In talking about culture we are really talking about a process of reality construction that allows people to see and understand particular events, actions, objects, utterances, or situations in distinctive ways. These patterns of understanding also provide a basis for making one's own behavior sensible and meaningful. (Morgan, 1986, p. 128)

To look at culture as a sense-making device for organizational members is only one way of looking at this complex phenomenon, however. Many theorists see culture as a multifaceted phenomenon, better understood in the plural: cultural perspectives.

**Cultural Perspectives**

Any succinct statement on what culture means is likely to be challenged on one front or another. Although there is no consensus on exactly what it includes and excludes, most definitions and descriptions entail the following. Culture includes shared meanings (with various labels, such as values, beliefs,
assumptions) and various organizational practices, norms and rituals. It develops during the course of social interaction and it evolves over time; it is rooted in the organization's history (e.g., Morgan, 1986, p. 121).

Culture is frequently recommended as a conceptual tool to describe, explain and understand complex phenomena in organizations (e.g., Bolman & Deal, 1991; Morgan, 1986). It is seen as especially suitable to understanding "organized anarchies" (i.e., organizations characterized by the complexity that is induced by unclear goals, uncertain technologies, and ambiguity over who holds power) such as colleges (e.g., Bolman & Deal, 1991; Kuh & Whitt, 1988). There is no consensus on how culture is to be used to guide and inform research, however, perhaps because there is no consensus on how to conceptualize organizational culture itself (as is noted by a number of theorists, e.g., Frost et al, 1991; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Smircich, 1983c; Martin & Meyerson, 1983; Martin, 1992). There are different and sometimes incompatible conceptions of culture.

I use two approaches as I attempt to make sense of the various conceptions of culture. In the first, I distinguish among conceptions of culture in terms of the theory of organization from which they arise. This approach recognizes that what we mean by organizational culture is linked closely to what we mean by organization. In the second, I consider differences in how conceptions deal with
diverse organizational meanings, that is, with interpretations that are not shared. This approach (following Martin, 1992) recognizes that conceptions differ in terms of what patterns of interpretations (whether consensus, dissensus or confusion) are seen as an appropriate focus for a cultural researcher. In what follows, I outline these two approaches.

**Conceptions associated with theories of organization.** Theories of organization often are described as if there are two dichotomous and mutually exclusive alternatives, a traditional or functionalist theory and an interpretive theory. In functionalist theories, an organization is seen as an instrument for task accomplishment; it is designed to achieve predetermined ends as efficiently as possible. It may be compared to a machine or an adaptive organism. Functionalist theories are seen to rooted in the same objectivist assumptions that distinguish the traditional or functional research paradigm from an interpretive approach. In interpretive (often labelled expressive or symbolic) theories, an organization is seen as an expressive form (expressing feelings, meanings, needs) rather than as a rational system (efficiently achieving material outcomes). Organization may be compared with other social phenomena (e.g., culture, politics, theatre) rather than with physical objects (e.g., machines). Interpretive theories of organization are rooted in subjectivist assumptions (Smircich, 1983a).
When culture first emerged as a means of organizational analysis, it was seen as an emergent, contemporary notion and often was contrasted with functionalist or traditional concepts (e.g., Bolman & Deal, 1991; Petersen, 1985). It was seen as a reaction against the image of organizations as objective, intentional, and rational systems. Culture “focuses attention on the expressive, nonrational qualities of the experience of organization. It legitimates attention to the subjective, interpretive aspects of organizational life” (Smircich, 1983, p. 355).

Yet, some conceptions of culture offer less contrast to traditional views of organization than others. These conceptions are consistent with functionalist (sometimes labelled traditional or instrumental) theories of organization. A functionalist/objectivist view is seen to understand social reality as a single reality; reality is orderly, objective and "out there," external to the individual. From this perspective, culture is seen as another element or variable in the system. It is something that can be created, manipulated, and controlled. When culture is assumed to be an organizational variable -- something the organization has -- the research agenda often is how to mold culture to suit managerial purposes (Smircich, 1983a).

An interpretive/subjectivist view is seen to understand social reality as multiple realities, socially and subjectively constructed through the words,
symbols, and behaviour of its members. From this perspective, culture is not something an organization has, it is something an organization is (Smircich, 1983a). Culture is seen as a root metaphor rather than as a variable (Smircich, 1983a).

I understand this distinction between culture as a variable and as a root metaphor as follows. Understood as a root metaphor, culture is the root (the heart or essential core) of the organization. "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5). Hence, the organization and the culture cannot be understood or experienced separate from one other. When culture is assumed to be a root metaphor -- something the organization is -- the researcher asks how organization is accomplished and what being organized means (Smircich, 1983a, italics hers).

Smircich (1983a) identifies five themes in research on organizational culture and classifies each theme as entailing either a view of culture as a variable (a functionalist perspective) or as a root metaphor (an interpretive perspective). The themes in which culture is understood as a root metaphor all consider organization as a particular form of human expression. They differ in their foci of interests, however. Research with the organizational cognition theme, for example, draws from cognitive anthropology, in which culture is seen to consist of
shared knowledge. The researcher may attempt to determine the underlying rules or scripts that guide action. Research within the organizational symbolism theme draws from symbolic anthropology, in which culture is seen as a system of shared symbols and meaning. The researcher attempts to interpret the themes of the culture and the links among symbols and beliefs.

On the one hand, this "either/or" distinction between functionalist and interpretive theories of organization and conceptions of culture is artificial. Theories of organization comprise clusters of schools of thought that occur along a continuum rather than adhere to one extreme pole or the other. On the other hand, although the dichotomy is an oversimplification, these distinctively different views are useful to an organizational researcher. They offer distinctively different perspectives on organization and organizational culture, which taken together, can allow greater understanding of organizational phenomena.

Conceptions associated with patterns of meanings. Conceptions of culture also differ in how they deal with organizational meanings or interpretations that are not shared. All definitions of culture recognize the importance of shared (i.e., widely held, consensual or nearly so) meanings. Organized action requires the emergence and continued existence of consensually held interpretations of what is to be done and how to do it. Shared meanings allow
day-to-day activities to be taken for granted, to become routine (Louis, 1983; Smircich, 1983a, b, c). Shared meanings also underlie the interpretive or sensemaking function of culture. People have to share a particular value or other meaning, like the sense of being members of a community, for collective interpretation or collective action to occur. This is the view Morgan presents when he says shared meaning and shared sensemaking are ways of describing culture (1986, p. 128).

Often, culture is defined solely in terms of shared meanings; it is seen to exist only where there is consistency and consensus. So defined, culture excludes any meaning that is unclear, uncertain or not a matter of consensus; ambiguity (confusion, uncertainty, or contradiction) is denied. These conceptions of culture constitute the integration perspective (Martin & Meyerson, 1988; Martin, 1992). A cultural perspective defines what culture is and by implication, what is not. It determines what is seen and what is not recognized or noticed. Each is a "subjective perspective that researchers and cultural members adopt when they perceive, conceive, and enact a culture" (Martin & Meyerson, 1988, p. 120).

In the integration perspective, culture is the social or normative glue that holds together a potentially diverse group. Culture is an integrating mechanism, always emphasizing consistency, consensus, and often, a leader as the primary
source of cultural content. This monolithic view of culture seems to promise clarity, harmony, and a means to managerial control and organizational effectiveness. Top executives may find the harmony, the leader-centeredness, and the implications for managerial control of this view appealing (Martin & Meyerson, 1988). Integration conceptions of culture are generally appealing and pervasive; they dominate the popular press and historically have dominated the academic press.

Organization, "being organized," requires a degree of consensus concerning organizational routines. But a lack of consensus on a range of issues is a fact of organizational life. The differentiation perspective emphasizes lack of consensus, inconsistency, and the development of meaning by persons other than managers. In the absence of organization-wide consensus, there tend to be overlapping subcultures or other groupings. Ambiguity is channeled; consensus is seen to lie only within subcultures, each of which is ambiguity free. The integration perspective, which denies ambiguity, and the differentiation perspective, which channels it, have dominated research in organizational culture to date (Martin & Meyerson, 1988, p. 95).

In the ambiguity perspective, the third cultural perspective, ambiguity can be acknowledged and even made the focus of attention. Consensus, dissensus,
and confusion coexist, making it difficult to draw subcultural boundaries. Individuals are connected by some shared concerns but not others. The pattern of connections that is relevant depends on what issue is salient at the time. This is as distinct from the organization-wide connections of the integration perspective and from the connections by membership in subcultures of the differentiation perspective (Martin & Meyerson, 1988).

Each perspective implies different ways of understanding what culture means. In an integrative view, culture is shared values at all levels; consensus is clear and organization wide. In a differentiative view, culture is both those values shared at the organizational level and those shared only at a subcultural level. There is clear consensus within subcultures and clear conflict across subcultures (Martin & Meyerson, 1988).

In an ambiguity perspective, the meaning of culture itself is ambiguous; it is unclear where, if at all, there is consensus and whether there are shared values. People may see similar problems but different solutions; they may have comparable experiences but multiple meanings around those experiences (Meyerson, 1991). Culture may be less specific than shared values; it may be a more general sharing of an orientation, of an overarching purpose. Members of an organization may be held together by "a common frame of reference or a shared
recognition of relevant issues. There may not be agreement about whether those issues should be relevant or about whether they are positively or negatively valued" (Meyerson, 1991, p. 154).

Within this context, culture is defined as follows. Members of organizations interpret the various manifestations of culture (e.g., norms, stories, rules, informal codes). Because their perceptions, memories, beliefs, experience and values vary, their interpretations vary. The patterns of these interpretations and the ways they are enacted constitute culture (Martin, 1992, p. 3).

**An Emergent Framework**

I begin the study with a framework that entails multiple perspectives and nested perspectives, as follows. Theorists writing about organizational analysis sometimes suggest using multiple analytic perspectives and using culture as one of those perspectives (e.g., Bolman & Deal, 1991). Theorists writing about analysis of organizational culture sometimes underline that culture itself entails multiple conceptions or perspectives which can serve as "lenses for interpreting events and actions in colleges and universities (Kuh & Whitt, 1988, p. 6). This idea, that multiple perspectives offer a richer, deeper understanding, recurs. Martin & Meyerson (1988, p. 121), for example, suggest that a single-perspective view of a
It is worth noting that theorists who emphasize using multiple perspectives often make a point of using plural forms. Kuh & Whitt, who write of cultural perspectives instead of culture (at least some of the time) say they do so because it “suggests that the concept of culture has many different connotations” (1988, p. 1). Martin also (1992) uses a plural form (e.g., social scientific perspectives) to emphasize that researchers differ in their theoretical viewpoints. (Martin uses another plural form, such as referring to cultures within organizations, to emphasize that organizational members also differ in their interpretations and perspectives.) I follow these authors in preferring a plural form in principle and in using the familiar term culture, as well as cultural perspectives, in practice.

I begin the study with two sets of multiple perspectives. One set concerns patterns of interpretations and consists of the integrative, differentiative, and fragmentation (or ambiguity) perspectives (Martin & Meyerson, 1988; Martin, 1992). The other set (following Smircich, 1983a) concerns theories of organization and hence of culture. This set can be seen in terms of two levels of perspectives. First, there are two broad categories of cultural perspectives, one which entails a view of culture as a variable (a functionalist view) and the other, a
view of culture as a root metaphor (an interpretive perspective). Second, within
each of these categories, there are more finely focussed research themes or
perspectives. Among the root metaphor (i.e., interpretive) perspectives, for
example, are the cognitive and symbolic perspectives. Table 1 shows the two sets
of perspectives and the five themes within the first set. (For purposes of
accuracy, I include all five research themes. I underline the conceptions that
actually are used in the data analysis.)

I also begin with the idea of nested perspectives. I use this phrase, as
Ogawa (1991) does, to reflect the assumption that the individual’s sensemaking is
embedded in the organizational culture. I differ from him, however, as follows.
Ogawa (1991) uses a cognitive perspective as the means to analyze collective
sensemaking, citing it as one of Smircich’s interpretive research themes. As I
analyzed the data from the first phase, I was deliberate about using multiple
perspectives. As I analyzed the data from both phases, I found increasingly I was
emphasizing a thematic analysis, an analysis typical of a symbolic perspective. A
symbolic perspective treats culture as systems of shared symbols and meanings; it
requires identifying and describing the recurrent themes that reflect the
organization's world view or ethos (Smircich, 1983a, c). It is not surprising, (at
least with the wisdom of hindsight, it is not), that I move toward a symbolic
perspective. “The focus of this form of organizational analysis is on how individuals interpret and understand their experience and how those interpretations and understandings relate to action” (Smircich, 1983a, p. 351).
Table 1
Conceptions of Culture: Two Sets of Multiple Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set # 1. Conceptions Associated with Theories of Organization (Smircich, 1983)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a Functionalist: organization as instrument; culture as variable</td>
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<tr>
<td>1a (i) culture as independent variable: theme of comparative management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a (ii) culture as internal variable: theme of corporate culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b Interpretivist: organization as expressive form; culture as root metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b (i) root metaphor: theme of organizational symbolism</td>
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<tr>
<td>1b (ii) root metaphor: theme of organizational cognition</td>
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<td>1b (ii) root metaphor: theme of psychodynamic processes</td>
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<tr>
<th>Set # 2. Conceptions Associated with Patterns of Meanings (Martin, 1992)</th>
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<tr>
<td>2 (i) integration perspectives: shared meanings, consensus</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 (ii) differentiation perspectives: conflicting meanings, dissensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (iii) fragmentation perspectives: consensus, dissensus, confusion</td>
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**Note.** The conceptions that are underlined are used in the analysis.
CHAPTER 3

THE STUDY: FROM PLAN TO ACCOUNT

In this chapter, I outline how I planned the study, collected and analyzed the data, wrote the account, and how I understood and enhanced trustworthiness. These processes are in practice recursive; I consider them, somewhat arbitrarily, under the five headings of planning, conducting, writing, and analyzing the study and trustworthiness.

Planning The Study

I planned a case study, consistent with the following advice. The researcher with an interest in the meaning systems of participants ought to explore the organizational culture (e.g., Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Ogawa, 1991; Smircich, 1983 a, b). One explores an organization’s culture on the basis of a significant
period of observation in the setting (e.g., Morgan, 1986), with interviews conducted later (Smircich, 1983a, p. 171). The study has an emergent design (in Lincoln and Guba’s, 1985, term), which offers the flexibility to respond to what presents itself in the setting (Marshall and Rossman, 1986, p. 81).

This study was planned to have long term observation (the period of data collection and verification was to be a year in duration) at the site. It consisted of periods of time I call the first phase, the “summer break,” and the second phase. These were followed by an extended period of analysis and writing. Following the advice to have a significant period of time in the setting, with interviews conducted later, I observed in the first phase and interviewed and observed in the second phase.

The first phase (from late February to early June, 1993) was intended to provide an essential set of data: observations of day to day activities. These data informed the interviews that occur in the second phase. The first phase also was important for building trust and openness (Smircich, 1983c). I wanted to know the people and the institution, and to have some of them know me, before I began interviews. Data were collected by means of observations of meetings, other organizational events, and informal interactions; I did some analysis of documents
and had many informal conversations. I was on campus two or three days a week during this period.

From June to mid August, coinciding with summer term at Multisite, I was off-site. Early in this period, I prepared and presented a conference paper about the study to that point (Owen, 1993). Afterward, I continued to analyze the data of the first phase and to plan for the next phase. In the second phase of field work (August 1993 to January 1994), I continued the on-going observations and interviewed 40 faculty members.

It may be worthwhile to note that I am deliberate in delimiting the research question, and hence the informants, to those who are faculty members. If the research question had asked about the sensemaking of organizational members, generally, then I would have needed to include persons in other roles, such as members of staff and administration. However, including persons in other roles would imply (or could be seen to imply) that the data must be analyzed and presented according to the organizational roles of informants. This would, in essence, impose another research question, that of comparing sensemaking across roles. Such a comparison would have increased greatly the magnitude and complexity of the task. Indeed, it could be seen to constitute an additional study. This delimitation carries with it a limitation of the study.
Conducting the Study

In this section, I outline my experience in gaining access, in matters of ethics and confidentiality, and in collecting the data. As I do so, I attempt to keep in mind the following.

I do not believe that every time we sit down to draft a qualitative study we must reinvent qualitative research all over again. ... my recommendation is to report in adequate detail how one obtained those data actually used in preparing the account, not the “methodology” (as it is so often referred to) of the entire study. (Wolcott, 1994, p. 108, italics in original).

Access

I gained access to Multisite with apparent ease. John Dennison invited Dr. George Greensmith (a pseudonym), the president of Multisite, to join us for lunch so that I could ask permission to do the study. George (as most people at Multisite call him) said he would discuss the project within the college. He asked me to leave it with him. Although my original plan had been to work on gaining access on several fronts at once, including contacting informally a few individual faculty members that I knew there, I did not do so. As the weeks passed, I questioned my
own lack of activity but continued to follow his suggestion. Four weeks later, George said in a telephone call that not only did there seem to be no problem (with my gaining access to conduct the study), the members of the college seemed very interested in and enthusiastic about the study. He also faxed a list of meetings scheduled at Multisite over the next three weeks to me, suggesting I attend as many as I wanted. The ease with which I gained access likely is related to Multisite's reputation as a friendly, open, and cooperative institution. Another likely factor is the "who you know" or "connections" principle (Lofland & Lofland, 1984, p. 25): having entry expediated by someone already favourably regarded by those with access control.

I comment on changing my plan by leaving the matter alone for a month for a number of reasons. It illustrates how the details of the design change with interactions, for example, and that a researcher (especially a novice researcher) faces innumerable decision points requiring judgment calls in ambiguous situations. One factor that made the decision difficult was that I was uncertain how literally he meant the phrase "leave it with me." If, for example, what was meant was, "you leave this alone until you hear from me," the consequences of not doing so could have been significant.
On the one hand, I gained access easily. On the other hand, there may be drawbacks to having all the initial information of one's project originate with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). There may be the initial impression that one is affiliated with management, for example. As it turned out, some faculty first learned I was on campus because minutes of Management meetings showed that I was present as an observer at those meetings. One or two people initially may have assumed that I was on campus studying managerial practice.

As the study proceeded, I learned that acquiring and retaining access is an ongoing process, not a single event. It means making oneself and one's purpose known again and again. At various times, I ran into faculty who did not seem to know about the project. Often, this was because they had not attended meetings where I was introduced and had not read the minutes for that period. Sometimes, they thought they had heard of it but wanted to be reminded of the purpose of the study.

Access also is a matter of degree. There were meetings I was not permitted to observe, for example. Access depends upon the time, the place, and the persons being dealt with in the organization. Individuals have to be willing to be interviewed and to interact informally and they choose whatever information and helpful hints they pass on.
Ethics and Confidentiality

The study design includes (i) meeting the University's requirements for conducting research with human subjects, and (ii) recognizing that ethics is not "done" by meeting a bureaucratic requirement. Overall, I recognize that, on the one hand, there are guidelines and regulations to help in dealing with ethical concerns. On the other, "the burden of producing a study that has been conducted and disseminated in an ethical manner lies with the individual investigator. ... The best that an individual researcher can do is to be conscious of the ethical issues that pervade the research process, from conceptualizing the problem to disseminating the findings" (Merriam, p. 184).

Confidentiality is a complex and somewhat slippery goal. Among other things, maintaining confidentiality is not entirely within my control. At one conference, for example, I presented a paper (Owen, 1994a) in which I told of a series of events at Multisite. I described what was done and said by number of persons prominent in those events, including the President of the College, the President of the Union, the Chair of the Advisory Committee, and so on. I used pseudonyms for those individuals, of course, as I did for the institution. Some faculty members at Multisite were in attendance and they introduced me to other
conference registrants as having done my study at their institution. Hence, those present not only knew the real name of the institution, they may well have been able to identify some of the individuals by knowing who had what roles in the relevant time period.

Confidentiality also is, in some sense, a matter of degree. Maintaining confidentiality of individuals, for example, seems less difficult than keeping the identity of the institution confidential. On the one hand, the institution seems likely to be obvious, or nearly so, at least to people who know the college sector. On the other hand, the following example suggests that may not be the case.

I presented another paper at a later conference (Owen, 1994c). Someone attending the session tried, to no avail, to elicit from me the real name of the institution. This questioner persisted after the session, offering guesses instead of direct questions, still to no avail. He returned to me later, fortified with wine and cheese, to announce triumphantly he had figured it out. He was mistaken. I did not correct him.

In my account of the first phase, some individuals can be identified by virtue of the roles they play (e.g., the presidents of the college and union, the chairs of various committees). In these cases, I am careful what I reveal. I limit my account to what they say or do in public forums and, occasionally, to what
comments that seem relevant to the research interest are made by informants about those public acts.

All the names used are pseudonyms. Some of the people presented in the first phase as active participants in meetings are among those interviewed. The pseudonyms they are given as interview informants differ from those they are given as participants in meetings and other forums. Some informants have roles or experiences that might make their comments more credible if those roles or experiences are revealed. In not revealing details like these, I may sometimes sacrifice analytic credibility for purposes of confidentiality. Overall, I do not see this as a significant gap in what I present here, however, because the views these individuals express are not unique; some of their colleagues express similar views.

Some people tended to speak of issues in terms of the needs and perspective of their program or department. Once or twice, informants asked how confidentiality could be retained when their department was indicated in their comments and when at least some of their colleagues knew that only one or two department members were interviewed. In most cases (including those who asked about it) the actual department or program affiliation is not revealed. Sometimes it is disguised. There are a few places in which I do indicate the unit affiliation of
the informant I am quoting. In those cases, no pseudonym is used; the speaker is identified by unit and number, as CE #1 or Trades instructor #2.

I discovered that my decisions on what detail to disguise sometimes changed. The first time an informant used the word "hogwash," for example, I heard it as idiosyncratic language use that I would not quote. However, it turned out that half a dozen interview informants used the word, so I do not always delete it when quoting those who use it. On a few occasions, I use the form, “someone says,” rather than using a pseudonym. I do this when the comment could suggest identity when taken with other comments by the same pseudonym or when the person does not appear elsewhere in my description. Information available in management meetings that was not available elsewhere I considered “off the record.” This did not involve a large amount of information, since much of what occurs at Management meetings is reported informally (e.g., comments of senior administrators in other meetings) and formally (e.g., minutes).

**Collecting the Data**

In this section, I describe the data collection techniques I used, the selection of the interview informants, and the characteristics of the informants.
Observing and interviewing. The role of observer entails a number of demands and requires ongoing decision making. It demands, for example, that one make notes. In some ways, this was easy. In meetings, I took notes openly. I recorded conversations shortly after they occurred; again, I did this openly. One difficulty was that time seemed in short supply. I sometimes was uncertain, for example, whether to convert particular notes to a more accessible form. A greater difficulty was that, as an observer, I had to decide where and what to observe.

In the planning stages, I thought this would be easy. I may have had a vision of myself with a comfortable perch, somewhere central to all that was happening. If such a place existed, I never found it. In practice, there were two main campuses and several other locations. Neither main campus had a single area that could be described as the social centre or meeting place. Each campus had a combination of cafeterias, coffee rooms, lobbies or faculty reception areas that were frequented by some faculty but not others. Most of these were busy only at certain limited times. All of them served me as vantage points at various times. One vantage point, being an observer at meetings and other open forums in various locations, became a primary source of data.

I decided in the first phase to attend as many of the regular meetings that concerned organization-wide issues as I could. I attended meetings of different
institutional units, as well, and also remained open to what came up, attending such special events as an orientation to new faculty and a workshop on dealing with change. In the second phase, I had to decide whether to continue attending as many meetings while at the same time conducting several interviews a week. Although continuing with the meetings was time consuming, I chose to continue with as many as I could. I am uncertain whether or not I would have been better off to have been more selective. I do know that spending a lot of time in meetings is characteristic of the experience of many faculty members at Multisite.

The interviews were open-ended. I began each interview by making a general statement of my research interest. In fact, the informant already had been told this when I initially requested the interview. Also, this information, and more, was on the letter of consent that was signed before the interview took place. The interviews usually had a conversational tone; I sometimes asked questions to clarify or to explore areas that seemed of interest.

The areas that I chose to explore primarily were ones that came up in the context of the interview or in the context of my experience as an observer. I might ask the informant to elaborate on something he or she had said, for example, or I might ask about a topic that came up in a public forum. I did not use a schedule of questions, although I usually began by asking the informant when
he/she had started with the institution. In one of the first interviews, I asked the informant what issues she associated with the institution becoming a university college. She seemed to translate issue as problem and seemed uncomfortable with that, although she seemed comfortable talking about some of her "concerns."

Thereafter, I avoided questions as specific as that and often found I had little need to ask questions. Mostly, I just encouraged people to talk.

Selecting the interview informants. I selected the interview informants by means of two strategies intended to enhance the transferability of the study. (As a criterion of the trustworthiness of the study, transferability is discussed below.)

These strategies are (i) nominated sample and (ii) comparison of the sample to demographic data (Krefting, 1991).

Krefting (1991) suggests that one use a panel of judges to help in selecting informants, thereby attaining what is referred to as a nominated sample. She describes this strategy with reference to an example in which one or two longtime members of the relevant social unit are asked to identify persons typical of the membership. I attained a nominated sample, as she suggests, although I consulted a dozen or so individuals rather than one or two.

By the time I sought advice in selecting informants, I had been conducting observations on campus for several months. I had noted a number of individuals
who seemed to be liked and respected by colleagues; they also seemed well informed, articulate and actively engaged organization-wide activities. I asked these individuals to suggest (a) possible interview informants and (b) other individuals to ask about possible interview informants. The individuals I consulted took some time and care in responding. Several people took out a list of faculty and went over it with me, for example, commenting on such things as the need to get members from various units and with various perspectives. One person said it was important that those interviewed be articulate persons; he then identified articulate persons who had supported the change from the beginning and an equal number of articulate persons who had not. Persons nominated included those who were active in various organizational committees and those who were not; they included those of long, medium and short-term membership. There were a number of idiosyncratic suggestions, all of which proved useful. One person suggested that a faculty member with long service who had recently returned from a leave might have an interesting perspective, for example. Another person suggested I must go to one of the smaller centres, not just the two main campuses, to get that “small centre” view. I also asked many of the early interview informants to suggest others and followed up on some of the suggestions.
As I proceeded with the interviews, I paid attention to how the developing list of informants reflected the institution's faculty membership. I considered such characteristics as gender, length of service, institutional division, campus or centre affiliation and involvement in degree programs. Arriving at a sample that compared closely with the demographic data on faculty members, generally, was made relatively easy. The “panel of judges” attended to demographic information as they advised me, for example. No one whom I asked to be an interview informant refused; also, it was easy to arrange a time for the interview with each individual.

All was not smooth sledding, however. One morning, fresh from the analysis of the previous evening, I had in mind that I needed more female informants and that I had no one from a particular department among my informants. I ran into a faculty member I shall call Meg in a women’s washroom that morning. Weeks before this, I had met and visited with Meg at lunch. She was pleasant company, quick, curious and witty. Perhaps impulsively, I asked her on this second meeting if she would be interested in being interviewed; we discussed it and she agreed. Over a period of time, I did the usual things, including describing the research project, preparing her consent letter, conducting and transcribing the interview, and sending her a copy of the interview transcript.
In response to the transcript, I got a brief note, in which she said she chose to withdraw her consent for me to use the interview data. Meg wrote that her department was not offering degrees; therefore the transition was irrelevant. This did not seem to explain withdrawing consent, but I chose not to attempt to discuss the matter further, on the basis that a person had the right to withdraw without explanation. Meg, the only informant not a part of the nominated sample, was the only informant who chose to withdraw her consent. I wonder if the moral here is, stick to the method.

Describing the interview informants. Each informant was a faculty member, as defined by the institution's collectively bargained contract. Each was in a regular (i.e., continuing) and full-time position. Consistent with practice in the college sector, generally, those who are department heads are faculty members. A few individuals in non-teaching positions, such as professional librarians and counsellors (as distinct from library assistants and student advisors, who are classified as staff) also are classified as faculty. Faculty members in the Continuing Education Division often are concerned with programming rather than more traditional classroom teaching. They are designated as Directors in the collective agreement and their usual title within the institution is Coordinators. In
the words of one CE Coordinator, "I'm a non-teaching faculty. We're kind of middle managers; we're called Directors under the Collective Agreement."

Using the criterion of membership in the faculty as it is defined by the collectively bargained contract, I selected a sample that was representative of faculty in the institution. I interviewed 40 faculty members, including 4 members of one department, interviewed as a group. I interviewed 36 faculty members individually; one (Meg) withdrew. The 35 informants remaining included:

(i) 14 each from Academic and Careers, the two instructional divisions of nearly the same size, each of which offers both degree and non-degree programs,
(ii) 4 from the Continuing Education Division, regular full-time faculty members classified as Directors in the contract, and
(iii) 3 non-instructional faculty members.

These informants comprise nearly one quarter (22%, i.e., 39 out of an estimated 181) of all faculty at Multisite in the term (fall, 1993) in which I conducted the interviews. As a group, they compare closely with the whole group of faculty members, in terms of a range of demographic characteristics. These characteristics include (i) location, in terms of campus or centre, (ii) divisional affiliation, (iii) gender, (iv) length of service, (v) proportion of teaching/non-teaching faculty. The one group somewhat underrepresented numerically is those
who are newly hired. I did interview a number of faculty with limited service (i.e.,
from one to several terms). I spoke with several other "new" individuals who
were willing to be interviewed. However, they said they would have little to say
because they had been spending their one or two terms there totally involved in
their work. In fact, I found as I was interviewing new people they often did have
little to say about what was happening at Multisite. As this emerging pattern
became clear, I came to feel little need to have this group better represented.
(Informants are listed by pseudonym, length of service and whether their unit
offers degrees in Appendix.)

Writing the Account of the Study

Following Wolcott (1994), I use three ways to present the data: description,
analysis, interpretation. Description means one stays close to the data as
originally recorded, by drawing from fieldnotes or informants' words. The
strategy is to treat descriptive data as fact; the underlying assumption, or hope, is
that the data "speak for themselves" (p. 10).
Analysis proceeds in some careful, systematic way to identify key factors and the relationships among them. Typically, it builds on description (p. 10). Interpretation may follow from analysis or spring directly from description. "It does not claim to be as convincingly or compulsively 'scientific' as the second, being neither as loyal to nor as restricted by observational data only" (p. 10). The goal is to make sense of what goes on, to reach out for understanding or explanation beyond the limits of what can be explained with the degree of certainty usually associated with analysis.

Description answers the question, "What is going on here?" Analysis may be used to address questions of why a system is not working or how it might be made to work "better." Interpretation addresses processual questions of meanings and contexts: "What is to be made of it all?"

Two other points about these ways of presenting data are worth noting. One is that there is no "pure" description, since in the very act of constructing data out of experience, the researcher singles out some things as worthy of note and relegates others to the background. The other, the three categories are not mutually exclusive. There are no lines clearly drawn where description ends and analysis begins, or where analysis becomes interpretation (Wolcott, 1994, p. 13).
I take into consideration Martin's (1992) comments on "language that makes generalizing assumptions" (p. 26). I follow her advice some of the time but not always. I agree that "all" is generally inappropriate, for example, when one assumes to speak of absolutely all organizational members. I think it is reasonable to write "all present seem to find this solution agreeable" when one is referring to the impression left by a limited number of persons on a particular occasion. I agree that terms like many or a few suggest proportions; they tend to quantify. I often use some, as she does, to avoid this. I do sometimes use many or a few, however, when it represents my subjective sense, when I think that may be useful in evoking the context for the reader. I also find relentless use of "some" quite wearing in terms of style. I tend to use the ethnographic present, which Martin (1992) labels the eternal present tense. When people speak in the past tense or I report events that preceded the study, I use the past tense. As I write of events and comments that occur as the study unfolds, I use the present.

Finally, a point on punctuation. I use three ellipsis points to indicate material omitted from a quotation; two, a natural pause. Indicating both these "breaks" in dialogue in the same way, by three ellipsis points, may be more conventional. However, I think that pauses sometimes are followed by insightful
observations. Distinguishing the informant's pause from the editor's "knife" may allow a sense of how the informant develops a line of thinking.

Analyzing the Data

In this study, I analyze the data to fulfill two purposes. I intend to explore, describe and attempt to understand (a) the organizational culture at Multisite, and (b) how faculty members at Multisite make sense of the transition to becoming a university college. In this section, I describe the data analysis in two parts. In the first sub-section, I describe the approach I take to data analysis overall. This analysis provides the basis of the descriptions and explorations that are presented in chapters 4 to 9; it responds to the first purpose. In the second sub-section, I outline the different sensemaking perspectives I come to identify as part of an emergent framework. This analysis provides the basis of the interpretations that are presented in chapter 10; it responds to the second purpose.

An Interpretive Approach to Analysis

The first phase of the study was a period of prolonged observations. The description of that period is the topic of Chapter 4; the interpretation and analysis
of that period is the topic of Chapter 5. From there, I proceed to a thematic analysis, that is, an analysis of beliefs I labelled cultural themes. A description and exploration of those themes occurs in chapters 6 through 8. This thematic analysis constitutes the description and exploration of the culture, described as "piecing together a picture of the meaning systems" (Smircich, 1983c) that is presented in chapter 9. The analysis that underlies these chapters entails descriptive, comparative, and interpretive stages.

The data base for the development of the themes and the cultural portrait was the interview data obtained in the second phase, supplemented by notes from observations in both phases. I transcribed the interview data myself from tapes; it consists of more than 350 pages of text.

Initially, I was overwhelmed by this material. I re-read material on content analysis; I tried this and that. I had the persistent sense that I was mutilating something that could come to live, given the right care, the right attention, if only I knew what form that attention should take. What moved me beyond that stage was finding Marshall’s (1981) comments on her approach.

It’s my assumption that there is some sort of order in the data that can emerge. My job as a researcher is to be an open and receptive medium through which this order comes out. I’m trying to understand what’s there, and to represent what’s there in all its complexity and richness. ... It always amuses me when I read books on how to do content analysis that you have to decide on some sort of level of analysis -- looking at a word, a sentence, or a section. But the chunks are fairly obvious -- you get chunks of meanings which come out of the data itself. If you read a side of a transcript, there is something that
comes out to you as, say, someone’s attitude toward their job, or the feeling of powerless in relation to people in the Union. There are chunks of meaning, and you don’t have to look at individual sentences or debate what the level of analysis is. Also, the books say, “Arrive at the categories you will use.” Well, I don’t do that either, but let the categories build up all the time as I put things together that go together. I think this is partly about how much anxiety and uncertainty you’re willing to tolerate for how long; I think the more you can, the better the analysis works out. (1981, p. 395, p. 397, italics in original)

I can now situate the approach I used within Lacity & Janson’s (1994) framework of text analysis methods. They identify three categories of approaches they consider useful alternatives, which they label positivist, linguistic, and interpretivist methods. They suggest that positivist approaches hold that “understanding arises through the identification of nonrandom variation” (p. 142), whereas in interpretive approaches, it arises as the researcher discusses “with participants the meanings they ascribe to their experiences” (p. 152). Interpretive approaches emphasize the contextual circumstances of both informants and researchers and the multiple interpretations that are possible for any text. “Interpretivist text analysis methods assume that researchers cannot objectively analyze a text and assign arbitrary units of analysis to tidy categories” (Lacity & Janson, 1994, p. 148). (It seems worthwhile noting that neither these authors nor I see any one method as superior to or better than any other; they simply are different methods, arising from different assumptions and suiting different interests.)
This is the approach I took to the interview text. I read and re-read the interview transcripts. Then I went through them all, asking first one question, then another. One critical question was what "chunks of meanings" can I get out of this transcript? That approach provided the foundation for my analysis of what I call the three cultural themes. These had been tentatively identified at the end of the first phase. Using the "chunks of meaning" approach and comparing responses among respondents, these themes emerged in the interviews as important to many faculty.

Another critical question I asked of each transcript was, what overview, if any, emerges from what is said? What is the overall gist of this set of comments? Is there a position, a dominant point of view, in this account? Some people make a clear statement of overview that is consistent with the rest of the account; some accounts are more complex.

As the analysis proceeded, I also looked at specifics, such as the following. What particular events, information, or issues does the person comment on? What clusters of interpretations about what is going on are offered? What is said or implied about action as an organizational member, about whether the individual or colleagues are behaving any differently or are likely to do so. I also went through all the data with clusters or sets of related questions. One set was, what is said
about the transition and with what is that connected? I also looked for expressions of feelings. Some people spoke of a sense of loss, for example; others, of excitement with the challenges. A few spoke of both. I also asked, Is there clear indication of what the individual thinks of the transition? If not, what can be inferred? I also looked for what was said about those elements I have called cultural symbols, values, and themes. How important do they seem to the person, for example, and does he/she associate them with the transition.

**Sensemaking Perspectives**

In this study, the analysis was ongoing, simultaneous with data collection, more intensive after the field work ended, and iterative in nature. Consistent with an interpretive approach (e.g., Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), I worked through a lot of data before making connections, albeit tentative, between the data and my emergent explanatory framework. What follows is intended to outline that “working through” process without taking the reader through each detail of the process.

In some of the interview accounts, I heard a great deal of emphasis on the belief system I call the traditional cultural theme of participation. Indeed, some faculty members made clear statements that what they thought about participation
(i.e., what they perceived as the dominance or decline of this decision making
approach in the organization in the present) was linked with how they interpreted
the transition and the transition period.

On the basis of these "chunks of meanings" in some interviews, I went
through all the interviews to see what was said about participation and what was
said that suggested a relation between interpretations of participation and of the
transition. In a number of interviews, the informant had made a connection
explicit; in some it seemed implicit. In other accounts, however, participation was
just one of a number of interrelated traditional beliefs that seemed of importance
to the individual. It was inseparable from a network of other values that
constitute organizational belief systems.

From this, I realized I had to understand how people interpret the transition
with respect to the whole network of organizational meanings, rather than in terms
of any particular theme. Given the holistic nature of culture, this is not surprising
or even interesting in retrospect, but it was something I had to identify as I
navigated the analysis.

Another critical point emerged from this effort. Although some faculty
expressed strong feelings about one or more of the interrelated beliefs I label
traditional organizational themes, other people did not speak of traditional
organizational themes with any particular emphasis. The analysis suggested that, for some faculty, there is little or no evidence that the cultural belief system is of central importance in how the individual interprets the transition.

As I identified informants whose interpretations seem not to be influenced greatly by organizational meanings, I looked for some other way to make sense of their perspectives. I found it in what Geertz's labels "major perspectives in terms of which men construe the world" (1973, p. 111). He identifies the religious, the common sense, the scientific, and the aesthetic perspectives. A common sense perspective, for example, entails accepting the world and its processes as being just as they seem to be; one acts pragmatically upon that world so as to bend it to one's purposes. A scientific perspective entails disinterested observation (rather than pragmatic action) and an attempt to analyze the world in terms of formal concepts. A religious perspective moves beyond the realities of everyday life to what it takes to be wider, nonhypothetical truths that correct and complete everyday realities. These "truths" have a sense of the "really real" which is produced and sustained by symbolic activity. A religious perspective entails acceptance of those realities and commitment rather than detachment (Geertz, 1973, p. 112).
I looked at each account to see if these perspectives offered a meaningful way to distinguish among the perspectives of informants. In some accounts, a perspective seemed easily identified. In others, beliefs consistent with more than one perspective were expressed. However, in those cases, there usually was a reasonable basis on which to identify an emphasis on a particular perspective. I categorize a small number of accounts as using multiple perspectives.

I modified Geertz' perspectives for my purposes, as follows. I use cultural perspective here as equivalent to Geertz' religious perspective, in that cultural values are seen as nonhypothetical truths and cultural symbols are seen to connote meanings beyond their inherent meaning. I distinguish between two types of cultural perspectives, however. In some of the interviews, what emerges is an emphasis on what I label Multisite's traditional cultural values and themes. In other accounts, what emerges is an emphasis on what I label Multisite's emergent values and themes. In all of these accounts, I hear a relation between what the individual says about these cultural values and about the transition. I categorize these accounts as showing either a traditional cultural perspective or an emergent cultural perspective, respectively.

In some accounts, however, neither traditional nor emergent cultural themes seem of great importance in how the transition is interpreted. Some people seem
to use a common-sense or pragmatic perspective; their view is practical and self-interested. They seem to take a matter of fact view of the world, in which they see various dimensions of everyday life as just what they seem to be (Geertz, 1973) rather than as symbolizing some wider set of meanings. Rather than monitoring and interpreting the expression of symbols, they monitor and interpret the resolution of issues.

An example may be useful here. A number of faculty who teach in degree programs say they are happy about the increased emphasis on various academic aspects (i.e., aspects of organizational life usually associated with academic settings). Some say they are excited about the opportunity to teach higher level students, for example. Others value seminars with colleagues, and so on. One person says he especially values the increased support for doing research. He says research enriches his teaching, enhances his interaction with colleagues, and contributes positively to the institution and the broader community. In this account, I hear an emphasis on an academic value that is seen to contribute to the cultural values embedded in institutional goals; I hear research as a cultural symbol as well as an activity. I label this an emergent cultural perspective.

Another person also expresses enthusiasm for academic aspects. He indicates he values doing research, and says that if there turns out to be less
support for research at Multisite than he wants to have, he will look elsewhere for
career opportunities. In this account, I hear an orientation to one's career and a
pragmatic emphasis on an issue that is seen to contribute to a long term career
goal. I label this a pragmatic perspective.

By way of summary, I distinguish between cultural and pragmatic
perspectives on the basis of whether a cultural symbol or a pragmatic issue seems
of central importance to the individual. I distinguish between traditional and
emergent cultural perspectives on the basis of whether the cultural symbol that
seems most salient is a traditional symbol, representing a value rooted in the
organization's history, or an emergent symbol, representing a value that may have
been present over time in the organizational context but has only been emphasized
in the shorter term.

The Trustworthiness of the Study

Traditionally, the four aspects of trustworthiness -- truth value,
applicability, consistency, and neutrality -- are conceptualized as internal validity,
external validity, reliability, and objectivity, respectively. Many researchers
assert that qualitative research cannot be assessed by these criteria. Lincoln and
Guba (1985) often are cited (e.g., Krefting, 1991; Marshall and Rossman, 1989; Merriam, 1991) in this regard. They suggest that these four alternative constructs are more appropriate to qualitative research: (i) credibility (ii) transferability (iii) dependability and (iv) confirmability. Krefting (1991), noting that qualitative research includes a variety of approaches, asserts that not all qualitative research can be assessed by the same strategies. In this section, I identify the strategies I use to enhance trustworthiness, following Krefting (1991).

Truth value is perhaps the most important criterion for the assessment of a qualitative study (Krefting, 1991, p. 216). A qualitative study is credible when persons in the setting studied, or persons who are familiar with that setting, find the investigator's descriptions or interpretations of the situation to be accurate. I outline the eight strategies I used for enhancing credibility, in the order given: prolonged and varied field experience; time sampling; reflexivity; triangulation; member checks; interview techniques, establishing the authority of the researcher, and structural coherence. Prolonged and varied field experience allows adequate submersion in the setting and sufficient time with informants to identify recurring patterns. Identifying and documenting recurrent features such as patterns, themes, and values is of central importance in qualitative research (Krefting, 1991, p. 217, citing Leininger, 1985). As well, prolonged engagement also (i) allows an
increase in rapport to develop, which leads to more information, and more sensitive information, being made available, and (ii) allows one to detect patterns of responses that suggest informants are responding with what they think are the socially preferred responses.

Prolonged observation also allows effective use of the time sampling strategy. I observed different events in different areas at different times of the day, on different days of the week, over three seasons. Reflexivity concerns the influence of the researcher’s own background, perceptions, and interests. It rejects the conventional notion of researcher “invisibility.” It acknowledges that “the researcher’s background dictates the framework from which he or she will organize, study, and analyze the findings.” (Krefting, 1991, p. 218, citing Agar, 1986). Reflexive practice includes keeping a journal in which one reflects on thoughts, feelings, ideas, generated by contact with informants and by conducting the research (Krefting, 1991). It also includes practicing value-aware reflections. It is intended to deal with the tendency to over-involvement, which often accompanies prolonged engagement.

Conventionally, triangulation refers to the use of multiple means of data collection (Denzin, 1989, p. 236). The idea is that the strengths of one technique of data collection can overcome the weakness of another; for example,
observational and interview data can be assessed against one another. This cross-checking can clarify and enrich participant's reports and can reveal inconsistencies and distortions. I used observations and interviews as the primary means of collecting data; I also did some document analysis, primarily for background and to cross-check some interpretations and reports.

Related strategies include triangulation of data source and of theory (Denzin, 1989; Krefting, 1991). The idea is that multiple perspectives can contribute to confirmation of certain aspects of the phenomenon of interest and to the completeness with which the phenomenon is addressed (Krefting, 1991, citing various authors). These strategies minimize the intrinsic bias and problems that come from single-method, single-observer, single-theory studies (Denzin, 1989, p. 247). Triangulation of data sources offers "variety in time, space, and person in observation and interviewing" (Krefting, 1991, p. 219). Theoretical triangulation "asks the researcher to be aware of the multiple ways in which the phenomenon may be interpreted" (Denzin, 1989, p. 246). It means that ideas from diverse theories and different disciplines can be used to interpret and explain data (Krefting, 1991).

"Member checks" refers to the strategy of verifying data and interpretations with the people from whom they were derived (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I used
this strategy in a number of ways. Sometimes, member checks were a part of an ongoing process. Each informant checked the transcripts of the interviews, for example, both for content and interpretation. I checked narrative accounts based on observational data with faculty members (and some other organizational members) as I wrote them over time. Other times, member checks were specific to a particular event. For example, I prepared a conference paper on a particular issue at Multisite (Owen, 1994a). It was published in the proceedings of a conference; this document was available in advance of the conference. I presented the paper at the conference, with a number of Multisite people present for the session. Those who read the account and those who attended the presentation volunteered comments on how accurate they found it.

I did a final member check to test the overall interpretation near the conclusion of the study, as recommended by Lincoln & Guba (1985) and Krefting (1991). This final check is seen to be more difficult for members than checks of material at earlier stages. Because the material now entails more conceptual analysis, not just descriptive data, the concern is that some informants might be troubled by the view presented. Consistent with the advice offered, I selected a small number of individuals to serve this function (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Krefting, 1991). My overall interpretation was confirmed.
I enhanced credibility within the interviewing process by reframing, repeating or expanding on questions (Krefting, 1991, p. 220). Also, I often checked the information provided in one interview with a later informant. In a broad sense, I used the interviews of the second phase to get information on what I tentatively had labelled as cultural themes as I ended the first phase. I was able to verify they were beliefs that are important to people and to describe what set of beliefs they entailed.

Credibility also is supported when interviews are internally consistent (i.e. there is a logical rationale about the same topic in the same interview) and by structural coherence (i.e., no unexplained inconsistencies between the data and their interpretation). Although data may conflict, credibility is enhanced if interpretations can explain the apparent contradictions; also structural coherence is enhanced by a logical, holistic picture. I demonstrate this strategy in chapter 10, where I explore two apparent contradictions in the interview data.

The authority of the researcher can be enhanced in a number of ways. In a long term field study, for example, the researcher has the unique authority described as the "I was there" element (Krefting, 1991, citing Miles & Huberman, 1984). Other authority-enhancing elements (Krefting, 1991, citing Miles & Huberman, 1984) that apply include my degree of familiarity with and interest in
colleges and the college system, an interest and theoretical background in the phenomena of interest, a disposition to use different theoretical perspectives, and the range of investigative skills developed through literature review, course work, and experience with qualitative research methods.

I see two other aspects of my experience as authority-enhancing elements. One is that my professional practice included experience with a variety of forms of interviews; this proved valuable in collecting the data. The other is the experience of describing and analyzing a particular organizational event and context as a case study (Owen, 1992); this proved valuable in analyzing the data.

Transferability concerns the extent to which the findings of a particular study can be applied to another context or with other respondents (Krefting, 1991). A view of transferability that is particularly suited to a qualitative case study is labelled *reader or user generalizability* (Merriam, 1991, p. 177, italics in original). In this view, the extent to which the findings apply to another situation is a decision left to the people in that situation or to the investigator who would make the transfer (following Kennedy, 1979, as cited by Merriam, 1991, and by Marshall and Rossman, 1989). This is consistent with the idea of *fittingness*, with how the findings fit into other contexts. “The burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make an application
elsewhere" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 298). The task is not to provide an *index* of transferability; it is to provide the *data base* that allows others to make transferability judgments (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 316, italics in original).

I have used these four strategies to enhance transferability: nominated sample, comparison of sample to demographic data, time sample, and dense description. The first three are discussed above. Dense or "thick" description, "rich fieldnotes" or "rich data" are "well-endowed with good description and dialogue relevant to what occurs at the setting and its meaning for the participants. Rich data are filled with pieces of evidence, with the clues that you begin to put together to make analytical sense out of what you study" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 86). The use of multiple informants and data collection techniques provides a rich data base. These data provide policy makers with a basis to determine appropriateness for their setting and provide readers with a means to tie the research into a body of knowledge (Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p. 146).

Extensive quotations are a part of the data; they allow the reader to make judgments of various dimensions of personality or attitudes that may transfer, for example.

Dependability in interpretive research entails thinking about the results so that "rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, one wishes
outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense -- they are consistent and dependable" (Merriam, 1991, p. 173). This recognizes that an attempt at demonstrating consistency can result in another equally plausible interpretation and that all extant interpretations can stand until contradicted by new evidence. The strategies I use to enhance dependability are dense description of research methods, triangulation, and code-recode analytic procedures.

Code-recode is an analytic procedure in which one analyzes a segment of data and then waits at least 2 weeks before returning to it, analyzing it again and comparing the second analysis to the first. I did this from necessity, because other obligations often meant I left the data analysis for a period of several weeks. At first glance, this strategy may seem to mean only that the analysis is repeated, allowing for the possibility of a different interpretation from the first analysis. In practice, the second analysis often was more than a different interpretation; enriched by that earlier effort, it was a useful extension of the original analysis. Using this strategy, then, was not an attempt at replication, it was a means of enhancing the extent to which the final analysis was consistent with the data.

Confirmability is the qualitative construct of the criterion of neutrality. Neutrality concerns "the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are determined by the subjects (respondents) and conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases,
motivations, interests, or perspectives of the inquirer (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 290). Conventionally, neutrality is seen as objectivity which is seen as intersubjective agreement. "What a number of individuals experience is objective and what a single individual experiences is subjective; Scriven refers to this as the 'quantitative' sense of objectivity" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 300, citing Scriven, 1971).

In contrast, the "qualitative" sense of objectivity refers to the quality of the report or evidence (Scriven, 1971, as cited by Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 300). This "qualitative" sense of neutrality is what is meant by confirmability. The construct of confirmability removes evaluation from some inherent characteristic of the researcher (i.e., objectivity) and places it squarely on the quality (i.e., confirmability) of the data themselves (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 300; Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p. 147).

The confirmability of the study is enhanced by reflexive practice, as described above, and by a number of strategies already identified. Strategies that enhance credibility also enhance confirmability, for example, as do strategies intended to control for bias in the data analysis, such as the constant search for negative instances and the ongoing questioning of the data.
As indicated above, some strategies are useful for establishing more than one criterion. Triangulation, for example, is a powerful strategy for enhancing both credibility and confirmability and, more generally, for enhancing the overall quality of the research.

However, it needs to be noted that the trustworthiness of an interpretive study can never be established to the extent of being seen as unassailable. Conventional criteria of trustworthiness can be met by procedures such as demonstrating control of all confounding variables and replicating the study. Such a study can produce findings that, within the conventional system, one is compelled to accept as trustworthy. The interpretive criteria are open-ended. Member checks, triangulation and such can at best persuade, not compel. The contrast between solving a jigsaw puzzle and answering a riddle comes to mind. What is a good answer, what is the best answer, to a riddle remains inherently subjective and contextual.
CHAPTER 4

A DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT: THE FIRST PHASE

In this chapter, I describe my experience in the first phase of the study. I take the role of observer in this fourteen week period. I spend two days a week, sometimes three, at Multisite. I attend more than thirty meetings and I watch people as they interact informally. I hear what people say and do in public forums and in private exchanges in my presence. Although I do not schedule interviews in this period, I have many conversations. The first phase begins as I enter the field; it ends as the academic year comes to an end. Within these "book end" events, I divide the phase into three periods, each of four to five weeks duration, as follows.

1. The first period begins in late February as Multisite is in the midst of a busy term. Using a wide angle lens, I seek an overview of what is happening.

2. The second period begins in early April as a budget shortfall is
identified. Taking a finer focus, I follow the gaze of people there and pay attention to the events of the budget period.

3. The third period begins in early May as a budget is approved. Paying attention to a number of organizational processes, I watch as term comes to an end.

**The Study Begins: Late Winter**

I enter the field in late February. The term is in full swing. People are involved with adding new degree programs, continuing expansion in established programs, and a variety of special community projects. In the first five weeks of the fieldwork (i.e., the first period of the phase), I attempt to maintain as broad a focus as I can, monitoring a variety of institutional events, processes and information. The account of this period is in two parts. The first part is a description of my first day as an observer at Multisite; the second is a description of some of what I see and hear during the rest of that first period.
First Impressions: First Day

On my first day at Multisite, I arrive at the South Campus shortly after eight in the morning. The main building is quiet and nearly empty. After a while, the receptionist arrives and I get a parking permit. I try to find the room where the weekly Management meeting will be held. I end up exploring more of the building than I intend. A few people are just arriving. I ask for directions; the people I speak with are friendly and helpful. The room, which proves to be a board room, is locked. The hall is empty. I move toward voices and eavesdrop briefly on a group of students in a nearby lounge. They are asking one another questions, as if studying for a test. I am startled to hear them talking about observation as a research technique; one uses the word surveillance. I become more acutely aware I feel anxious and vaguely guilt-ridden.

I return to stand outside the board room, reading notice boards. A man pushing a trolley with carafes of coffee and assorted pastries arrives. The locked door is frustrating, he says. He cannot just leave the stuff, he tells me; he needs the trolley. People are always late around here, he says. He asks me what meeting it is; I confirm that it is Management. Especially Management, he snorts, they never start on time. My attempts to make pleasant conversation have only limited
success. The man agrees it is an attractive building but volunteers that he has too much to do today, that the whole place is just too busy. I wander along the hall.

The students now are asking one another questions about doing interviews. There are more people around now, mostly alone and moving rapidly through the hall. I start a conversation with Charley, who is looking for someone in the lounge; he seems unhurried. It turns out he is a faculty member and he knows that I am beginning a research project at the college. "I heard about it in a meeting .. I forget which one," he says. "We spend a lot of time in meetings; I'm not sure how useful you'll find them." We discuss the College Wide Committee (CWC), which has its monthly meeting this evening. "I can't figure that one out," he says. "It seems like a run-through for the Board meeting next week. .. I can't figure out why they have both," he repeats. "Maybe you can figure it out. Let me know."

Charley goes to class. I learn later that he is seen as an active and influential member who does a lot of committee work. (As indicated above, I use three ellipsis points to indicate material omitted from a quotation; two, a natural pause.)

Just a few minutes on either side of nine o'clock, the administrators begin to arrive. They greet me pleasantly and chat animatedly with each other. They seem to know about my project. They do not ask for details. There are quick exchanges of information within dyads or triads; two people arrange to get together later in
the day concerning a particular project. Just after nine, the President, George Greensmith, and a few others, arrive. Some of those present keep an eye on George; they seem to monitor where he is and whether he is engaged. A number of people catch his attention and get a word with him. At least one arranges to see him later.

The Board Room is large, bright, and attractive. The wall opposite where I entered consists of large windows and French doors that open to a landscaped area outside. The furniture has been arranged so that it will accommodate a group of a dozen or so on the right side and a group of several dozen on the left side. The management group uses the smaller arrangement on the right. Portraits of the college's former presidents and board chairpersons line the right wall; they are parallel to the table at which the management group sits. The placement is such that those in the photographs appear to scrutinize what happens at the table. Both the arrangement and the observation seem trite. Yet, the impression persists. These photographs are the only decorative elements on any of the walls and, except for some large plants, comprise nearly all the apparent efforts at decorating the room.

The meeting starts late. Neither of the two female administrators has arrived yet; one man is missing; there are seven men and me present. Some of the
men take off their jackets. I am introduced and asked to say something. I try to
speak briefly, but I have the sense I have said too much, that people want to get on
with business. Several people ask me questions, though. One man says that since
a case study must be comparative, he would like to know what other university
college is included in the study. I say the study concerns only Multisite and I
wonder if my answer comes out awkwardly. I am trying to be accurate while
hoping to avoid making it obvious his assumption is mistaken.

One person offers his assistance in arranging to meet people in his division.
Another asks George if the union knows of my study. "Yes, well aware," says
George.

The meeting proceeds. People get up and quietly help themselves to coffee
throughout the meeting. Every now and then, George makes an aside to explain
something to me. Once in a while, one of the others does as well. I wonder if this
sort of comment, indicating that people are aware they are being watched, will
stop. In fact, the comments become much less frequent and tend to disappear by
the second or third Management meeting.

That evening, at the College-Wide Committee, the Chairman of the Board,
Ken Campbell, cordially introduces and welcomes me. "All right, everyone," he
says, "we've all got to be on our best behavior." Those present include board
members, senior administrators, those who chair various internal committees, those who represent the faculty-staff union and the student association, and those making presentations or giving reports. People report on internal committee work, on new programs being developed, on projects in progress, including those in the community, and on developments in the college sector. The items on the agenda at this meeting are those that will be on the agenda of next week's Board meeting.

The meeting seems to proceed smoothly. There is attention to both image and substance. People speak of the need to be sensitive to perceptions, to how various decisions are likely to be seen internally and externally. They also discuss various issues in terms of the institutional values and mission. People speak as if there is clarity on mission and values. People compliment one another on the work in progress and thank one another on the contributions made by individuals and the groups they represent. The tone seems strikingly and almost consistently polite and positive.

One exception is that a Board member makes a comment, seemingly intended to be humourous, that ridicules a cabinet minister. There is little apparent response; most people appear neither amused nor disapproving. It is almost as if it was not said. I say "almost" because the response seems to be a sort of studied non-response. After the comment is made, a number of people
look down, apparently at the material in front of them, with more intense concentration than seems necessary or natural.

**First Impressions: How We Do Things**

Multisite has a lot of meetings. At many of these, people report on what is happening at other meetings, so anyone who attends a number of meetings tends to hear the same information more than once. Meetings are often described as "open." One meaning is that any member of the organization can walk into almost any meeting and can ask a question or make a comment. There is a network of committees; often, the membership is determined by election.

People speak of this network as "our governance structures" or "our decision making structures." There are standing committees that approve new programs or revisions to old programs and that monitor and revise policy around admissions, for example. There are task forces of shorter duration that deal with particular tasks. Many committees report to the Advisory Council. The Council consists of administrators and elected representatives of faculty, staff, and students. It advises the Board on matters of academic policy and related educational matters. This academic year, it is chaired by Elizabeth Thomas, a faculty member.
I attend my first meeting of the Advisory Council the third week of the study. People arrive at the Board Room in ones and twos and sit at the large U shaped arrangement on the left side. One person points to the portraits of the former presidents and Board chairs at the other end of the room, as he seats himself, and asks the person beside him how long those have been there. He says he is glad not to be sitting by them; he asks what the idea is, as if he really dislikes seeing them there. It sounds as if the photographs are fairly new in that location. His neighbour smiles as she responds; I cannot hear the response. It is unclear to me to what extent he really is unhappy with the photographs being there. His neighbour seems amused by his response.

Among the issues discussed at this meeting are a number that concern the college's decision making structures. One member reports that "some people are unable to participate fully in the democratic process because of a lack of release time." An administrator says there should be no problem; Wednesday afternoons are largely free from scheduled classes to allow for meetings. The member responds that may have worked once; now the time pressure is too great to keep the afternoon free. Nursing instructors, for example, have to use Wednesday for clinical work and a half day is not good enough.
Fred Wilcox, a member of the union executive, expresses concern that some people may be "disenfranchised." He speaks of the establishment of the Council in the college’s early years, when democratic governance was the goal and the ideal. People need to be given release time to participate, he insists. "We need that broad base; otherwise we get the same people and the same type of people [those with administrative responsibility and hence more release time]. We've talked about it [more release time to participate] over the years ... before we get too much larger, it has to get factored into the budget."

Another issue is whether there should be alternative representatives for those for whom regular attendance is impossible. Someone says this could get confusing if too many did it. Elizabeth agrees, saying it would mean too much rehashing every time. "We need people who are informed and prepared; we have problems there anyway."

The meeting moves on to debate a proposal for a new pattern of representation for the Council. Members of the subcommittee that produced it summarize its key points. The proposal tries, they say, to strike a balance between area representation and population; it considers current area representation inadequate. It will reduce membership from 18 to 16. It consolidates a number of positions, with one effect being that a number of
positions may be filled by either a faculty or staff member, depending on which individual happens to be elected. After extended discussion, the Council votes to reject the proposal. A number of people acknowledge the efforts of those on the sub-committee who prepared the proposal, though. One member notes they were not given much direction. The meeting moves on to consider other items of business, both unfinished and new. These include reports from sub-committees and information on new courses being proposed.

As the meeting winds down, the topic of representation and the rejection of the proposal comes up again. A number of issues and points of disagreement are outlined again. There seems concern with the lack of resolution of the matter of representation and with the feelings of the members of sub-committee. There is exploration of why the motion to approve the proposal failed; was it the intent or the specifics of the proposal? There is a sense that the meeting is over but there is something troubling people about that earlier discussion.

Elizabeth reminds everyone that governance in colleges is topical now in the broader college sector. She is a member of a provincial task force considering internal governance in colleges; that group emphasizes that teaching faculty must hold a majority of votes in advisory councils. This limits how much people can
consolidate faculty and staff positions. People anticipate that some aspects of college governance will be prescribed by legislation, perhaps within the year.

As the meeting is ending, I walk across the room. When I see Becky smiling at me, I move toward her. She makes a gesture that seems to take in the whole room. "Aren't we great?" she says, "This is how we do things." Becky repeats this last statement and continues, "It's our participatory style. All of us, administrators, faculty, staff, students, we just get everything on the table and you can say what you want and.. that's how we decide." As she finishes her comments, she adds, "This is why we have the success we do."

Comments like Becky's recur at Multisite. People sometimes speak as if institutional success is a given, for example. They sometimes refer to values and goals, as if what those are is taken-for-granted. When I ask what the values are, caring, openness, and respect are most often identified. People sometimes explain this in terms of being like family. However, some people express concern that these values may be threatened by the change; they wonder if degree programs may be a "poor fit" with how they do things.

The topic of participation recurs in meetings and in informal exchanges. People describe participation as rooted in the history of the college, as a key factor in the harmonious relations the college enjoys, as expressing core organizational
values. Fred’s comments on democratic governance (p. 98) illustrate this sense of value-based institutional traditions.

"Our participatory style" seems to entail a valuing of the other person's point of view. Participants in meetings and in informal conversation often preface their remarks with the phrase "this is just my perspective," or something equivalent. The phrase seems intended to suggest that the other person may well have a different view that is equally valuable. People seem to listen attentively to what others say; the impression is that everyone’s point of view is appreciated. When someone disagrees with a point, an effort often is made to indicate that the other’s point of view is useful nevertheless. Related to this, rejecting the sub-committee’s proposal seemed to be a source of concern for many persons present. People seem sensitive to other’s feelings.

About a week after Becky makes her “aren’t we great” comment, there is a change in what people talk about in meetings and in conversation. Budget seems to become the centre of attention and I make it mine. The budgetmaking process offers an opportunity to observe “how we do things” at Multisite.
The Budget Shortfall: Early Spring

When the study begins, the upcoming budget is one of a number of topics of conversation. As time passes, budget becomes a more frequent topic. The information on funding is usually available by year end; it is delayed until late March. The delay itself becomes a topic of conversation. Early in April, people learn that the college faces a budget shortfall. The funds allocated include no increase (i.e., 0% inflation lift) in base budget; this means, in effect, a reduction. A shortfall of more than half a million dollars (in an institution with anticipated revenues of just under twenty five million) is indicated. Budget becomes the main topic of discussion, at least from my vantage point as an observer at open forums and in open places. It is the sole focus of three special forums scheduled in April, for example, and it frequently is a major topic at regular meetings and in conversation. In this second period of the first phase, I focus on the information and events that concern fiscal matters.

The Shortfall

In this section, I describe the situation in which layoffs are expected, George announces a shortfall, and George attempts to frame the situation.
Layoffs. Formally, the information on budget becomes known when George Greensmith, the president, presents it in a budget forum. It is known that there will be layoffs for a few days before that, however. There is both a Management meeting (which I do not attend) and a CWC meeting (which I do attend) three days before the president's forum. Before CWC begins, one administrator tells me the Management meeting that morning was heated: "never seen anything like it; people were yelling and everything."

Another administrator moves down to sit by me; he seems to want to say something. He seems upset and "choked up," as if he is trying not to cry. He says, "what you've got to understand is how difficult this is, it's important you understand ... how unusual this is. ... It's the people .. it's the pain. We're family. We take care of one another." Pat, another administrator, sits near me as the meeting begins. Pat is writing something on a plain white napkin (of the sort provided with coffee service) as the meeting is in session and turns it so that I can see. It says, "Are we having fun yet?" I am uncertain how to respond; I make no response. There seems to be a palpable tension in the room. The meeting proceeds with various items of business; budget is not an agenda topic.

George presents a proposal. George Greensmith holds what is described as the President's Budget Forum. There are actually two meetings, open to all, one
at each of the two main campuses; they are held a couple of hours apart. In these meetings, George presents a proposal of how to deal with the shortfall. He says the proposal has been prepared by management (i.e., senior administrators). Each meeting has three stages: (i) George's opening comments, (ii) a "walk through" of a three part handout, and (iii) a question and answer session. The handout consists of (a) five pages (headed Notes) that seem intended to provide a rationale: "it's important to us that you understand our thought process," (b) three pages (headed Recommendations) that identify the measures to be taken and the dollar values associated with these, and (c) one page (titled Process) that outlines the sequence of events that will occur in dealing with the budget shortfall proposal.

The first two stages of the meeting are essentially the same at both campuses. George's opening comments include points of information and interpretation of information. As he moves through the Notes and Recommendations section of the handout, George says aloud much of what is written there. Positions eliminated include three administrators (associate deans who are members of the management group) and one manager (mid-level). A technical (audio-visual) position will be eliminated; some other instructional support positions will be reduced or not be filled. A two-year Career program will have its funding reduced, so that it is offered on a part-time basis only.
Tuition fees will be increased; the increase for students in Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language programs, students who often are less affluent than those in other programs, will be less than in other programs. The proposal also indicates that some new positions and other cost items will be added, many of them faculty for new degree programs. One new position, described as a back-up to the computer services office, will offer system (i.e., non-instructional) support. George says that he is "concerned with minimizing layoffs, but that's not the prime concern; the prime concern is that this place does its job."

The section headed Process indicates steps in the intended sequence of events. The proposal has been approved in principle by the board (step 1), for example, and those affected have been notified of the recommendation of lay-off but not of actual lay-off (step 2). Only one step (Step 3) concerns internal discussion; it stipulates that the recommendations will be the "subject of debate" at this forum and that "a formal discussion" will occur at the next Advisory Council meeting. The remaining steps indicate a date by which amendments are presented to the board, that formal ratification will lead to formal notice of lay-off, and that the college will work with the union to see that "those affected ... are treated fairly and with concern for their future careers and for their personal welfare."
Framing organizational reality. People attempt to make organizational experience meaningful; they attempt to frame and define organizational reality (Smircich and Morgan, 1982) for themselves and for others. They may attempt to guide the attention of those involved in a situation so that what may be a complex and ambiguous overall flow of experience becomes something more discrete and vested with a specific pattern of meaning (Smircich & Morgan, 1982, p. 261). A frame is a perspective, a way of thinking; it is a choice of how to respond to a situation or problem; it may be creative or unimaginative, new or old (Bolman and Deal, 1991, p. 4). "Frames are both windows on the world and lenses that bring the world into focus. They filter out some things while allowing others to pass more easily" (Bolman and Deal, 1991, p. 11).

Framing refers to presenting issues from a particular perspective, often by emotional appeals to social and organizational values (McShane, 1992, p. 539). In this forum, George offers a multifaceted definition of the situation. He ties current process to historic values, for example. Again and again, he reiterates the value of openness: "This place has always worked best in an open way ... I want to be as open as possible." He emphasizes that the proposal is a discussion paper: "The floor is still open for better ways to do it." He links the college's situation with the power of the external funding authority. The college is "both shrinking and
expanding at the same time; the Ministry is providing for growth only in degree areas."

George also links the situation with a powerful internal factor. In reference to the Collective Agreement signed last year, he says: "I'm not saying that's the problem; we're only paying the system average. But we knew when we signed it, it would have budget implications." He forcefully defines the situation in relation to the university college status. "Let me put to rest any myths," he says, "the new degrees are not sucking money out of other programs." He also acknowledges the affective side of the situation: "I don't expect you to like it; I don't like it."

Another facet of the frame George presents concerns the demands placed on administrators. "If I have a worry about our proposed solution it is that we are imposing an even heavier burden on remaining senior administrators: this in an institution which already has one of the smallest ratios of senior administrators to faculty in the system." George describes the measures the proposal recommends as not foreclosing on any significant options. The college has a strategic planning process presently underway but not completed. The measures eliminate the shortfall "without causing any significant shift of Multisite's overall direction."

George seems very clear on what types of responses are and are not appropriate. He emphasizes that the discussion "will only be helpful if it is
realized that for every item that is taken out of the 'cuts,' an item of similar value must be put back in." That is, to object to a recommended reduction or elimination, one must offer either an alternative "cut" or a way to generate additional revenue to cover the item. The process "must be constructive:" people must not compare programs and positions. It is unacceptable, for example, to suggest saving Tom's job by laying off Harry.

Response to the Proposal

In this section, I describe the two question and answer sessions at the President's Budget Forums and then I outline some of the response to the budget proposal that occurs over time. I do so under three headings.

Question and answer session: North Campus. The first meeting takes place in a rather worn looking classroom, with long tables and mismatched chairs. It is late morning; many faculty are in class; some arrive late. I recognize a fair number of faculty and some staff members. There are a number of senior administrators present. If there are students present, I do not recognize them. George stands at a long table at the front of the room. In the question and answer session, the first questions concern the support and alternatives offered to those who have been laid off. Then, people ask about some specific recommendations.
Sam (a faculty member) questions the reductions to instructional support, especially the elimination of the audio visual technician. He contrasts this loss with the addition of a new position in computer services. A senior administrator says the new position provides system support (i.e., support to non-instructional college wide services, such as registration). Sam says sharply the new position offers administrative support; the administrator says "that's not fair." The tone of the exchange seems angry. It is not entirely clear how best to interpret this exchange. The administrator's comment seems an attempt to clarify that this is not a shift among those positions that provide instructional support. The matter of fairness seems related to whether or not college-wide systems can be seen as supporting administrators specifically, rather than the college as a whole.

Sam suggests the college may end up with impressive banks of equipment and no one who can help people use them. Jack, another faculty member, says, "in which case, we won't need either position." The remark seems intended to be humourous, to soften the exchange, reduce the tension, and perhaps to move the discussion on. Sam responds testily: "We don't all seem to be on the same side." No one responds directly to this comment. They may not hear it. (I happen to be sitting nearby.) They may have heard and prefer not to respond.
Shortly thereafter, George ends the meeting. He says he had better get on the highway if he is to be on time for the meeting that's planned at South Campus. His final comment is said pleasantly and perhaps with some relief: "Thanks for not shooting the messenger." In the hallway outside the meeting room, a group of about a dozen people are walking out of the building. Someone in the group says to Sam, "I'm glad you spoke; you were right on; you know where it is." I walk to the parking lot.

**Question and answer session: South Campus.** The second meeting takes place in an attractive auditorium with upholstered chairs with adjustable writing surfaces. George stands on a stage, using a microphone. In the question and answer session, the first person to speak is Peg Wilson. Peg is president of the Union that represents both faculty and staff. She wonders aloud whether she will speak from her seat or take the microphone from George, at the front. There is a bantering exchange in which she takes the microphone from him, saying she will take over the meeting, to which he responds, laughing, "by all means." The exchange seems good humoured on both sides. Both George and Peg look tired.

Peg makes a number of points. She says "the only thing carved in stone is the bottom line." She indicates that the Union executive has had only a few days with the proposal. They are not sure if the new additions are justified. She
emphasizes that "a budget is a set of priorities ... what we're saying (with this proposal) is these new positions are more important ... it's more important to have a computer specialist than to have a media specialist." Still at the microphone, she tells George she would "like to see the figures attached to the new positions." George says yes, nodding; he reassures her he knows where she's coming from. He says they (those who prepared the proposal) looked at priorities. He reiterates "this is not a top down process; it is open."

The next speakers (perhaps half a dozen, all of whom are young women) are students in the Career program that the proposal recommends cutting. Their program is located at this campus. They speak one after the other; then some speak again; at times, more than one is speaking. Even though some of them will have graduated before the recommendations take effect, they seem very upset with the anticipated reduction. They also seem articulate, persistent, and confident as public speakers.

One student says, "the plan says students don't count." Another says the reduction indicates a failure on the part of administrators to understand and to value a new and innovative program. A number of students suggest that increasing tuition fees would be better than reducing the program. One student says that increasing class size throughout the college is a fairer solution than
cutting one program. Another student says that the non-university courses are being sacrificed to university courses. One or another of the several senior administrators present respond to each comment. The responses seem reasoned, informative, and courteous.

A student repeats an earlier suggestion, that large lectures are better than not having a program; a series of increasingly heated exchanges follow. George says that if she is talking about more than a few, she is talking about a revolution; it would change the whole underlying philosophy of the place. He has to look at the whole institution, he says, he cannot change the whole place to solve a small problem. He says he'd like a faculty member to comment on large lectures.

A science instructor stands up and says "you've got to consider what you mean by teaching; if I have 300 students in a class, I have no access to them. This problem is just the tip of the iceberg." (The iceberg presumably implies that the current shortage of funds is part of a larger and long term problem; adding a few large classes now will not provide a solution.) A number of students respond angrily, saying big classes are better than none. Another faculty member responds, "if you want big, anonymous classes, go to UBC." A group of students shout, "there is no room there." They seem furious with that comment and increasingly frustrated with the discussion.
The program faced with reduction continues to dominate the discussion, driven by questions and comments from students. They urge the College to try to persuade the government to provide more funding, for example. They suggest the administrators and Board seek public support in doing so. A number of administrators and faculty express doubt that such efforts would be effective. George says he will not allow the program to continue in hopes that next year's budget will be better.

A student, seeming aggressive, says, "the university college will be a university first, a college second, and pretty bad at that." George says he doesn't believe that's going to happen. The student persists: "it will over time." George, now red in the face, begins with "I don't want to get passionate but ... the recession will not bottom out; it is a recession where the bottom is the norm." He speaks of the national economic situation, saying that Canada is bankrupt. His comments may be intended to bring closure to the session.

The exchanges do not end there, however, but they do seem to peter out; some views expressed earlier are repeated. It seems as if the students want to continue the discussion until they get a response they consider satisfactory. One student says that since there is consensus in the meeting to save the program, she wants reassurance there is a commitment to do so. George says he's not sure if
there is a consensus. He offers a commitment to look at real alternatives. He says that the responsibility of management is to do the homework and say this is one way we see. As the meeting ends, he repeats two ideas he has put forth earlier. One is, "we find we make better decisions if we make them together." The other is, "we have different perspectives; ... you're looking at it through the eyes of one program; I have to look at the whole institution; that's why we can't talk about it."

**The following fortnight.** Four days after the President's Budget Forum, the instructor and some students from the Career program present their case at a meeting of the College Board. The instructor, Linda McDonald, using the phrase "respectfully submit," presents a proposal which she labels "A modest proposal." The initial management proposal reduces the number of courses available in any term so students are forced to take more terms to complete. Linda’s proposal allows the program to retain one-half more of a faculty position than management proposes. Although this is a reduction in the present faculty complement, students will be able to complete on a full time basis. Linda’s proposal will mean the program remains intact, with a better possibility of long-term survival and growth.

A number of students speak. They describe the impact on their careers and lives if the program is not available to them on a full-time basis. Several of the students use the phrase "respectfully submit," too. The last student to speak looks
around the table and makes eye contact with individual board members as she speaks. She ends her comments by saying to the Board: "Let me remind you: leadership is not doing things right; it is doing the right thing." Everyone is quiet and looks serious. The Chair, Ken Campbell, responds with empathy for the students' situation but without reassurances that the program will not be reduced.

Peg Wilson gives the union report. She begins with what she labels a reminder; the Board and Management "need to look at how this proposal affects high level posts .. managers are people too." She expresses concern with the long term effects on persons and the institution of having too few administrators, especially in periods of chronic underfunding. Then her tone changes: "I'll take the invitation to suggest seriously. Here's the first plan: keep the associate deans and get rid of George, Bill (a dean), Pat (another dean)." Everyone (including Bill, Pat and George) laughs. It seems that some of the tension in the room dissipates.

Peg says that the Union has a process to suggest that involves all members in finding ways to save money. Any savings will go to save people and programs. The process will be outlined primarily in the in-camera (non public) session to follow. She says, "we've developed a level of trust here ... we need to cash it in." Nothing more is said about the process in public session.
Metaphors of family recur in language use at this meeting and in the days that follow. A student, representing the Student Council, suggests that faculty and staff car pool on travel between campuses to reduce expenses; he says that "if you want us kids to do it, we have to see the parents do it." The idea of cutting certain programs rather than cutting across the board is spoken of in terms of trying to decide whether to let all your children go a little hungry. This metaphor recurs in the weeks after this meeting. The dark side of it, of letting a few children starve so the survivors remain well-fed, is not made explicit.

Budget is often the topic of conversation in the following period, in informal exchanges and in regular meetings of departments and divisions. I stand among a group of administrators and faculty members, just before a meeting begins. One of them says that budget will probably dominate the discussion. Another says, pleasantly, that at least it makes it interesting for the observer. Pat, an administrator, says, "we do it all for you, Starr."

In meetings, some people say the "general spirit," the overall emphasis of the proposal, is appropriate. People explain this view with comments like "classrooms are the last to be cut." There seems to be recognition of how difficult a task it is to deal with a shortfall. Some people comment positively on the openness of process. Some say, for example, that most colleges do not make so
much information available to faculty. There are negative comments, however, "on how the proposal was presented." This seems to refer to the requirement that one must provide an alternative for any recommendation one rejects.

Many people, including some who say the overall emphasis is good, express discomfort with specifics. People express concern for the individuals who are laid off. The idea of family, that people ought to take care of one another, recurs. The technical position in audio-visual which has been eliminated is the subject of comment, sometimes juxtaposed with the addition of what is usually described as the computer back-up position. There seems to be some concern with how to interpret this; some see it as a shift from instructional support to system support.

People also express concern for the individual students who are affected by the reduction in the Career program and for the college's image in the outside community, if students are disappointed. Some comments suggest meanings taken for granted: colleges are to be concerned with individual students and to provide a certain kind of classroom teaching. These comments seem consistent with those of the Science instructor (p. 112). Some express concern that this reduction may foreshadow a gradual loss of comprehensiveness, especially in terms of unique and innovative programs.
A few say that the College is wrong to try to cut costs, to try to find ways to balance the budget. Doing so "implies we are wasteful, reinforcing the public's perception there is always fat to cut" (an opinion expressed in the Union newsletter). Instead, the College should shut down for a number of days, thereby making a public statement that "underfunding generates less production" (Union newsletter). This view is expressed by some people active in the union, although it does not seem to be the union position. I am unable to identify a union position, as such, although I ask about this and read all relevant documents to which I gain access. I hear that representatives of management and the union executive are meeting, in closed sessions, throughout the budget period.

**More Meetings**

George outlined his intended sequence of events at his forum. The proposal was to be "the subject of debate" in two forums: at the President's Budget Forum (day 1) and at the next meeting of the Advisory Council (day 13). The proposal, with whatever amendments, was to be ratified at the May board meeting (day 33). In the sequence that actually unfolds, Days 1 (early April) and 33 (early May) remain as "bookend events" to the budget process. Other special meetings are scheduled, however, and budget is among the topics at most other meetings. The
day after the students present at the April meeting of the Board (day 5, as outlined above), the Union distributes a notice of a special meeting (to be held on day 19). The notice asks that people think of priorities and of alternative ways to cut costs or generate revenue and pass their ideas to the union executive in advance of the meeting. At the regular Advisory Council meeting (day 13), Council members decide to schedule (for day 22) a special meeting. The notice uses this label: Extraordinary Council Meeting: Budget. In this section, I describe the meetings that occur on days 13, 19, 22, and 27.

**Regular council meeting (day 13).** Early in this meeting, George is invited to give his report. (The President's Report is a regular agenda item.) He begins with a few other items and quickly moves to budget matters. He notes that this meeting is not "the big finale" after all; now it is just another step because the union initiated its own forum. He makes two points, one immediately after the other. First, he expresses gratitude for the union's constructive approach; second, he reiterates that people knew when the last Collective Agreement was signed "it would not be done easily."

Elizabeth Thomas (the Chair) says she has a few thoughts and questions in mind about the role of the Council. (As indicated above, the Council advises the Board on matters of academic policy and related educational matters. The
President is present as a resource person and a participant in the discussion). One is the question of what the Council should do in the long run. If, she says, George's vision is that this committee have the formal budget debate and if the Council sees itself in that role, then there has to be serious planning around accomplishing how that is to be done in future years. Elizabeth says she also wants to question what is happening this year. If, for example, there is to be a budget debate now, it ought to have been set up two months ahead.

It is really important, George replies, that "this Council be the primary focus of the internal debate around budget." Also, he notes that this year there has been a problem with time as well as money. Someone else says that what is important to the Council is "how the budget impacts on what we do; it is not clear that we need to deal with the business details, the minutiae." There are questions and comments on how a Council concerned with educational matters is to understand the financial implications of its decisions. George says the committee should not be looking at programs one by one; it should look, for example, at what programs are offered over a five year period.

A little later, George reiterates that this year, the budget process is "caught in a time problem as well as an information problem." The information from the Ministry was delayed by nearly three months, he says. He says he took the
proposal to the board (for approval to discuss, not for approval as final form); he needed to "get the comfort level of the Board before bringing it here." In future, he says, he expects to receive information from the Ministry by year end and have a period of two months internal debate.

Elizabeth asks why the proposal was taken to the Board before being brought to the Council. George responds that, in universities, financial concerns are taken to the Board, not to the academic council. George continues: "What is seen as the primary responsibility (of the Board) is to be fiscally sound, .. it is not instructional." "Then how meaningful is our discussion," Elizabeth asks, "If management says it looks like some impact on programs, either we're having a discussion .. or legitimizing something that no one has been a part of .. what discussion did you expect?"

George replies, in a tone that seems defensive, that the discussion has been preempted by the "legitimate action taken by the union" (i.e., scheduling their upcoming forum). He says, "to be perfectly honest, I don't know how you come to a committee like this and say we have a shortfall, we have to cut some programs, we have to cut some positions." Fred (a member of faculty and of the Union executive) seems to agree, "it's very difficult ... the union can't lay off its own, .. still .. if, when it's clear cuts are going to happen, if a group could come together
with management ... ." George interjects that the document is still open to comment, "it's not a closed door." Fred says, in what seems a gentle manner, that he is not trying to make anyone defensive or to denigrate any effort. He just wants to understand what's happening, he says; he'd rather have a role in shaping decisions and then seek a response than just be reacting to something already shaped.

George says that if he could live it again, he would have assumed that there would be a shortfall and would have proceeded (from December onward) on that basis, rather than waiting for the information from the Ministry. That would have allowed a better process, he says, and given the internal community an opportunity to come up with ideas. The discussion then shifts, as a student representative asks a question that changes the topic from process to a specific recommendation.

Later, someone asks whether people have considered holding back on the negotiated salary increase (in the faculty and staff Collective Agreement) and phasing it in over several years. A faculty member responds: "This is a union matter. The membership at last year's meeting knew the consequences. There was a high degree of satisfaction (with the contract)." The response seems to have an edge; it seems that this matter is not open to discussion.
On the topic of how to deal with budget in future, George suggests that the role the union is taking this year may be a role for a sub-committee of the Council in the future. He says, as well, that management cannot respond to individual suggestions as they come in but must look for a balanced package. "The task of the (management) group is to take the suggestions and see which are fruitful."

This remark seems to suggest something of what will transpire during the union forum: management will not respond to specifics at that time. At this point George re-asserts a statement made earlier: "ultimately, management's responsibility is to take recommendations to the Board after consultation."

**The union's forum/workshop (day 19).** I hear of this event two weeks before it is held. A faculty member who has just picked up material at her mailbox waves a piece of paper at me, saying, "have you seen this .. the form?" I am confused by what she means; I look at the sheet as if it is a new form of some especial interest; she more or less repeats herself. Then, I see that the paper announces that the union will hold a forum to discuss budget. A light dawns that helps to explain some earlier moments of confusion. I realize that other faculty members have used the meaning of forum with the pronunciation of form in earlier exchanges. In those exchanges, I felt some confusion and was unsure why. In each case, the speaker is an articulate person with one or more graduate
degrees. Each speaker is also a founding member at Multisite. I realize now that my confusion came from a word that did not fit. I find this pronunciation of forum as form as something a number of people do more than once as interesting and puzzling.

I go to the session, uncertain what to label this event. Early on, it is labeled a forum; later, a workshop. Many references avoid a label altogether, referring to it in terms of the name of the building in which it is held. A number of people say to me, "are you coming to the Junction?" One union notice requests suggestions on budget; it uses no label: "we will collect ... collate, group and possibly cost them and bring them back to you at (date and time), The Junction." (The Junction is a business complex within walking distance of South campus. It includes a pub, a restaurant, and a conference centre in which the union often rents space for meetings.)

I arrive at the Junction wondering what to expect. In the previous week, some people have expressed concern that there may be confrontational exchanges. Others have expressed puzzlement, wondering what can be achieved. The session begins. An associate dean, who will no longer have that position if the management proposal is ratified, welcomes people to what he labels the Budget Alternatives Forum. In introducing himself, he makes what seems to me a witty,
albeit poignant, remark about the "half life of associate deans around here." No one laughs; many faces look sad. Peg Wilson, the union president, speaks briefly and also welcomes everyone. She looks tired. She thanks people for handing in their suggestions: "the response has been overwhelming."

Peg says the ideas people at Multisite passed along have been combined with ideas generated at Urban College (a college in the region that faced a shortfall last year). The plan for the afternoon is outlined: small group work to generate more suggestions on how to cut costs or generate revenue; administrators available as sources of information; administration to report at a later time on what use will be made of the suggestions. One implicit message seems to be that administrators will not be put on the spot.

People are assigned to groups of 8 or 10 by means of colour codes on envelopes of materials picked up at the entrance. One intent of the assignment to groups seems to be that each group has both faculty and staff; there may also be an effort to represent different areas or campuses. Each group has a different package of materials that provides details of a particular means of cutting costs or increasing revenue. Peg asks me if I have a group. I say I want to "float" but she responds, "no, you need a group." She takes me to a group with fewer people than most of the others. She begins to introduce me, but it becomes clear I know
several members of the group already, so she leaves me there. Her manner is of someone intending to be helpful, finding a place for someone who may not know everyone. My sense is that I am expected to participate in the group, rather than just observe.

There are perhaps a dozen tables in a large room, the sort of conference room comprised of several adjoining areas that can be combined by opening connecting doors. The room quickly becomes quiet, as people appear to settle to the task, apparently with a high degree of involvement. The members of the management group move about the room, providing information to groups as they are beckoned over to groups. The tone of interactions seem collaborative and comfortable.

Two members of the group I have joined express frustration with the process, that "we're not getting at the big issues." They then seem to apply themselves to the group's assigned task, which is looking at the details of a plan to generate revenue by introducing paid parking. I am inattentive to the details of my group's activity; I am trying to get a feeling for what is going on in the room, overall. One group member asks me a question which I cannot answer and then comments, apparently good-naturedly, that I seem not to be concentrating on the task. He is someone who has experience with me as a non-participating observer
in other meetings. I wonder if he is checking to see if I want to be included or if he thinks I ought to participate.

I am uncomfortable with what is happening and feeling increasingly anxious about being here. I am unwilling to pretend to be participating in the task. I feel an intense empathy for these people; I know what it feels like to deal with a reduction in funding. I think their efforts are futile, however, an odd bit of "busywork." It seems to me they are "nickeling and diming" a situation that will not be altered much. I am feeling frustrated that I cannot understand what it is they think they are doing. I am feeling unduly annoyed with the fact I have been "seated."

I play truant from my assigned group, initially by walking the long way around to the coffee table and stopping to visit along the way. After a while, I just wander about, without pretending to have a "home group" to which I will return. I come to feel comfortable doing so; I chat briefly with Peg in passing. In some groups, the people seem to be dealing seriously with the details and implications of the materials provided to them. In others, they are making conversation, often about how weary they are with continuing concern with funding.

About an hour after the forum begins, spokespersons from the small groups report to the whole group. They comment on specifics like the loss of the position
in audio-visual. Again, this loss is contrasted with the addition of the computer position. They comment on more general issues, such as the continuing problem of chronic underfunding. People say the College must make clear they are unfunded, that there is no fat to cut. Management promises to look at all suggestions. The forum winds up on that note.

As people are leaving, I ask one member of the group I left what he thought of the process. He hesitates; I wonder if he is surprised by the question; he says he thought it was great, really great. His response seems overstated; it may be defensive. If so, I wonder if my voice revealed more of my own bemusement than I intended. Also, I wonder how he interpreted my leaving the group.

**Extraordinary Council Meeting: Budget (day 22).** Three days after the Union workshop, I arrive early for the Council's special meeting. Other early arrivals say they are unsure what to expect of this meeting; they wonder how long it will last. The staff member who organizes Council meetings says a number of people called to see if it had been cancelled. Someone reports that union and management were meeting late last night (in another of the closed sessions between management and the union executive); no one seems to know (or to be willing to tell) with what outcome. A number of people arrive just before start time; others continue to trickle in. The meeting begins about ten minutes late.
Elizabeth begins the meeting by saying there are two topics. The first is the present situation, which will include whatever news there is out of the most recent management - union meeting. The second is the parameters of this committee's role in budget discussions in the future. George outlines the budget process to date. He says that discussions with the union have been constructive. They asked tough questions, he says, but the tone was respectful, by and large. However, "there is no pot of gold; I can't say there will be no layoffs. There are some changes; frankly, not highly substantive ones." Concerning the changes, "I have to stop short of being definitive; I haven't talked with my colleagues (i.e., the rest of the senior administrators) to see if there is agreement. I met with the union last night. I need the weekend to put it together; then I'll go to the Board with a changed sense of direction."

One change is that the Career Program will be less severely cut. Linda's "modest proposal" is accepted. This will "keep it alive and allow it to grow." This is possible, George says, because recent figures indicate somewhat more bookstore revenue than initially identified.

George attempts to re-frame what is being called the new computer back-up position. He says it seems that the position is seen by organizational members as someone who just fills in for Henry (the manager of computing services). "There
seems to be an image of some guy with a cigar, sitting around waiting for Henry to go on holiday or get sick." George says that he takes responsibility for explaining it badly. George and Henry then explain why they believe this position is essential and how they see the absence of the position as "courting disaster." If the mainframe computer fails when Henry is not available, George says, then much of the institution, the library, student records, payroll, for example, would not function. Being his back-up is just one side of the new position, Henry says. The other side is to look after Multisite's expanding networks. Henry describes the amount of work to be done and the backlog of work steadily accumulating.

There is a range of questions and comments, most of which pertain to the specifics of the budget. Fred, a Council member, brings up concerns with the cuts in management. He speaks of the outside projects the college is involved with and the time demands they impose on managers. There is a "ground swell of fear," he says, "concern with loose ends, with what falls through the cracks." George says. "Thanks, I appreciate the recognition; that's a good question." He says a history of "flat layers" of management is one of the college's successes. The work of the associate deans will move downward as well as upward, he says. The positions of department and program heads will become more critical, if that flat structure is to be maintained. As we get bigger, he says, people will identify more with the unit.
Fred persists; he says that the worry is not just with management, it is with services like registration, it is the strain on the system. Fred speaks of the problems with burnout and low morale in an earlier period (i.e., the 1980s) of restraint: "we don't want to go through that again." The discussion moves to funding for staff and administration as distinct from funding for faculty. There is reference to one or more management positions being added when a new plan is developed. Fred reiterates his concern with burnout throughout the institution: "not only are you (management) going to be lean and mean; we are too."

Elizabeth notes that the group has spent an hour and a half on the first topic (this year's budget). "I am now asking the second question: the parameters of the role of the committee in the future." "My sense," George says, "is that the Council's role is to recommend policy that pertains to instruction and programs. In monitoring budget, its role is to see if it is changing policy overtly or covertly but ... that's easy to say ... almost includes everything."

There seems a reluctance to move from this year's process to the role of the Council in the future. It seems as if there is nothing more to be said about this year; it seems as if people are not ready to leave the topic. There seems an ambivalence about what has happened this year. Mike, a Council member says:
"On the one hand I feel we've been circumvented as a committee. On the other, there has been wide opportunity for input."

The reductions in the Career program comes up as an example in terms of the role of the Council. George says a body like the Council cannot decide to drop a program. He seems to mean that such decisions rest with the Board. Several members object; they assert that since Council approves programs, it must be a part of decisions to cut programs. "It is a change in policy to drop," Elizabeth says. Judy, another Council member, says that "if there is responsibility at one end [of the decision], surely there is some responsibility at the opposite end."

George responds that Senates at universities have been unable to make such decisions. "Experience teaches me," he says, "that it's a tough thing for a body like this to say no to this [program], replace it with that; it's tough enough at the management level." Judy persists: "If we approved offering the course, we should have a say in cutting it; it [a change in what is offered] does change the direction of the institution." Elizabeth adds that the Council has a responsibility "to make sure the board knows the implications." The meeting ends soon after these exchanges; the question of the Council's role in such decisions seems to be left unresolved.
The College Wide Committee (day 27). At CWC, Elizabeth Thomas reports on the Council's two most recent meetings. She says that although the shortage of time complicated the process, all discussions were constructive. She emphasizes the need to clarify roles. If the budget cuts an instructional program, for example, that can be seen as a change in instructional policy. It seems clear that Council must be a part of that discussion, she says; what role it has in the decision is unclear.

Peg Wilson, giving the union report, expresses her appreciation for the opportunity for consultation. She says that real consultation is time consuming, however, and there was not enough time. Peg also emphasizes the need to re-define roles. She speaks of the constraints of the traditional and adversarial roles of union and management. Traditionally, the union is concerned with people, jobs, work conditions; management is concerned with efficiency, the bottom line, productivity. "These traditional roles give a set of rules ... our process on budget marks a step away from that ... but just a step ... means risks on both sides, we said we'll do more than complain, we'll take a modest amount of responsibility ... you said, we'll do more than decide ... we want to consult with you; ...we can't stop here ... we have to work together for the best of the organization ... we are a long way from abandoning traditional roles ... we don't have a process yet ... we have
no mechanism other than our mutual trust ... we can't go on without a process ... what we need is an accord in this institution."

The budget proposal presented here is the same one that George described in the special Council meeting as not yet definitive. It is essentially the original management proposal, slightly modified: in George's words, "amended but not substantively." Revisions include small increases in revenues and small reinstatements in instructional areas, including agreeing to Linda's "modest proposal" to retain the Career program as full-time. The items on the agenda at this meeting comprise the agenda of the next Board meeting. This proposal is ratified at the Board meeting (early May, day 33). In a practical sense, at least, Multisite has "settled" the matter of dealing with the budget shortfall.

**First Phase Ends: Late Spring**

In this section, I describe the third and final period in the first phase. It begins as the budget process and the month of April end. Some organizational processes that were pushed to the back burner in the budget period are brought forward now. There are two meetings of the Strategic Planning Committee in this period, for example, one early in May. Regular meetings return to the broad range
of topics that characterized the pre-budget period. The Advisory Council meeting in mid May is an example. There are increasingly frequent references to the end of the (academic) year. There seems to be a pervasive sense of fatigue as May comes to an end.

**Strategic Planning**

(What I see and hear of Strategic Planning throughout the first phase is brought together here for a sense of continuity. Most of the observations of the Strategic Planning Committee occur in this third period.)

The strategic planning process already was underway when the study began. There had been "size up" sessions, for example, in which participants (including board members, management, and representatives of students, staff, faculty and the community) meet with a consultant and identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Throughout the course of the study, two other group processes take place. One consists of sessions in which the management group meets for several consecutive days with a "facilitator" (outside consultant) and draft successive versions of the plan. People speak of these as drafting sessions or management retreats. The other process is that a group, usually called the
Strategic Planning Steering Committee but in fact a subcommittee of the Advisory Council, meets to consider each new draft.

Early in the study, a number of people tell me this planning process is important: I should ask to observe the management "retreats" and the Steering Committee meetings. I ask George if I may attend some part of the management retreat. I am not surprised that he says no. I ask, in a sense, against my better judgment. I think that he will refuse and that he may be uncomfortable with the question and with saying no. My sense is that, socially and politically, it would be a good idea not to ask. Making the request seems essential analytically, however; I can not know the response without asking the question. He seems upset, at least for a moment or two, with the request. He says the management group needs "some time when we can let our hair down without being observed."

The strategic planning process comes up in the regular Council meeting that occurs in the budget period. Harry (a Council member) questions the process. He says that he is "feeling out of the loop concerning strategic planning; seems to me that the Council as well as management should oversee the process." George says, perhaps with a bit of annoyance, "I thought I'd laid out a process but I think from other conversations it is not understood or not appreciated." He goes on to say that there are two phases, which he describes as follows. The first phase
is drafting a document. He contrasts this phase to the "Access process, which produced a lot of burnout." (This is a reference to the Access Committee, a large group which held weekly and long-lasting meetings over several months three years ago. It produced the proposal that the college seek university college status.) The approval process, the second phase, comes in the fall, he says. Speaking of the document that the Strategic Planning process will produce, he says, "the document becomes of this committee." George explains, "it is put together this way because of problems with burnout; this process allows maximum input without too much demand." He continues, saying, "This committee is front and centre. The plan is approved here before going to the board." Harry responds, "thanks for clarifying, I didn't understand." The exchange in which Elizabeth asks George why the budget plan was taken to the Board first follows almost immediately after this.

The minutes of that meeting report that concerns were expressed and that George clarified process. The minutes describe the subcommittee as "established with broad representation from the institution to review each stage of the process as it is received from the drafting committee ... the approval and recommendation to the Board process is designed to give the Council ownership of the document."
I want to attend meetings of the Steering Committee. I try to find out when the next one is; people who are usually well informed seem uncertain what is happening. For example, someone says that he thinks the next meeting is postponed because management members have postponed their latest drafting session; he asks a colleague who happens by if she knows. The colleague says she thought the last one was cancelled and will not be rescheduled until committee members have a chance to look at the latest draft. I try to contact Connie, the faculty member who chairs the Steering Committee; I cannot reach her.

Sometime thereafter, I find out when a meeting is scheduled and where it will be held. I arrive early, in hopes I can talk to Connie to discuss what I am doing and to request her permission to be present. She arrives with little time to spare, however, and immediately is surrounded by colleagues. The situation seems to shift suddenly from pre-meeting chat to calling the meeting to order. I am somewhat startled by this since I still am looking for an opportunity to introduce myself to Connie before the meeting begins. Connie announces that we are starting and then says she sees some people, or at least one person, she does not know. She is looking directly at me; she is not smiling. She asks me to introduce myself; I do so as briefly as I can. Connie responds, 'and you were invited here?' The most senior administrator present reassures her with a few soft
spoken comments. I feel uncomfortable with this awkward beginning and am
determined to speak with her as soon as I can.

The meeting proceeds. Those present include representatives of staff and
faculty and a number of members of the management group. More members of
management arrive during the meeting. The group reviews the latest draft of the
strategic plan section by section. Non-management committee members comment
on or question particular statements in the plan. One or another member of the
management group attempts to explain what the item means or is intended to do.

For example, the draft plan has this mission statement: "to provide
accessible education and training that assists adult learners in our region to meet
the challenges of living and working in a rapidly changing world." A faculty
member who represents Adult Basic Education suggests that service to the
community ought to be a part of the statement. An administrator says that the
statement is meant to be focused. "I'm not saying the comment [on community] is
not a good one; just so you understand our process." A board member says that a
mission statement should get at the driving force of the place which is being proud
of teaching excellence. Another administrator says they had a lot of debate on this
one; they wanted consensus; they wanted to get at the essence of what we do. The
statement, he says, "tells what business we're in; it's meant to be all
encompassing." The same faculty member says, "Our role in the community is the business we're in ... private colleges do training and education too; ... also what we do is not just accessible, it is high quality." One of the administrators again defends the statement as given.

Faculty representing Continuing Education indicate that they, like their colleagues in Adult Basic Education, do a lot of work that would not be seen as education or training: work with groups in getting something going, in animating community groups. Connie suggests the group make a recommendation on this; she and a number of others discuss how to word it. The minutes report "the committee recommends that the drafting committee revisit the mission statement and include our role in community service and add high quality [as another descriptive term, along with accessible, to modify education and training]."

Another item in the draft that triggers discussion is labeled the abandonment objective: "To abandon the attitude that we can or must continue to do the things we have always done and in the ways we have always done them." People question what the objective means. They say abandonment sounds negative and that it is impossible to measure an attitude, anyway. They suggest the objective be changed.
The pattern to this point continues throughout the meeting. The document is reviewed, section by section. A committee member questions a statement and an administrator attempts to clarify or justify it, sometimes in a manner that seems defensive. Occasionally, one of the administrators says he (neither of the female administrators are present) will take a suggestion back to the "drafting committee," meaning back to the management group.

As the meeting ends, I make sure I speak to Connie. I offer an apology for not contacting her earlier and indicate I had tried to reach her. She agrees that she has been impossible to contact. She smiles; she seems tired. I feel comfortable; the tone of this exchange seems pleasant. I comment briefly on my research project and offer to discuss the letter of consent I have for those who chair meetings I want to attend. She looks at it with what may be uncertainty, reading some of it. I feel uncomfortable; the tone seems to have shifted. She waves the letter at the same administrator who spoke on my behalf in the beginning, asking, "is this okay?" He responds lightly and reassuringly, with a comment that the letter is standard.

Another management retreat on strategic planning must take place before the Committee meets again. In the period leading up to the retreat, I pick up informal comments made by some administrators and some staff members who
work with administrators. One staff member, for example, says her boss does not want to go. It seems that he is frustrated with the process and sees it as a poor use of time. An administrator, in an aside, says the steering committee is more like an editing committee. Another administrator says he and his administrative colleagues find the whole thing uncomfortable; at steering committee meetings "we are struggling to remember why we came up with a wording; it's hard to get back what we were thinking [at the retreat]."

At the next meeting of the Steering Committee, George is absent. Connie asks the administrators who are present if they want to comment on the recent three day retreat. There is an apparently good natured set of exchanges in which each seems to want someone else to respond. Then one of them says, "report on the three days?, well, .. we were there for 3 days, definitely there for 3 days."

Most of the people present, including the other administrators, laugh. The same administrator then takes a more serious tone and offers a report. "Well, by and large ... we got done what we needed to ... we were pretty well burned out by the second day ... we reviewed the document in the management meeting and agreed it was too long ... general sense is the document is useful; it has the potential to take us where we want to go."
Connie asks if there will be another session with the consultant. An administrator answers that that depends on how this committee responds to what they have drafted. This leads to a series of comments on the role of the Steering Committee. One administrator says that it is to produce the Strategic Plan. No, Connie says, it is to validate the plan, not to generate it. Shortly thereafter, the group begins to review the document.

The abandonment objective, still unchanged, comes up again. As Committee members comment, first one, then another administrator, speaks. One agrees the language is a problem, for example, but says alternatives are hard to find. Another emphasizes the importance of what it means: to foster what is new. A third says that it responds to a recognized institutional weakness: "we're not bad at growing .. but letting go is a weakness." Still another says the Ministry talks in terms of substitution: if we want to take on a new program, what will we give up? He acknowledges the difficulty of giving up programs; he emphasizes the need for an "open view, given the world." The administrators seem to be attempting to persuade the Committee to keep the abandonment objective in the document; the Committee does not seem persuaded. The matter seems to remain unresolved. The meeting proceeds, as people question and discuss other items.
Advisory Council Meeting

In mid May, I attend another Advisory Council meeting. There are fewer people present than usual; someone comments that classes are over for the term for some people. The furniture is arranged in a large square. There are a fair number of empty seats; there seems a fair bit of physical distance between most people. Elizabeth looks isolated, seated alone, along one side of the square. Elizabeth asks people to move closer; there is little response although some people who were standing, sit down. Elizabeth wonders aloud if the furniture should be re-arranged. Several people move a few tables; they do not seem to have a plan; the result is that there is now a cluster of empty tables in one section of the square, which seems no improvement. The meeting starts late.

Items of discussion include new programs and ongoing processes. There is some discussion in response to the question of whether new priorities mean old ones will be displaced. A little later, a committee member reports on a meeting with Ministry officials concerning a particular program. This member ends her report by making a link to the earlier discussion: "the fact is the Ministry is going to pick and choose what we do anyway ... so [in terms of the question of priorities] we'd better not hold back on one [of our priorities] because of another."
A variety of topics come up; most are considered only briefly. There is an extended discussion on gun control, however, arising from a request that the institution support and circulate a petition that demands gun control. The request comes from an university in eastern Canada at which a number of students were shot to death. There are strongly held and sometimes conflicting views expressed. Someone calls it a "touch point issue" for educational institutions. Some people question whether it is appropriate for the Council to take a stand on social issues; others question whether it is appropriate for the Council not to take a stand. Someone says supporting a petition is a political act; "if we want to do something, it should be educational." Elizabeth says the two are not mutually exclusive; "one of the best ways to educate is to take a political stand." George says that education is the most political activity of all and asks if Marx said that. The discussion is lively; people seem engaged and sometimes passionate. People occasionally challenge one another; the tone remains courteous; people seem to listen attentively. The Council decides to consider the matter again in September, when members will have a chance to discuss it with those they represent.

Another extended discussion concerns deciding how to allocate an achievement award. Among those nominated, it comes down to two groups, one which organized a conference and another which coaches students' teams. People
speak in turn, in the order in which they are seated around the table. Each speaker
says how he/she votes; most say why. As more people speak, it becomes clear
that a large majority are voting for one of the nominated groups; it seems that the
decision is made. Then, one member speaks eloquently on behalf of the other
nominee. Several other members, including a few who have already voted with
the majority, seem to support the comment. Some who have already voted say
they want to reconsider. One member says trying to compare the contributions of
each nominated group is "apples and oranges." He calls for two awards.
Everyone seems to find this an agreeable solution.

The theme for the next year is discussed. People consider how several
popular possibilities can be modified so that what were seen as two themes can be
combined. Various committees give reports. One person after another quietly
slips away from the meeting room. Most of the administrators have left by now.
Elizabeth asks whether to hold another meeting this term. Someone indicates it is
too late to consider doing so; there is no longer a quorum. The interaction among
those who remain seems to shift; it seems to become more like a conversation
among colleagues than a meeting. It is a disjointed conversation, though, in which
many of the comments people make seem not to be linked to the preceding one.
Strategic Planning recurs as a topic in this conversation. Elizabeth says the Council discussed handguns for a long time and should have discussed the Strategic Plan. One member of the Strategic Planning Committee says he is satisfied with the Planning process; there have been opportunities to express concerns. Another member of the Strategic Planning Committee seems to disagree. She says she has brought up a number of topics, including the abandonment clause, several times and is still not satisfied with the response. An administrator, speaking of the work they do in the retreats, says in a tired voice, "there is a limit to what we can do in three years." Someone points out that he has said years when he means days; people call it a Freudian slip and laugh about it. Someone else points out that another administrator made the same slip in a meeting earlier in the week.

Jim, a Council member, says he wants to direct a question to the members of the Strategic Planning Committee but is afraid of the answer. He says he wants to ask what the process cost and whether it was worth it. Someone says the cost was $48,000, funded by the Board. Someone else says that amount is only the cost of the consultant. Jim says directly to one member of the Strategic Planning Committee: "was it worth it?" The committee member says, "that's not for me to say .. I have my opinions." The group disperses within a few minutes.
End of Term

As the month of May proceeds, there are increasingly frequent comments that the [academic] year is ending, that summer break is coming. Most of the committees and other groups that meet regularly throughout the "year" will not meet again until September. People speak of winding up the tasks of this term and completing what they need to have organized for the fall term. Often, the comments imply that people are tired and feeling the need for a break.

I ask a woman who is a senior administrator's secretary when most people return in late summer; I casually use the phrase "summer break." I realize too late my insensitivity. She begins her response, with what may be an edge in her voice, by saying, "just so you're clear on the facts." She then reminds me that the holiday entitlements of faculty and staff differ and further, that faculty are entitled to several weeks (usually, two months) of Professional Development (PD), which often are taken off campus. Faculty are formally entitled to two months holidays; these often are scheduled just after the person takes PD time; hence, many faculty seem to disappear for three or four months in the summer. Most staff members have only a few weeks of holidays and so must work through most of the period some faculty call summer break.
The phrase "end of term," like the phrase summer break, is used in meetings and informal exchanges, as people chat and plan. It often implies that certain routine activities are about to cease for several months; it sometimes implies that there is no point in initiating anything new now. "End of term" does not seem to be a particular date; it often seems to mean whenever one has all one's exams marked, the marks turned in and is free of scheduled classes. What is usually meant, in fact, is the "end of term" in the academic (i.e., university transfer) instructional units.

In some other programs, end of term comes later. A faculty member whose program is classified as vocational, for example, says they have a much longer year than the academics. "We never see them in May or June; they disappear in April; they could be at home doing their marking or PD, I guess .. we teach 'til the end of May and then take PD and don't take vacation until the third week of June." In still other programs, end of term has little meaning. These programs operate on the basis of continuous intake and do not have terms as such; they continue through the summer months.

As May draws to a close, there are fewer people around; many of those who are look, sound, and move as if they are tired. People seem to assume that I will disappear for the next two or three months as most of those faculty who are still on
campus are about to do; they ask me about my plans for the summer. My summer activity centres on continuing my interpretation and analysis of the first phase. First, I need to complete papers for a conference in June. Afterwards, I must consider how the first phase will influence what I do in the second phase, when I add the role of interviewer to the role of observer.
CHAPTER 5

AN INTERPRETIVE ACCOUNT: THE FIRST PHASE

In this chapter, I explore my experience in the first phase. In the first section, I explore my impressions of what I see and how I respond to them. In the second, I describe how I use cultural perspectives to interpret what I see. In the third, I look back at the first phase and foreshadow how my impressions, questions, and puzzles guide the next phase. This chapter primarily is interpretive and analytic, with descriptive material in support of my interpretations.

Impressions of a Culture

In this section, I begin the cultural analysis (as it is usually labelled, although the meaning is better expressed as cultural interpretation/analysis, in Wolcott’s terms.) I begin with impressions of what I see and hear. As I observe,
I become aware of patterns and characteristics. Over time, I find I am told a particular story a number of times. I also find that a number of recurring images seem to pop into my mind unbidden. Both the story and the images cause me some puzzlement.

Some Cultural Characteristics

Morgan, in the following comment, suggests some of the characteristics of a culture that become evident to the observer.

The characteristics of the culture being observed will gradually become evident as one becomes aware of the patterns of interaction between the individuals, the language that is used, the images and themes explored in conversation, and the various rituals of daily routine. (Morgan, 1986, p. 121)

In terms of patterns of interaction, I already have noted the distinctive style, sometimes described as “our participatory style,” that characterizes meetings and other exchanges. In emphasizing the importance of everyone’s perspective, this style seems to reflect the values of respect and openness that sometimes are expressed explicitly.

Another side of how people interact at Multisite, however, is that the pace often is quick. Mobile individuals may exchange greetings in passing without slowing down, for example. People often walk quickly as they move from one
area or building to another. I speak to someone who says she's running from
meeting to meeting and laughs as she says it. She really is running, on her way to
the parking lot to travel to another campus.

Interaction often seems purposive and businesslike; there is a sense people
know what "our job" is and are getting on with it. There is also a sense of people
working long hours month after month. People whose work includes
administrative responsibility refer to the backlog of work: "we used to have some
downtime to catch up. There's no downtime now."

Language use at Multisite often includes phrases of hospitality. People
"invite" one another to discuss, to consider. They suggest "re-visiting" topics of
discussion or earlier decisions. Language often includes metaphors of family.
Early periods in the college's history are described by "founding" or early
members in terms of "we were family." When asked what that means, someone
says, "we all knew one another and took care of one another." Consistent with the
metaphor of family, activities including group meals and collective work activity
are mentioned in stories of earlier periods. The family metaphor seems not to
connote traditional authority relations at Multisite, however. No one is designated
as a parental figure, for example, although the metaphor often does have that
implication.
Culture may be revealed by what is missing as well as what is present. Metaphors of war and sex rarely surface in language use at Multisite, for example. Also (nearly) missing are particular patterns of eye contact that are common in meetings in many organizations. At Multisite, eye contract and direction of glances are largely straightforward and utilitarian. In meetings and in informal interaction, people tend to look at the person speaking or spoken to or at the material in front of them or on display. Exchanges in which two or more persons make eye contact as someone else is speaking, for example, are rare. In other settings, such exchanges often are frequent and sometimes are obvious. They often imply personal connections and shared views; they may suggest a negative response to what is being said; they can suggest coalitions around particular issues.

The Gaining Status Story

Some people tell stories of how Multisite gained university college status. The historical context is as follows. Several years ago, the Minister responsible for college sector institutions had a Consultation Group conduct public hearings to identify how to improve access to post secondary education in Multisite's region. Multisite formed an internal committee; one outcome of the Access Committee (as
the internal committee was called) was a proposal that Multisite become a university college. Sometime thereafter, the Group produced a report people at Multisite say they found disappointing. It did not include details of their proposal, they say, and did not to reflect the degree of community support they had. Events and activities in support of their proposal followed; these included student rallies, the formation of a Community Coalition, the circulation of petitions, and other attempts to rally support and to influence political decision makers.

The "gaining status story" has the form of an organizational saga. In some versions, the broad sweep of community support is emphasized. In others, the strength and effectiveness of student support is central: "the students put it over the top." It can be seen as "a narrative of heroic exploits, of a unique development that has deeply stirred the emotions of participants and descendants" (Clark, 1972, p. 178). It can be seen to do what sagas are supposed to do: transmit core values and beliefs. This story implies an orientation to community and to students; it can be seen as expressing specific institutional values. Perhaps this is central: it can be seen as linking traditional community college values (focus on students and community) to the university college structure.

I am uncertain that the "gaining status story" has the "feel" of an organizational saga, however. When faculty volunteer stories, they are often of
the good old days, more than a decade before the university college status was attained. Stories of the early years often concern organizational events and activities that people describe in terms of the metaphor of family. Stories of the early years sometimes concern how faculty worked with students; they speak of small classes and lots of individual attention and personal interaction. Those who tell the "gaining status story" most often seem to be administrators or staff members who work closely with administrators. Once or twice I wonder if the person telling me the story has made a point of doing so.

One administrator, in what is apparently an aside, describes the change of status as a response to community demands and then gives a partial telling of the story. I ask where the initiative started, within the community or the college. After a moment, he replies, "now that you ask, I guess I'm not sure; looking back, I've lost sight of where the initiative for the university college came from."

Telling the oft-told tale may be different from revisiting the historical record.

Two Recurring Images

A recurring image or thought may indicate that one's "emotional participation" in the current situation is analogous to certain feelings, thoughts or themes one responded to in another situation. As the first phase unfolds, two
images recur in my mind. The first, an image of cashiers’ faces, keeps presenting itself to me in the first few weeks of the study. The second, an image of couples, recurs later in the first phase.

The cashiers’ faces. As I drive home from Multisite on late afternoons in March, an image recurs. It is of the faces of perhaps a half dozen women who work as cashiers at a local grocery store. The image had been a puzzle for me in an earlier period of time. I could not understand why my eye was drawn to their faces when I was in the store and why the image of their collective faces persisted after I left the store. After a while, I realized that the faces exhibited a striking consistency in their style of cosmetic use. The variety in the faces themselves and in the colours of the products used may have made the pattern difficult to tug out at first. Once identified, the "fact" of the consistency seemed glaringly obvious. There was a strong sense of a template, of an established protocol. Each woman had contour blush, for example, applied to exactly the same area; each had two or three colours applied to the eyelid, apparently using the same technique and in the same pattern.

I felt uncomfortable with the "sameness," as if I took it to suggest something inauthentic, some artifice (over and above that intrinsic in the act of applying cosmetics). It is as if I assume that a similarity in group presentation
implies an inherently artificial presentation. This seems unreasonable though, since an idiosyncratic presentation can be at least as deliberate and contrived as any other. A reasonable interpretation of this puzzle was that the women had gone off to the same workshop, received the same instructions on cosmetic application, and now each of them was following those instructions to the letter.

When the researcher is the research instrument, the researcher's feeling and apparently random thoughts are (or can be) important analytically. These feelings and thoughts may be idiosyncratic but they may suggest an impact, an impression, the setting would have on others. The image of the cashier allowed me to recognize a pattern in what I was observing in the field. There is a pattern of sameness, of template, to the way people talk and to the general pattern of social interaction at Multisite. There is the sense that there is a definite way of doing things, a given set of procedures, and that everyone follows procedure. I had some discomfort with this at first, as if I did not trust it to be "real."

Sameness of this sort often is authentic. It is consistent with the idea of a "strong" culture, for example, with a shared set of underlying assumptions that guide "how we do things." It also is consistent with a particular form of strong culture: the idea of an organization as a clan (Ouchi, 1980). Clans are characterized by a sense of social solidarity, of community; they have goal
congruence and intensive socialization. In a clan, implicit knowledge of traditions is a means of mediation and control; this is in contrast to the bureaucratic emphasis on explicit knowledge of rules. On the basis of implicit traditions, clans often are highly disciplined. A clan "provides great regularity of relations" (Ouchi, 1980, p. 136).

The couples. As I drive home from Multisite on April afternoons, I realize I am thinking of a number of couples I had known years ago, many of whom I had not thought of in ages. What all the couples had in common, in my knowledge of them, was that each made a major life decision during the time we socialized together. In each case, one partner made a decision the other would not have made; the other seemed to go along with it; there was little overt conflict. The one who went along seemed sad; the other seemed oblivious to the depth of the other's feelings. In each case, the marriage ended within two or three years. I have always wondered if the sad person ended the relationship as a delayed reaction to the decision or to the nature of the other's decision making process. I have always wondered if the oblivious person ever recognized how much impact the decision may have had.

It seems that some people at Multisite are experiencing a lot of sadness and pain as a result of the budget process. Some of them (including some
administrators) say so; some show it on their faces. It seems as if others take it less personally but are respectful of the feelings of others. Some may be oblivious, however, as the following story suggests. Of the three associate deans who lose their positions, two have instructional positions to which they return. There seems to be nothing available for the third (who did not have an instructional position to begin with). Over time, it seems increasingly clear no job will be found for him internally and the prospects in the field are poor. Then his non-administrative colleagues are able to find an instructional position for him. During this period, he remains nominally an administrator and a number of senior administrators continue to consult with him on various matters. Two administrators observe in passing that the reception they get in his office now is "a little chilly." They seem surprised by this and disappointed in him, as if he is overreacting and unduly sensitive.

Using Cultural Perspectives

In this section, I begin with my puzzlement concerning how to use cultural perspectives. Then, I summarize the analysis that follows from two sets of perspectives, (a) the functionalist and interpretive perspectives and (b) the
integrative, differentiative, and fragmentary perspectives. (This section is in four subsections. Because of its length, the passage on the fragmentary perspective is under a separate heading.)

**Making Sense of Cultural Perspectives**

The literature encourages the use of multiple perspectives in cultural analysis. One is advised to take one perspective, then another, and use them as lenses, to see what you can see, for example. I find this advice useful, but only to a point. As I work between the literature and my data on this basis, I find I can organize some data here, make sense of something formerly inexplicable there. However, the activity has a certain vagueness to it; it comes to feel increasingly unsatisfying.

I look more closely at my conceptual tools. I see two sets of perspectives, the first consists of the functionalist and interpretive perspectives, and the second, of the integrative, differentiative, and fragmentary perspectives. I am uncertain how to decide which to use when. I want something other than a strategy of constantly switching lenses. What do the functionalist and interpretive perspectives offer as an distinctive interpretive frame and what different frame do
the integrative, differentiative, and fragmentary perspectives provide? This seems to me a question of the "what," the conceptual nature, of each perspective.

I make sense of this by looking at the perspectives this way. Each set of perspectives deals with a central topic; each perspective within that set centres on a specific assumption concerning the central topic. The central topic for the functionalist and interpretive perspectives, for example, is the nature of organization. A functionalist perspective assumes that an organization is a rational system acting efficiently to attain material outcomes. A interpretivist perspective assumes that an organization is a social form in which meanings, feelings, and needs are expressed.

The central topic for the integrative, differentiative, and fragmentary perspectives is the characteristic pattern of interpretations; it is whether consensus, dissensus or confusion (Martín, 1992) obtains. Respectively, the first perspective assumes a focus on what is agreed upon; the second, on what arouses conflict; and the third, on what is ambiguous. I come to distinguish the two sets of perspectives not only on the basis of their central topic; they tend to differ in the level of analysis, as well. In the first set (dealing with the nature of organization), the level tends to be the organization. In the second set (dealing with the pattern of interpretations), the level is more likely to be the individual or the group.
The approach I take to using the perspectives, then, is first, to identify the core assumption a perspective entails and second, to use that assumption as an analytic device. For example, I might look at a particular observation and ask, "does taking the assumption that people focus on what arouses conflict help me understand this?" At that second step, the "what" and the "how" merge, underlining the interrelation between the methodological and conceptual domains. In this approach, I attempt to look at the data "as if:" as if I can take my observations and hold them up so I can stand back and look at them as if I am looking at what is happening in real time. In retrospect, none of this sounds especially noteworthy. However, it took me a while to arrive at this practice and to articulate it.

Functional and Interpretive Perspectives

I begin with the functionalist assumption, that organization is an instrument for effective task achievement, and take an overview of the events of the budget period. Multisite deals with a budget plan that could have been contentious; it approves it with little overt conflict. The process seems consistent with the functionalist emphasis on efficiency and unity of action. In the functionalist ideal, culture functions to enhance organizational effectiveness. Multisite's culture
and its participatory process seem instrumental in attaining the goal of an approved budget; organizational values seem to guide action and to provide a sense of stability. In the functionalist ideal, a culture is "strong," with apparent consensus on what we do and how we do it. Such a consensus would explain the distinctive style I see at Multisite, the impression of "sameness" in the ways people act and interact. A functionalist perspective helps to explain a strong and persistent impression I have: something at Multisite works very well.

I take the interpretive assumption, that organization is a network of meanings and the expression of those meanings, and look at the first phase. There seem to be many organizational needs and meanings expressed. People speak of the apparent pressure on the participatory process, for example. Fred expresses concern with people being disenfranchised because of lack of release time (p. 96). Elizabeth says the Council already has problems with members not being prepared and hence with "rehashing" (p. 97). Peg says the institution needs an accord, that it does not have a process (p. 132). People express concern with the layoffs and program cuts of the budget (p. 117) and feelings of loss and threat in terms of the organizational change that is underway (p. 99). I hear anxiety and ambiguity in many of these expressions of feelings. I recognize that anxiety and ambiguity are
often closely associated; they are inherent in organizations and are especially prevalent in periods of change.

People often deal with anxiety and ambiguity by creating symbols and by acting symbolically (Bolman and Deal, 1991, p. 244). Value articulation, a form of symbolic action, happens more often, for example, when people perceive a threat to "how things are done around here" (Kuh & Whitt, 1988, p. 106). People at Multisite frequently articulate and reiterate their values in meetings and in conversation. Fred, for example, reminds the meeting that democratic governance is an ideal at Multisite (p. 96). An instructor says that an impersonal relation between student and instructor is not what he would call teaching (p. 111).

Meetings can be another form of symbolic action, more important for what they express than for what they do (Schwartzman, 1986). The union's budget workshop can be seen to operate as a social metaphor, meaning that people use it to talk about one thing in terms of something else. At one level, that workshop may say, "if we all work diligently, we can solve this problem together," and at another, it may express something more like, "we feel the pain and loss; we don't know what to do about it." Meetings in which metaphoric process takes precedence often produce confusing or contradictory results, such as inaction that is defined as action and also elicit a high degree of involvement from participants.
(Schwartzman, 1986, p. 251). This seems to me to help explain what was happening at the union budget forum. In a related way, each of the three special budget forums can be seen as a ritual, in that it presents a particular interpretation of organizational reality. Each forum symbolizes and emphasizes the status of the authority (president, union, council) who plans and conducts it.

Meetings and other forms of symbolic action can shape and re-shape meanings as well as express feelings and needs. "A meeting ... may be the major social form that constitutes and reconstitutes the organization over time" (Schwartzman, 1986, p. 250). As people speak of values and meanings, they help to create and re-create culture (Morgan, Frost, and Pondy, 1983; Smircich, 1983a, b, c). At Multisite, people speak not only of the merit of their process but of its apparent inadequacy in dealing with some aspects of the budget problems (e.g., Peg, p. 134). They speak of the need to re-visit and re-shape the process to deal better with such matters in the future. Culture is "an ongoing, proactive process of reality construction .. an active, living phenomenon through which people create and recreate the worlds in which they live" (Morgan, 1986, p. 131).

The functionalist and interpretive perspectives, taken together, offer another lens on the budget process and period. So far, I have said (above), that (i) the budget process is interpretive in that people express feelings and explore values
and needs, and (ii) the budget process is functional in that the organization resolves an important and potentially contentious issue with little disruption. I could add that (iii) the budget process seems to achieve very little instrumentally; the original proposal was not substantively modified. I see the linkages among those statements, as follows. The budget process is not instrumental in terms of the content of the budget; what is instrumental here is the expressive activity. This expressive activity enhances organizational effectiveness. People talk about their history of good relations; they remain cooperative; the sense of cohesion is retained. Also, some of this discussion may result in procedural improvement over time. Hence, organizational function and organizational expression are intrinsically interrelated and mutually influential. At Multisite, organizational process seems to allow and support symbolic action, which can facilitate revising meanings. This may be especially important in an organization engaged in a major structural change, since such change implies alteration of existing meaning and value systems. Organization as instrument and organization as expressive form can be seen as discriminated aspects of the same phenomenon rather than as two separate phenomena.
Integrative and Differentiative Perspectives

The people at Multisite often emphasize consensus and harmony, at least in public forums. Throughout the first phase, generally, members reiterate organizational values, such as openness and respect, in public forums and private exchanges as if consensus on these matters is understood to exist. That the institution is successful seems to be taken for granted. That it is the best in the college system often is implicit in remarks and sometimes is made explicit. Becky's "aren't we great" comment after my first Council meeting (p. 98), for example, suggests this idea and also that she believes the process they have just enacted is consistent with the participatory values she espouses. During the budget process, the three most prominent members, (George, Elizabeth, and Peg) repeatedly reiterate how constructive everyone is and how helpful the processes are, for example. George speaks as if there is consensus on institutional values and philosophy and on these being the basis of past and ongoing success (e.g., p. 105).

A differentiation perspective, typically, focusses on what arouses conflict, on where there is dissensus. In this perspective, patterns of interpretations are likely to show a clear consensus within subcultures and a clear dissensus between subcultures. At Multisite, the pattern may be more complex or more subtle or
both. With the exception of some exchanges during the budgetmaking process, conflict and dissensus seem to be shrouded by the public presentation of an integrated culture. Different campuses and different units, for example, have different interests, but this is rarely acknowledged in public forums. A possible source of potential conflict, the interaction between union and management, rarely seems openly adversarial at Multisite.

When clear dissensus does emerge, it triggers little acknowledgment. Sam's objection to the loss of the technical position in the question and answer session (p. 109) does not become a topic of discussion, for example. The sharp exchange that follows it is brief and seems to be ignored. There is a sense that conflict is not seen; it seems that most of those present in public forums are at pains to present a harmonious surface.

That harmonious surface may obscure a variety of conflicts, within and between various subgroups. Two stories (each told as a factual account) suggest there may be conflicting factions within the union, for example. The first story begins before the budget proposal is presented, as people anticipate what will happen. Some union members urge a strong union opposition to any layoffs that might occur. These members say they will take job action (including a strike, if necessary) so all members can retain their jobs. Then the management proposal is
presented. It turns out that those who are to be laid off are not among the friends or immediate colleagues of those who have urged strong opposition. These previously vocal members "lost interest .. they disappeared," my informant said, with apparent disgust. The sense is that the union then realized it could not rally enough members to mount an effective opposition.

The second story is that some union members thought it would be better to phase in the increase in salary over several years and thereby save jobs this year. A majority of the executive were against this, however, and the fact that the idea was discussed was not acknowledged in public forums. The matter came up; one person asked if it was considered (p. 121). The response, that it is a union matter, ended the discussion and seemed to be said in a manner that would end a discussion. The information that it had been discussed and rejected was not offered.

Another story (again, passed on as a factual account) concerns conflict within the management group. A small subcommittee of the management group, rather than the whole group, came up with the budget proposal. Not surprisingly, the subcommittee did not include any of the associate deans, all of whom were laid off. The subcommittee's proposal, I am told, caused heated debate within the
(whole) management group. The minutes of that session indicate that "all agreed it was the best alternative in the circumstances."

The Fragmentary Perspective

A focus on what is ambiguous occasionally appears in the comments of participants at Multisite. Throughout the first phase, generally, some people speak of ambivalence about the change, for example, and of feelings of loss and threat. Some people speak of the transition in terms of gains and losses; sometimes they seem uncertain what those are. Sometimes people speak as if something of value has been lost but then say that something inevitably will be lost, or may be lost. Some people say they cannot identify what the "something" is. Others say it is, or might be, a sense of family, a sense of knowing one another, caring for one another. Some people are aware they contradict themselves: they know what the something is; they are uncertain what it is. They know they feel threatened; they are unsure by what.

This sense of ambivalence and uncertainty in an educational institution undergoing a significant change is not surprising. Educational change "represents a serious personal and collective experience characterized by ambivalence and uncertainty" (Fullan, 1991, p. 32). It is inherently threatening and confusing; it
involves loss, anxiety and struggle. Change is multidimensional, although it is often not conceived of as such (Fullan, 1991, p. 36). Subjectively, its different dimensions (such as its implications for goals, skills, behaviour, beliefs) can be experienced in a diffuse, incoherent manner (Fullan, 1991, p. 36).

A focus on what is ambiguous may appear more often during the budgetmaking process. Mike's "on the one hand, on the other" comment, with its contradictory images of the Council being circumvented versus people having a wide opportunity for input, is one example (p. 130) within a short period (measured in minutes or hours) of time. Elizabeth's question, "what discussion did you expect?" is another (p. 120). It seems to capture the ambiguity that seems to me to pervade the entire budget process.

A fragmentary perspective recurs frequently in my view of Multisite. I hear people speak of consensus; I am unsure how real it is. I wonder where there is clear dissensus; it seems to be implicit in some private comments but it rarely surfaces otherwise. At various times in the analysis, I try to use an integrative (or a differentiation) lens; I ask, how does the integrative (or differentiation) assumption help me understand this observation? Sometimes, the answer is, it does not help; the patterns of interpretations often seem ambiguous.
I am uncertain how participants interpret much of what is happening. George seems very active in attempting to influence the interpretations of others. It is unclear to me how successful he is. In the session in which he attempts to re-frame the computer back-up position (p. 128), for example, I see fatigue and perhaps resignation on the faces of those present. I am uncertain if I see acceptance. George attempts to define what is and is not a constructive way to respond to the proposal. People may comply; they avoid pointing fingers at other persons or programs to cut. They may not have done so, in any case. What success in defining the situation means may itself be ambiguous or at least subjective. It may mean having one's definition accepted; it may mean no more than being able to put forth one's definition without public challenge.

There are exchanges in which it is unclear whether people hear one another. For example, in the case of Fred's comment on a ground swell of fear with things falling through the cracks (because there are too few administrators), George responds with thanks for the recognition (p. 129). It is unclear what was heard in Fred's comment that could be interpreted as recognition, to be acknowledged as if it were a compliment. One dimension of Fred's comment is that people are concerned that administrators may already be attempting to deal with more than
they can deal with effectively. It is unclear whether George missed this or found it more convenient to appear to have missed the point.

Telling lies is an inherently ambiguous activity. It may also be a revealing one: people tend to lie about matters that are important to them (Van Maanen, 1979). Some administrators, for example, were unhappy that the union called a budget meeting and initially were concerned with what would happen at that forum. Yet, the public presentation was consistently that they supported and appreciated all that the union was doing. One interpretation is that they want to maintain the appearance of unity and harmony. Another is that they want to maintain the impression of hierarchical control, that only events of which they approve occur.

When Peg welcomes union members to the Budget Alternatives Forum, she thanks them for their contributions of ideas (for alternatives). She describes the response as "overwhelming." Yet, (if my information is accurate), there were in fact very few ideas put forward and the union executive were concerned with this lack of response. (In a sense, this non-response could be construed as overwhelming.) The materials available at the workshop used the data generated at Urban College (although they are presented as coming from both Multisite and Urban). Peg may fib to suggest something about union solidarity, for example, or
more generally, about the participatory process at Multisite. In each of these examples, it is unclear what interpretations are intended and what interpretations result. In the workshop example, it is unclear how to interpret the lack of response itself, especially since the turnout for the workshop itself was good.

I am uncertain how to understand the relation between the union and management at Multisite. In most colleges, a differentiation perspective would seem indicated; it is unclear if it is in this case. It seems likely a union would oppose layoffs of members, for example. The public expression of this opposition at Multisite seems limited, however. Management reiterates its appreciation for the "constructive" approach of the union. Throughout the budget period, representatives of the union and of management meet in closed sessions (p. 118, 128). It seems likely that one of the matters they negotiated in those closed sessions was what would happen at the union's workshop. As those sessions continue behind the scenes, people in public forums reiterate the value of openness.

Ambiguity concerning power, influence, status, and roles seems pervasive. Many "facts" are open to multiple interpretations. The President, the Council, and the Union each holds a budget forum, for example. The Council and the Union each scheduled a meeting that changes the sequence and the emphasis George
intended. One or both of these acts may have been intended to display status and may or may not have been interpreted as doing do. The role of the Council (to advise on instructional, but not fiscal, matters) seems inherently ambiguous. It seems impossible to separate budget decisions from instructional matters in an educational institution and nonsensical to try. Finally, the Ministry exerts a great deal of power, in that it allocates resources and makes some stipulations on how those resources are to be used. It is unclear, however, to what extent various decisions are directly or indirectly driven by Ministry priorities.

Looking Back; Looking Forward

As I look back on the first phase of the study, I find I am uncertain how to interpret much of what I see at Multisite. Participation is a puzzle in itself and it seems to mirror my general sense of ambiguity. As I think about the next phase of the study, I consider “the compelling question, the nagging puzzle” (in Marshall and Rossman’s, 1986, phrase) that influences what I explore and how the research unfolds. As I conclude this chapter, I reveal how I approach the analysis of the second phase. This foreshadows what is to come in terms of the next three chapters of this document.
The Puzzle of Participation

I have an "on the one hand, on the other hand" sense of juxtaposed impressions of participation and I have this same sense of juxtaposed impressions when I think in overview of my experience as an observer. I hear people at Multisite speak of participation as the way they do things. As I observe the events of the budget period and the meetings of the Strategic Planning Committee, however, I do not see a process I would label participatory. I consider meanings, looking first for a definition.

Epp (1993) notes that participation is a term used to imply many diverse and sometimes unrelated concepts about decision making and hence is a source of confusion. She distinguishes among pseudo-participation, participation, and shared governance. These related but distinct processes differ in the power afforded those who take part and the extent to which the results of the processes are applied to the organization. In the first type of process, pseudo-participation, participants are consulted. In the second, participants are included in the decision making. The administrator retains the right of veto but if it is exercised, reasons are given; the veto is not used arbitrarily. In the third, all who participate in
shared governance are treated as equal partners; leadership is a group process (Epp, 1993).

Finding a definition in the literature does not tell me what the term means in a particular context, of course. What Becky describes (p. 98) and what Fred wants to retain (p. 96) sounds like participation (in Epp's terms). George, Elizabeth and Peg, people active and influential in decision making, tend not use the term, however. Peg, in her report to CWC, says she appreciates the opportunity to consult but that consultation takes more time. Elizabeth indicates roles need to be clarified and that time was short. George says management's role "is to take recommendations to the Board after consultation." None of these sound like participation, in Epp's terms. Indeed, I wonder if Peg is saying that what happened was not even consultation.

There are a number of puzzles that concern language use and meaning. Two stay in mind; one is the confusion of form and forum (p. 122). The other concerns the use of the word respect. Respect recurs, for example, when people speak of their organizational values and past. It often comes up when people speak of participation and how it works. Once or twice, I ask a faculty member what it means; the person responds as if puzzled and perhaps impatient. Respect means respect; it is taken for granted.
George uses the term respect in describing process. For example, he says, "they asked tough questions but the tone was respectful, by and large" (p. 128). Linda and her students reiterate the phrase "respectfully submit" as they urge the Board to accept the "modest proposal" (p. 113). I am uncertain what relation there is between the meaning of respect as faculty, generally, use it and as I hear George and Linda use it in public forums. I also am uncertain how to interpret the fact that the "modest proposal" is accepted; it is one of a few substantive changes in the budget proposal. I note that Linda's teaching area and the students' area of study is communication skills and media studies and that the students actively lobbied political and community leaders. It is unclear what relation, if any, there is between these observations and the acceptance of the proposal.

Participation seems a paradox. On the one hand, it seems that Multisite has a valued and functional process. I hear people reiterate the theme and its values. I see organizational members representing all areas and roles discussing issues important to them at some length. There seems to be an openness to hearing the views of other people (as seen in the discussion of gun control, p. 143) and a great openness with information (as seen throughout the budget period, in terms of financial details). The process seems to accommodate the expression of diverse and
sometimes dissenting perspectives. Much of the process seems to occur in public forums, open to all.

As I observe the discussion of gun control and of the award, for example, I think I am seeing something wonderful. The discussion process that unfolds on these issues seems almost to be something tangible. It like an old and beloved beach ball, passed along slowly, surely and systematically most of the time. Occasionally, it bounces across the table but it never startles the receiver. As I watch, I see a smooth group process; then I see one individual creatively reframe the situation: we do not have to make a dichotomous choice; we can give two awards. Then, I see the group make this solution a matter of group consensus.

On the other hand, it is unclear what this valued process people talk about is and how participatory it really is. Neither the budget process nor the strategic planning process seems participatory, either as I understand participation or as Becky and others there describe it. George says the budget process is as it is because of problems with time and information (p. 119); the strategic planning process, because of burnout (p. 135). I see George and perhaps a few others as very central in what is happening. Many people spend little time in the forums in which public institutional decision making occurs. Some who are present have little to say.
I think I see a discrepancy between what people say they do and what they do. The observation that people do not "walk" exactly as they "talk" is not in itself remarkable. Systems of ideas and beliefs that pervade organizations are abstractions from the concrete situations; they are maps of the territory rather than the territory (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1966, p. 562). The discrepancy claims my attention because I sense a lot of tension around the process. I retain an image of the faces of people at budget meetings and at strategic planning committees and my sense that response is constrained. As I observe the events of the budget period and those that concern strategic planning, I think there is something the matter. I have a persistent sense of opinions unexpressed, of people inhibited and restrained. If a question is not answered, for example, it is rarely asked again. No one ever says, "Did that answer your question?" Some issues seem to be circled again and again and left unresolved (e.g., the Council’s role in decisions to cut programs, p. 131; the abandonment clause, p. 141). There is a sense that some things cannot be said directly; that what is described as open sometimes is closed. I wonder what constrains process. I wonder what implicit themes, if any, shape the public discussion and if so, what they are. I wonder how to understand the apparent emphasis on harmony.
As I watch people, some of whom look sad and most of whom look tired, I wonder what they are experiencing. A number of questions come to mind. Is there something not being said? What constrains participation? What is the matter? These seem predictable or at least understandable questions. Another question recurs: What is missing? I do not understand the question; I do not know what makes me think something is missing. Yet, the question persists. I decide that, in the interviews, I will listen for what is said about participation and that if the informant does not initiate the topic, I will ask about it.

**Thinking About the Next Phase**

The questions that persist, the events and processes that puzzle me, come to the fore as I think about the next phase and what I will do in that period. I comment, above, on the image of faces at the budget meetings; I am uncertain what I see and how to describe what I see. Yet, describing the meetings I attended in the first weeks of the study posed no particular problem. More generally, this juxtaposition of what seems straightforward and what seems ambiguous recurs as I struggle to describe my overall experience of the first phase. My experience with a paper I prepare for a conference illustrates this.
As the academic year at Multisite draws to a close, I prepare a paper for a conference (Owen, 1993). As I do so, I find I have two images of Multisite. One image is of a distinctive culture in a harmonious context, where people discuss and explore organizational issues in a variety of open forums. The other image is of a complex culture, where there seems to be a sense of restraint in what people say and a sameness in what they do. After the conference, I continue to reflect on my experience and attempt to plan the next phase of the study. I reread the paper and find doing so troubling. In it, I do not quite capture that second image in word or in thought. I do indicate something of the lack of consensus, using some of the comments made in budget meetings. I do indicate that people discuss the need to re-consider process. Yet, the image that comes across is one of harmony, consensus and organizational effectiveness. I look at the paper and find I am asking, what am I not saying? What's missing in this account? Why does it seem not to capture my experience?

As Martin & Meyerson (1988) note, an integrative perspective can be as appealing to a researcher as it is to an organizational member. It may have fewer loose ends conceptually than the alternatives and it can seem more comfortable psychologically and politically. I may have emphasized comments consistent
with an integrative perspective and downplayed observations more suited to other perspectives. The other image may remain elusive for another reason, as well.

My inability to flesh it out also may be because of limitations of the observer role. The analysis of the organizational culture to this point has been based on one kind of data: what I hear and see in public forums and what people choose to tell me. It seems as if I have reached the boundaries of what observations let me do; I want to hear what people have to say on a one to one basis. I need to add interviews to the observations. Together, observations and interviews provide two essential kinds of evidence by which a rich and detailed picture of organizational meaning systems eventually can be pieced together (Smircich, 1983c).

Towards a Thematic Approach

There are a number of topics I want to understand better. I am interested in what participation, family and mission mean at Multisite, for example. They are themes in the ordinary language sense: they recur as topics and seem important to people. Early in first phase, I wonder if participation is a cultural theme in the cultural anthropological sense, as well. In this sense, the term theme denotes "a postulate or position, declared or implied, and usually controlling behavior or
stimulating activity, which is tacitly approved or openly promoted (Opler, 1945, p. 198). Cultural themes affirm an understanding of how we do things; they specify the links among values, beliefs, actions (Opler, 1945; Smircich, 1983 a, b). Becky’s statement, that “This is how we do things. It’s our participatory style” seems like an explicit statement of a cultural theme, in Opler’s (1945) sense of the term.

I wonder if the idea of a cultural theme offers a useful way to approach what people say. Some people speak of a sense of family, for example, as something taken for granted. I am uncertain exactly what this means, however, and to what extent it is a widely held understanding. In a related way, people sometimes speak of the institution’s purpose, its mission, as if clarity and consensus on the topic are taken for granted. Certainly, people seem to speak with certainty and conviction about mission at the Strategic Planning Committee meeting (p. 138). Yet, I am unsure to what extent there are shared understandings of what the organizational mission is.

Sometimes, in reporting on an interpretive study, one offers a “purist” rendering of the sequence and details of analytic decisions. Other times, one presents the outcome of a data analysis process (e.g., the decision of how to proceed) without requiring the reader to work through a lengthy presentation
(following Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 434). At this point, I present a decision and foreshadow what is to come, as follows.

As I proceed with interviews and with analysis of the data they produce, I find I am increasingly analyzing the data in terms of themes, in the sense of primary cultural premises or understandings, and the values and symbols associated with themes. This is consistent with using a symbolic perspective. A symbolic perspective treats culture as networks of meanings, as systems of shared symbols and meaning. The heart of a symbolic analysis is the articulation of recurrent themes. Themes reflect the organization's world view or ethos; they suggest the links among values, beliefs and actions in the setting; they provide the context against which symbols have meaning (Smircich, 1983 a, c). In the second phase, I am intent on understanding the meaning systems at Multisite. A thematic analysis emerges as the means by which I attempt to gain that understanding.

In the next three chapters, I describe and explore the themes of participation, family, and mission. I offer the following as an "advance organizer" for what is ahead. Early in the first phase, I notice that references to participation, to being family, to the institutional mission recur. Often, there is a taken-for-granted quality to the comments, as if shared meaning is assumed. Sometimes, it seems as if I am hearing a statement of a cultural themes or central
premise, in Opler's (1945) sense of the term. I begin to describe and explore what people say about participation and find that doing so offers me a window on beliefs and values that concern decision making, more generally. In a related way, I find that exploring what people say about family opens a window on the nature of social relations at Multisite. Exploring what people say about mission focuses attention on beliefs and values that concern institutional purpose. In the case of each theme, then, I begin with a topic that I have tentatively identified as a cultural premise and find I am exploring systems of meaning broader than the sense of premise with which I begin. An account of each of these explorations of themes follows, in the order given.
CHAPTER 6

THE THEME OF PARTICIPATION

In this chapter, I describe and explore what participation means to faculty at Multisite. I present some of what people say about participation by categorizing it as either references to the past or to the present. This seems reasonable for an number of reasons. One reason is that this distinction recurs in what faculty at Multisite say. At the first Advisory Council meeting I attend, for example, Fred describes democratic governance as a goal rooted in the institution’s earliest time and he expresses concern with what is happening in the present (p. 96). In the interviews, people often contrast the present with the past. Another reason is that, in general, organizational culture is seen to be better understood with some historical context. Morgan (1986), for example, advises the observer that “one usually finds that there are sound historical explanations for the way things are done” (p. 121). Also, there is a great deal of comment concerning participation; a
chronological presentation is a way, if only one of a number of ways, to organize what is said.

As I explore what people say, I want to answer the questions and puzzles I identify in the first phase. One question is how to understand the apparent discrepancy between what people say they do and what they do. Another question is how to understand two specific organizational processes, the budgetmaking and strategic planning processes. I want to know how people at Multisite interpret them as well as how I can best understand these processes. I am puzzled by my "what is missing?" question and by the language use that arouses my curiosity. Also, more questions emerge as I interview faculty.

This chapter is in three sections. The first two sections primarily are descriptive. I present what people say about participation in the past and in the present. The third section is interpretive. I explore what people say and I attempt to answer the question of what participation means to people at Multisite.

**Participation: Speaking of the Past**

"Founding members" speak of the mid to late 1970s, during which time Multisite was established. (Hereafter, the term "founding member" is used to refer
to faculty members who began at Multisite in the 1970s. I do not use it to imply a leadership role, necessarily, which it could be seen to connote. The choice of term is somewhat arbitrary and not without difficulty. "Old-timers," for example, comes to mind but has an unappealing connotation.) Some faculty speak of the early 1980s, which were characterized by budget cuts. Many faculty speak of the late 1980s, in which the college seeks university college status. In this section, I present what people say about the past, primarily as it pertains to participation and, to some extent, as it evokes a sense of context that informs the broader interest in the transition. I do so, in three subsections.

The Early Years (1970s)

Multisite was founded in the mid-1970s. When people speak of the early years, they often speak of participation. In many accounts, they describe an approach that sounds like the process Becky describes when she says, "we just get everything on the table and you can say what you want .. and that’s how we decide." In a few accounts, they describe an approach that sounds inconsistent with what Becky describes. I present some of each of these accounts, under two headings.
It was wonderful then. Some faculty use the word wonderful when they speak of the early years; some use it when they speak of their experience of participation in that period.

I remember when there were 20 of us and when we were looking at the first temporary facilities. ... Might have been 20 of us and Kelly [the Dean] laid out the plan ... and asked for our input, like what did we want in this room, and I just thought, I can't believe I've been asked, I had never been involved in that role before. I could say I want this and it would happen. It was wonderful then. It was wonderful to be in on ground floor, being asked what you wanted. (Marg)

We've always governed, if that's the right word, run on consensus, with interpersonal kind of arrangements, and committees and meetings. We've always complained bitterly but actually it's been a wonderful system, almost everything is done by a committee or task force or group of people getting together. (Jane)

Some faculty credit the first president with establishing participation.

Participation .. in the history, goes back to the very first president, whose objective was a good organization with good labour-management relations. So much is established with that very first senior person .. still the only college [in the province] with one union [that includes both faculty and staff]. ... Participation, yes, there's been that from the very, very beginning: consultation, collaboration and all that kind of thing to the nth. (Ann)

Some faculty credit the union.

Personally, I think the union has an awful lot to do with the tone of the place. I'm ambivalent about unions but ... They held tough on wanting both faculty and staff in the one union; at first, the labour board wasn't even going to look at it ... finally granted it. ... I would argue what we've got here is a model for negotiating, to the point where books have been opened before anybody else was doing that; it's not unique now but it was ahead of its time ... realizing confrontation is not the way to get things done. (Jay)

Some faculty credit key faculty members.
There was an assumption right from the beginning that we had a right to make these decisions and we certainly had the energy and commitment to carry them out; my sense was that in many ways key faculty members lead this place, not because of an absence in the leadership but because that was allowed to happen ... the general direction of the institution, the overall direction ... was a faculty creation. [later in interview] (S: Was that participatory process something that was set up by Roy, the first president, or something that faculty set up and he accepted?) Yes, the latter, faculty set it up, he accepted it. (Leah)

When people speak of participation in the early years, they speak of idealism, of clarifying values and of being deliberate in determining process.

In the old days, we were really enculturating ourselves ... endless discussions like what do we want to do with each other, what is going to be the tone of the institution ... management did a great job of hiring us ... and getting us together with some frequency and in a context where some culture building could take place. (Pete)

I remember long debates ... whether we should be one union or not, what it meant to work in this institution and what kind of worker and what kind of values around that. (Leah)

We were very raw, young, very idealistic when we started, there was a heck of a lot of work put in on very fundamental issues and it has paid dividends in the long term ... smooth working relationships between faculty and staff and between faculty and management ... much more collegial atmosphere [than at other colleges] and I think everyone has been committed to that, and as a result, the emphasis has been on people, the emphasis has been on cooperation, on the best means of doing things. (Jay)

A traditional sense [of a community college], but a very exciting one ... very much idealistic, not just an educational institution but a sort of sociological ... I'm not phrasing it well, it was a means of serving the community and helping people who hadn't been helped before. (S: Was it serving social purposes?) Yes, and it would open to everyone, people who traditionally had been not served ... I think people really believed this. (Jane)

When people speak of those early years, they speak of decision making, of a style of interacting, of enthusiasm. They speak of harmonious relations, and of having faculty and staff in one union.
It was a model that I think the college worked very well under and it was part of this voice: we participated in decisions. (Barb)

It was very friendly, a very human sort of institution; I liked the directness, people say this and it can be talked about. (Val)

We were young, energetic, it was new place, there was a lot of enthusiasm. (Rob).

We hear of hassles elsewhere ... and we ask, how did we avoid that? ... We're the only institution with a joint faculty and staff union and I think that has a lot to do with it. ... The union has had incredibly positive impact. (Jay)

We see ourselves as quite different, with the joint faculty and staff association, so our students won't show up, for example, and find that staff have gone on strike and so faculty who want to teach, can't ... and it creates a better atmosphere in terms of relations at a negotiating level between the Board and administration and faculty and staff because they know they only have to do it once. ... I just think it works a lot better. (Matt)

The values of respect and trust recur in what faculty say.

Certainly, it has a reputation of being harmonious and that is valid, that is true. ... And there's a very mutual .. respect and there is also ... a trust in you as an individual. ... What struck me was how articulate people were, how respectful of other people's opinions, even though they could be at opposite ends of the spectrum. ... So it's boundaries that respect differences, you're not going to feel the same way I am. (Rita)

**It wasn’t that everyone was involved.** In some accounts of the early years, however, what emerges is less than consistent with the participatory ideal.

Some faculty report that the process was more open to some individuals than to others. Leah speaks of the “politics of the left.”

It was small enough and homogeneous enough that a lot of the decision making structures were informal ... what it felt like as a new person ... the people who were already there made most of the decisions; ... once you'd been there a while, you participated ... you had to have been around for awhile in order to understand how it worked because there weren't official channels. ... In Bill's [the second president] era, some of the faculty felt
very much in the decision making process and some felt very out and it's at that point when they were out. (S: I'm not sure what you mean.) Well, they stayed out from that point on, so it wasn't that everybody was involved. (S: So an in-group?) Definitely an in-group, there always is, but there has been all the way through. (S: And was that because they kept the others out or the others didn't know the ropes?) Mmm, both .. mmmh .. you know what the politics of the 70s were like .. there were people who were fighting the good fight and then there were the rest of them and in terms of .. politics of the left, I suppose, and it was justifiable in terms of the politics then, to not involve some people. (S: Because they weren't politically correct?) Right, they didn't have the right position, but that's always been the case. (Leah)

Some faculty say that faculty participate more than staff members. Some faculty say academic faculty participate more than non-academic faculty members.

When we started out ... faculty certainly had the voice, very few staff people spoke up. and it seemed to be okay with everybody. (Barb)

I think the academic faculty have always been far more involved that career faculty, who traditionally aren't ... and people who are part-time don't participate in the same way .. (Wendy)

Academics tend to carry the weight, they're more vocal, more verbal, more assured .. they will tend to create .. you know, the discussion. The discussion's really not there, when it's .. it's not involving them and it is the vocational type student [affected by the issue] ... (S: ... is it just that they talk differently or do people listen more to them?) Yeah, well, they do [listen more to them], what you're getting at is the pecking order, very definite a pecking order. (S: Do you see the academics as high in that pecking order?) Yeah, yes. (S: Is that something that's always been the case?) I would think it's always been the case. (Dan)

Two images emerge from accounts of those founding years. One image is of a participatory ideal. When people speak of it, it has the sound of a tale told often. It is presented easily and sometimes in passing; each account is consistent
with the others. It is consistent with "the wonderful time" Marg and Jane report and with Becky's "aren't we great" process. It is an image of people sitting around a table, patiently listening to all points of view and carefully exploring the issues. The other image is less than idyllic. It is presented less frequently and less easily. Each account seems to entail a personal perspective; it seems to emerge only during extended and thoughtful exchange. It is an image in which there are people missing from the table and in which some of those present are unlikely to speak up. These different images suggest that people differ in their experience of organizational reality in the early years. The ideal of an inclusive process seems to co-exist with the experience of a process that was to some degree, at least, exclusive.

From Founding to the Budget Crunch (1980s)

The early years, in which the college is established and a culture is shaped, seem to have ended by the 1980s. Faculty who were new to Multisite in the early 1980s speak of finding a way of doing things already entrenched. They speak of concern with funding. They often speak positively of what they find, as well.

For example, one faculty member who arrived then speaks of an "enlightened administration."
I knew when I came in ... they knew the crunch was coming in terms of funding and I'd taken this position and the union people thought this just puts more pressure on, when the crunch comes, who's going to get laid off? They were right. I survived the cuts that came in 83/84, a lot of people didn't, a bit uncomfortable in that sense, nothing to do with me, they were just not not that particular position at that time, but on the whole, I was accepted. ... It was quite friendly ... a real informality about things. ... I was working in liaison with people in other colleges, so I had a sense of what they were doing ... managerial attitude was quite open here, over my lifetime in a number of different jobs, both in [another profession] and education areas, probably this was the most enlightened administration I ever came across. ... You notice little things. At that time there was no staff parking, there was no administration parking, no stall with president on it, it was first come first serve, quite egalitarian, very little distinction made between management, staff. ... I knew someone, a member of staff, who got some flak from an instructor and Bill [the second president] said, hey, you don't have to put up with that ... that was the kind of thing. ... (S: When you came in, did you feel you became a part of that founding group or was it too late?) No, it had already formed when I came in ... (S: You came into an established culture?) Yeah, yes, I would say so. (no pseudonym; story may identify)

Another expresses some disappointment with the resources available but says he stayed because of the people.

I came in 1980 ... we were looking at [adding] new facilities and extra faculty and staff ... [but then, we] hit early 80s recession and only now catching up to what we should have been doing in the early 80s ... I stayed because the administrators and people did as much as they could. ... It really feels like a participatory democracy and you personally have a great ability to make a difference and I guess that's just the way the people who were involved here got started and the long tradition [has continued] ... stability in management, passing on styles and the Boards have been very good.  (Byron)

When faculty speak of the early 1980s, they often speak of budget worries and budget cuts. They sometimes speak of the “crunch,” which can refer to the loss of some positions in some departments or more generally, to the period of time itself.  Some people speak of the period as very difficult.
We ... have a base of exceedingly good people administratively and instructionally, and in terms of staff, can't think highly enough of them. ... All in one union and ... stable and in some sense, we fought back the flood waters, putting holes in dykes together during that period of the early 80s and I think it produced a core of enormously strong caring kind of institution. ... This is an institution that had a pretty solid core to it. ... These are people who have seen it from the day it started and we built it and we worked together and that's partly because that group was galvanized during that horrible period in the 1980s, when we managed to survive here as an institution. (Hal)

Others seem to express little emotion.

The cuts of the 80s were all around the solidarity, the Bennett goverment's budget and I think anger over those cuts turned outward ... and certainly in terms of the union’s response ... our efforts were dedicated to solidarity committees. ... Most of the cuts were at the bottom level, the newest employees, which made it possible to accept them more easily. (pseudonym omitted)

Some faculty speak as if concern with funding has continued from that period onward.

I did look at the point of formation as being one of excitement, it was all uphill and we were really just roaring. ... Then the cutbacks came ... Bill [second president] came in when we were still growing and everything was going well ... and then he was there for the cutbacks and then we were required to work harder and we were asked to do that, and well, it would only be for a short period of time, right? We loved the college, we had formed this relationship. Whether it was board, management, faculty, staff, it was a wonderful relationship and they based it on that and they asked us to work hard, work harder, and we were certainly willing to do that, it was our institution. ... Bill was sure ticked off, ticked off with the government, ... he made it very vocal ... with the cutbacks, just continually being cut back. ... We were willing to work harder, but you know, like 8 years later, we were still be asked to cut back more and he didn't feel, what his article [concerning resigning from his position] said is that he didn't feel respect from the government. ... Man, we have worked our butts off all these years with all these cutbacks, with shortage of staff. (Barb)
In the accounts of this period (early to late 1980s), Multisite emerges as a nice place to be. It is friendly, informal. However, concern with cutbacks that might occur and with cutbacks that do occur seem a source of ongoing distress, at least to some faculty. In the accounts of this period, there are references that are not in the accounts of the early years. The concern with funding seems to direct attention beyond Multisite’s immediate community; people speak of the provincial ministry that provides funding, for example. There seems to be an articulated awareness that the institution is not autonomous.

Attaining University College Status (late 1980s)

Concern with funding seems to continue throughout the 1980s. It is a highly salient factor as Multisite decides to pursue university college status in the late 1980s.

Another group [that thought gaining status was a good thing] that I hadn't thought of is those who saw the college as falling apart, getting less and less funding, doing more and more work, who saw it as just one way of saving the ship, so to speak. By becoming this new animal, would we get more funding and be able to carry on doing what they thought was important to do? (Jane)

Newcomers who arrive in this period still find Multisite a nice place to be.

The organizational culture, to me, it really hasn't changed very much at all. I found that the environment and attitude was much softer and easier to work with [than the college I came from], no internal politics at that time. I think maybe the politics becomes more
[meaning: it is more political] recently but at that time, I didn't feel that there was any undercurrent. It was very open, it was very comfortable. (Cindy)

In the late 1980s, people are increasingly aware that the government perceives a problem of access to post secondary education in the province, especially in Multisite's region. The stories people tell of how the college gained university college status (p. 153) are set in this period. Several participatory processes unfold both inside the organization and in the college sector. Internally, for example, an Access Committee (referred to in reference to the gaining status story and as a source of burnout, p. 135) meets regularly. Externally, there are a series of public hearings.

Some members are more active participants in these processes than others; some seem not to participate at all. I summarize comments on this period and its processes under the subheadings, (i) We can't leave it alone, (ii) Degrees of involvement, and (iii) Agreement, more or less.

**We can't leave it alone.** When I ask people at Multisite about the period in which university college status is sought and attained, they say I must talk to Chuck. Chuck was an active member of the Access Committee; he provides an overview of events and processes.

Finally by the late 80s, the government said, we have an access problem in the province and we [Multisite's region] are one of the worst served areas, and they launched a public
inquiry. ... There was a fair amount of feeling that it was none of our business, we should just leave it alone. My view was, and I wasn't the only one by any means, well, no, we can't leave it alone, because we will be influenced, even as a two year college, and we could even be put out of business, if they open up a university somewhere in our region. ... we ought to be a voice in the debate. ... So we started to do an internal institutional discussion. ... There was an Access Committee created but it wasn't given a lot of support. ... The government got really serious and announced a more formal process ... and another Access Committee was created, now involving more administrators and a more central focus, institution wide, and I was one of the elected representatives. ... A lot of debate but nothing had emerged as a consensus. ... there was a strong feeling amongst a large number, I won't say a majority, of faculty and staff that yes, we must be involved. ... What emerged was a draft proposal that we become a university-college ... and we decided we should present this to the college community [to get] consensus internally ... canvassed it widely in the institution. We had debates and in the end there was more or less agreement, as close as you could come in an institution. ... We saw that to respond [to the Ministry's commission] with any credibility, we must present this to our communities. ... We didn't miss anyone. ... We decided to orchestrate and coordinate all this. ... [The Ministry's commission] came to the conclusion this was a put up job: these people have set the whole community up to get what we want. ... Eventually, with the government saying month after month they were going to act and doing nothing ... eventually students started to get upset ... and their focus turned on the government and they went to MLAs and got no answers, so they got mad, and organized their own committee, and they started to lobby the school board, the MLAs. ... They got the ear of the Ministry in a way we never could. ... highly organized; funded by donations ... They really did a job. ... I can remember a rally to get him [the Minister] out ... and I remember the mayor of Southton getting up and wagging his finger at him and saying, you announce the university-college, I'm not saying will you do it, you do it, and do it fast. ... So he went away with his ears ringing. ... Early June and I think it was 28 of June that he finally did announce it and 10 days later, couldn't have got any closer to wire, there would be a ceremony on South campus. (Chuck)

Some faculty become active in the status-gaining process because they wanted their own programs to offer degrees.

Some of us (in Careers Division) became champions in promoting degrees for some Careers programs; we didn't want to be left out of the degree thing. ... So I sat in on Access meetings and it was really easy because people on the academic side, as well, felt we should not try to copy what the other university colleges were doing or what the universities were doing; we should not try to just do traditional academic degrees. What our community needed and our position in the system was to provide what wasn't available elsewhere. (Walt)
Some faculty speculate on the reasons some of their colleagues support gaining status.

There was a certain element of the faculty who were very scholarly and saw this as a wonderful opportunity to teach upper level courses and do research and become more of a scholar because they'd never had that opportunity under the old system and then there were a group, I suppose, who just thought there was a need for university level teaching in the area and rather than wanting to see another university coming in as a free standing university, [they could see we] could do it better and cheaper. (Jane)

**Degrees of involvement.** Some faculty members are less involved than others.

I suppose the first I heard was the Chair of the Access Committee coming to an Advisory Council meeting with a proposal for a comprehensive university college that would include the careers program [degrees in careers areas] rather than just the university programs ... different from what some of the other colleges went for ... a lot of lobbying went on in the community, various councils ... meetings every Friday afternoon [the Access Committee] really burnt a lot of people out with that frequency. (Cathy)

Some faculty members seem to have had less information than others.

At that point ... I had to take on more responsibility so I may not have been as aware as some people of the whole process. The only thing I was aware of was there was a fair amount of lobbying and a fair amount of community support, a lot of energy being put into the process of transition to a university college. (Eva)

The problem is that it happened instantly. ... We didn't have a series of white papers over 5 years. ... It was dumped on us. As I recall, the announcement was made publicly in July; we were told in 6 months, we've got to have programs. ... well, a period of almost a year but still insane ... chaotic. ... There was the Access Committee and the local communities discussed that and a lot of push to be university-college, but I don't know that any of us actually anticipated it actually happening or that it had to happen as quickly
as it did. ... There may have been a lot going on but it wasn't at the level where a lot of us were participating. (Hal)

Some faculty seem surprised that it happens.

I thought it [talk of gaining university college status] was a pipe dream and quite frankly, I didn't think we'd have a snowball's chance in hell. (S: Tell me why..) ... It just never occurred to me that a community college could become a university.... and I figured, well, how could that be, we wouldn't have the qualified faculty. ... My opinion of what a university was, was people struggle to get into it and struggle to teach in it, and my experience of the whole structure as something this would never be. (Cindy)

So when the prospect came up of being a university college, how did I feel? I didn't really think it was going to happen, I figured the government wouldn't do it, we'd be seen as too closely aligned with lower mainland colleges and therefore a threat so I was quite surprised that it came about and it could have not come about depending on who was education minister that month. I think we were having rotating ministers every month. (Wendy)

Agreement, more or less. Some people who come to agree with the idea of gaining status (i.e., became a part of Chuck’s “more or less agreement”) seem to do so with mixed feelings. Luke and Keith’s comments also illustrate the concerns with funding and the sense of competing with other institutions that recur in accounts of this period.

What was important to faculty in that period was fear; fear of losing comprehensiveness, with bringing in all levels, losing that sense of warm community, .... we were nurturing, like a family ... concern with a poor fit, but also fear that if a university went into Oceanside, we'd get what's left over for students. ... It was driven by fear; it was a post restraint period. ... There were still cutbacks ... never enough money. (Keith)

For starters, most of us were not in favour of making the move but then we saw all of a sudden we could be a casualty of all this. ... We [i.e., the community colleges] were all becoming university colleges, we'd be seen as a dinosaur. It was going to happen. It became obvious, very very quickly, that degrees in the area were going to happen, so
where does that leave us. (S: Someone said going for status was fear driven; would you
agree?) Yes, I'd say that's so and that's still true, a fear of losing what we've got. (Luke)

Some people say the administrators joined the effort to gain status later than
many other members.

But on the whole the institution took to it really well. Staff were really strong supporters
of it, from my perspective, and by this time so were the administrators. (S: By this time?
Administrative support came later?) Well, there was mixed opinion among them, from
my vantage point. By the time the whole presentation and report had happened, they
were obviously strongly in support so we couldn't do it without them and ... the Board
was also of one mind, very strong, if they hadn't been, it wouldn't have happened. (S:
Would it be true to say that where the original impetus and a lot of the push came from to
start with was from certain faculty?) Yeah. (And administrative support came later?)
Yeah ... that probably was a function of they knew more than the faculty knew about the
administrative ins and outs. The more you know, the more you can see problems, we
were blissfully ignorant, we were just seeing a line straight ahead that needs to be
pursued. (Chuck)

George was against the university college because he thought the pressure from the upper
levels would lead to a loss of comprehensiveness. ... He had a proposal for a consortium
... had a mutiny on his hands ... "our" plan had no "we" in it. ... He does listen, I'll say that
for him. ... By the time everyone was together on the university college, George threw
himself into it. (pseudonym omitted)

Walt corroborates the last report, that faculty did not support George's plan
for developing a consortium structure rather than becoming a university college.

His report that George is highly influential in what happens may be a different
perspective from the last report.

It was difficult in terms of models, figuring out how to proceed. The first one put
forward by the President was not one that had a great following ... a model of centralized
administration and several colleges, modeled on one in the states, so we fell on the choice
of university college, at least the government seemed to understand that. ... The idea of pursuing degree granting status didn't pick up steam until George arrived, coincidental with what the other colleges were doing (i.e., becoming university colleges), we were already thinking of that. (Walt)

Some faculty may never have come to agree with gaining status.

I had a great range of opinion expressed to me, from extremely supportive amongst many faculty, probably most by this time [institution is about to put forth proposal to seek status], but a very strong core of people who were dead set against it and made no bones about it. ... Whether that still exists, they don't say it anymore and I don't ask. (Chuck)

Then of course, there were people who didn't think it was a good idea at all and felt very threatened by it, mostly those who didn't have the qualifications to teach the upper level courses. ... There must be people who were against it for philosophical or pedagogical or ideological reasons but the biggest group that I have observed are the ones who just feel very threatened because either their programs are not ones that would ever become a degree [program] or even more ... the ones who are in programs that have or will become degrees but they don't personally have the qualifications. ... I think they felt and feel very threatened, sort of like relegated to second class citizens. I'm not sure that any department has actually treated anybody like that but I think they either see themselves like that or are worried that in the future they will be put away in a category of 2nd or 3rd class. (Jane)

When they speak of this status-gaining period, people express a variety of emotions, beliefs and attitudes. The images that emerge are complex and ambiguous; they may or may not be conflicting. One image suggests organizational consensus. It is the image presented by the gaining status story: an image of an institution united, a community in full support, and students putting it over the top (p. 153). The other image is ambiguous on the matter of consensus and dissensus. It is an image of a few faculty members as the driving force behind
seeking status. I think this is implicit in Chuck's account; in response to my question (p. 200), he confirms this. This image is similar to the one evoked by Leah's statement about the early years: "in many ways, key faculty members lead this place" (p. 189).

There is also an impression that emerges consistently from the accounts of the different periods in the past. It is of Multisite as a nice place to be, a place where people seem to place a high value on harmonious relations. Something that changes from the accounts of one period to the next is what people say about the institution's environment and how often they refer to it. When faculty speak of the early years, they sometimes speak of the community the college serves. When faculty speak of the budget crunch, they often speak of the provincial government and its role in allocating funds. When faculty speak of the status-gaining period, they frequently speak of government priorities, of competition for funding within the college sector, of political response to societal demands. In the later period, there seems to be recognition that the sociopolitical environment has a significant impact on what happens within the institution. This recognition, which does not surface in comments on earlier periods, seems coupled with a sophisticated view of the issues. This may point to a stronger emphasis on the broader context and a deeper understanding of issues, rooted in the increasing concern with funding and
with decisions made externally. It may also reflect something about the nature of memory and how it changes.

Participation: Speaking of the Present

In the last section, I presented what people say about how they did things in the past. In this section, I describe what people say about how they do things now, first, in general terms, and second, in terms of specific processes.

The Participatory Process

In this section, I describe what people say about participation in general, under two subheadings: (i) Premise and practice, and (ii) Participatory symbols.

Premise and practice. Many faculty speak as if participation is a basic understanding of "the way we do things here." Sometimes, faculty speak as if the premise and the practice of participation are more or less the same. These accounts often affirm the participatory ideal of the early days.

We have done extremely well, we've been just fortunate as an institution. There has been a certain respect there and we have tried to understand each other's position and there's been very little kind of order by fiat. ... There's been a chance to evolve. ... It really feels like a participatory democracy and you personally have a great ability to make a difference. ... [little turnover] periods where we couldn't hire anybody for years and we grew together ... stability in management, passing on styles and the Boards have been very good. ... Sometimes when I look at it from the outside, we should move faster on
things but if you do that you cut out the participation. ... I feel that the input of people into decisions has been a constant. It's a very rewarding institution if you have the time and the energy, you feel you can be part of making the institution, there's no lack of opportunity to do that if you have the time and the energy to do that. It's been wonderful, to be in on planning a degree and developing facilities. It's absolutely remarkable, the level of input, I think that's a constant. (Byron)

Among some comments that affirm the theme (i.e., affirm that participation is the way we do things), the word "still" recurs, implying a comparison to the past.

There still is that process, that commitment to look for consensus ... still plenty of opportunity for things to be addressed. (Mary)

I still have the feeling around here that one person or when people feel strongly, they can get things done. There are people who will listen, mechanisms are in place to allow people to be heard and to make changes, if a thing makes sense, if a thing is well presented or logical. (Anita)

Eva quantifies the contrast with the past.

It's a good place to work and for the most part there is participation, if people want it. Sometimes we have these big messes like happened with that one policy (department head) but for the most part, it isn't bad. ... I don't think it's changed an awful lot. I would say maybe a 10% shift towards less participation and less harmony, but only 10% and I don't think that's a lot. I think we still have a very closely knit association, and I think people who, once they understand that history, why it is harmonious, I'm hoping that it will continue to be that (way). (Eva)
Sometimes, faculty speak with ambivalence about the relation between the premise and the practice of participation. Sometimes, they speak of a discrepancy between the premise and the practice of participation. Susan speaks of a facade.

Participation is definitely one of our strengths ... a great deal of opportunity to participate, if one has the time and energy. ... The thing that I presently like best about our institution is we have a neat relationship between faculty, management and staff ... less hierarchical power plays than in many institutions ... contributes to this sense of participatory. ... On the other hand ... my experience with that committee and seeing our recommendations being accepted ... and then totally ignored a year down the road, I wonder how much of that participation is ... can't think of the word, it looks like it's there but it's not really there ... (S: facade?) a facade. ... I think we will always have a least a facade of participatory style of organization and I think that's a good thing. (Susan)

Andy speaks of the importance of listening and wonders if people are good listeners; he says, “some of this stuff is token.”

On the participatory sort of things, I guess I would sort of say some are more equal than others and that you can participate but whether you get heard or not is another question. ... I'm not a person with a lot of clout so you could say, everybody could say, he had his chance to speak, but in fact is that so? ... I think when you say participatory you have to say, are there good listeners there? It's not enough to have 10 or 20 people sitting around a table, is anyone really listening to what's being said, is there the actual humility that goes with that? I have to ask myself and sometimes I come up with an answer that doesn't please me. ... I don't necessarily find that the listening is there ... and I think some of the stuff is token. ... It's interesting, a lot of things that just come to my mind now. It's interesting to be in this talk with you, its interesting that in the dozen years here I've never had a similar talk with any administrative person and you know the only other one I think of, talking about listening, when I really felt listened to, was [series of interviews by non-administrative person]. ... And at other meetings, some of them some time ago ... everybody listened and that was the last I heard of it. ... There's a part of that in some of us, a bit of cynicism, in the sense that we have been asked to participate and tell you and then it's gone into a black hole somewhere so there's that side to it. (Andy)
Pete speaks of choosing the appearance of participation even when there is no substance.

It certainly is very much in the culture of the place, at least to choose the appearance of participation even when there's no substance. I think, many places, we get the substantial participation, but the culture is such that we try to make it look that way almost everywhere, which is not to say that there is a kind of cynical move to say, gee, it's better to only look that way rather than to actually have it, but if that's all you can get, well .. that's better than none at all. (Pete)

The preceding comments illustrate a perceived gap between what is said and what is done. Two of them also illustrate a type of comment that puzzles me.

What does it mean, when Pete says that, if the appearance of participation is all you can get, that's better than nothing? What does it mean, when Susan says to have a facade is a good thing? How can I understand comments to the affect that, that the appearance, the facade, of participation is better than nothing?

Here is another account that entails a pattern I find puzzling. Andy seems to negate the theme (above) but he seems to affirm it, albeit with some qualification, later in the interview.

In some sense it's (participatory process) real enough because I have been able to say "whoa" a number of times in those meetings. ... I've had very positive experiences too .. got hold of a couple of people before the meeting and lobbied them and said look, I need some support from you guys and they said, sure ... and that's the sort of thing we have to learn, is that you need to get that .. you need to have the savvy, and I'm not sure that everybody has the chance to get that. In other words, the people with the most experience have the most savvy and the people, as a rule, who are lower down have, including staff people, have had no opportunity to say how does this stuff work. A lot of guys in
Some other faculty members seem to do as Andy does; they move easily among comments that affirm, qualify and contradict the theme. Some of the interviews are of the following pattern. The informant reiterates the theme as premise, then speaks of frustration with an experience seen as inconsistent with that premise, and thereafter go on to recount an experience in which practice is consistent with premise. I find something interesting in this, although it is not necessarily unusual for people in ordinary conversation to appear to contradict their earlier comments. Also, it is not surprising that a premise sometimes holds and sometimes does not. Yet, this “slipperiness” piques my interest as something that may inform what participation means. I wonder: What, if any, is a useful way to understand the pattern of comment in which faculty move easily among apparently inconsistent perspectives concerning participation?

A few faculty members sometimes speak as if premise has no counterpart in practice. Cindy, for example, says, "I've always thought participation was a myth that long time employees believe."

**Participatory symbols.** Faculty often speak of the various symbols of participation: the joint union, the elected committees and values such as respect,
openness, collegiality. They speak of what is changing and of what remains constant. Some comments suggest that the value of respect continues to be strong.

The amount of respect that we [faculty and staff] have for each others’ work is considerable and surprising here, I don’t see that [at other colleges]. ... It's not just a matter of people refusing to cross one another’s picket lines ...[at other colleges] it's a real refusal to understand ...and I don't think that what I do here, well, depends on which day you catch me, is all that much more significant than what Maggie [the receptionist in an area that houses faculty mailboxes and offices] does. We're all doing professional jobs as well as we can. ... I don't look upon it as them providing me a service but I've seen it at other institutions, and it embarrasses me about some faculty and annoys me at some institutions that the staff would have such contempt for certain faculty. ... So we really do have a sense of people sharing regard for each other's work but there's always been a certain amount of complaining that things aren't equitable. Staff complain that faculty have too much say and faculty complain about something else; they are still two groups but on the whole it works pretty well. (Wendy)

A new faculty member says he has found Multisite to have the good relationships for which it is known. Like other relatively new faculty, he compares what happens at Multisite now with his experience with other institutions rather than with the past at Multisite.

I've seen various things happen at [other] institutions. ... a lot of infighting .. Things don't just get done so the feeling I got during the interview [to attain the position at Multisite] was that the department was very cohesive and the institution itself was very cohesive. When I had the interview with the representative of personnel, I had the same feeling, I was told the same thing, I didn't find any information that would conflict with those ideas. I also researched ... I talked to other faculty members at Mountain U who knew something about Multisite. ... Before I was hired on here I did a Sessional at Mountain U ... and a couple of courses at Urban College and talked to people out there, kind of got the same .. feeling, that it was a good place to work, that there was good relationships between admin and faculty and staff, and so on. I basically find that. The other day, I was giving an exam yesterday and the workers were fixing a door out by the room, banging away, and I said I've got an exam and every time you guys pound, my students are jumping out of their chairs, and they say, oh, yeah, no problem, when are you done?
and they were gone. ... Well at Mountain U or Prairie U, you'd never have seen that, it would have been a major problem. (Lew)

A faculty member with long service sees the good relations as likely to continue.

I think we're unique in the kind of leadership we have, both from our union, and management, in the sense that I would see, and from our Board, the commitment to keeping the good working relationships got us through the very tough times of the mid 80s in better shape than other institutions. ... That got us through some tough periods, it's carried through and I think it will carry on because of the open dialogue and communication. Some of the new things they're talking about, such as having staff and faculty on the Board, that would continue to keep things going. There's going to be pressures on that relation but I think we can come through those. (Adam)

Other comments, however, suggest that the value of respect has been eroding. Barb, for example, says that in the early years faculty had the voice and that it seemed to be all right with everybody for a time but that changed.

And then as staff grew and became a little more vocal, my perception was ... that faculty started resenting the fact that they were always having to talk for staff and they were having to share this pot of money. ... Then I started seeing these little pockets of .. again, territory, but pockets of .. lack of respect, on both parts .. but all in all, if you compare to other institutions, we got it made. (Barb)

Barb and Adam each provide an example of a category of comments that recurs in conversation, in meetings, and in the interview data. People often seem to assume and sometimes assert that Multisite is superior to other institutions in
the college sector. These comments often take for granted institutional success, past and present. Sometimes, how Multisite is better is specified; other times, as in Barb’s comment, the greater worth seems more general. I wonder how I can best understand comments in which a faculty member asserts or implies that Multisite is better than any other college sector institution.

Some people speak of other values that seem to be eroding. Some speak of less informality and of less openness between faculty and administrators. Hal, for example, speaks of the president becoming more remote.

We have changed presidents [over the years] but the president has become really kind of remote in a sense over the last few years to what it used to be. ... Not unusual [in earlier period] to have lunch with the president, sit down and talk for a couple of hours on this campus. We don't do that anymore, we haven't seen our president for .. quite a while. (Hal)

Andy says that the place is less egalitarian and that people are less direct.

The institution has become much larger ... become more formal, although compared to other places, it’s still pretty informal. ... While its friendly and still informal to an extent, there isn't .. much time for, there isn't any slack to speak of in the system. ... It's almost .. not something that's easy to .. define but there's something that seems not to be there. ... a concern with being polite, I think that's pretty well always been there but I think it's more so now than it was before. . . . We used to go on [director/ department head/coordinator] retreats every year with picnics and so on ... and there was some pretty direct stuff said every year. Poor Kelly [the dean] took us out there and everybody attacked him out there and I remember once he took us on a boat ride ... and he gave the seagull popcorn and of course it came back to return the favour, and he said, this is just like coordinators, they eat out of your hand and then shit on you. ... That kind of .. joking and stuff, I see .. that's changed. I'm not sure it has anything to do with the university college. ... I don't know, people don't seem as direct. ... Management's more clustered now than they used to be. I think they're become more isolated. I think I hear the word management more often. ... I suspect that they're much more comfortable with each other now than they are outside
that circle and I don't think that was true before. ... more of a "we them" situation ...
somehow I don't feel things are as egalitarian as they once were, it interests me, I don't
know why that is. (Andy)

Cathy says she feels more cut off, with administrators around less.

I think this past year, its only October, already there's a different atmosphere [at North
Campus]. The administration is not around much. I do feel more cut off ... the way I
feel, and I have talked to others, because administrations isn't here, you don't talk to them
in the halls, you don't find out little tidbits of info .. there used to be management
meetings here alternate Tuesdays. You'd see your dean; he'd have lunch in the lunch room
before going back [to South Campus]. (Cathy)

Some faculty see less collegiality among faculty and are unhappy with that.

I see more divisiveness among faculty and less and less collegiality. ... There is a tension
between those who have Ph.D.s and those who don't, between those who are approved to
teach upper level and those who are not, which ties in to Ph.D. (Susan)

Others see collegiality among faculty as already conditional and likely to
become more exclusive. Some people do not seems unhappy with that.

There's always been very collegial relationship with faculty, not categorized as academic
and careers, although there is a distinction with the trades group, partly because they're in
another building and also an attitude about higher learning. My feeling is that there will
be a split eventually. (Walt)

Some are concerned with losing the collegiality between faculty and staff.

We've always had this joint staff and faculty union ... and I think faculty have worked
quite hard at trying to be collegial with the staff, not treating them as "them-us," and I
think that too changes if you have a scholarly thrust and there are also a few new faculty
who come from places where you don't talk much to staff and treat them in a slightly
different way, they're just the staff. ... And my worry is .. that if we had only a few new people each year, they would very quickly get socialized to the old ethic but because they are coming in so fast and in such great numbers, I'm not sure if they are being socialized into the old ways, so maybe it'll be a whole new institution. (Jane)

Some faculty, like Jane, express concern that the joint union may be lost. Other faculty say it may be lost but show no apparent concern.

It's worked reasonably well, but we may be getting too big for it. (Rob)

Ever since I've been around here, there's been a kind of .. uneasy marriage in which we all pretend we have exactly the same vested interests. (Wendy)

I don't honestly see how a faculty association that can handle the demands and needs of a staff and faculty can work anymore. I think the faculty has to be part of a much bigger unit like CIEA [provincial association of collective bargaining units] ... whole thing is so different, you've got a professor teaching 3rd and 4th year, you've got a shipper; there's no way the demands are the same. It's lovely to socialize with them and all that, I'm not opposed to that at all but what one needs from a united front is not there anymore. One is holding the other back, the needs are so different ... I think this whole thing is a myth. (Cindy)

When people talk of committees, they often talk of the Advisory Council.

There's an interestingly democratic system; the committees like the Advisory Council have encouraged faculty to sit on them ... always pulling strongly to keep faculty well involved. (Rob)

Some faculty see a problem with the committee's terms of reference or are skeptical of the committee's actual role.

The Council needs clearer guidelines, otherwise it can be seen as arbitrarily deciding if something should or should not be approved. (Wendy)
I have thought that at times the Council was a committee by which management were able to give the illusion of consulting. (pseudonym omitted)

I despise the Council, it doesn't accomplish anything, although it can be potentially influential. (Luke)

Up until three years ago or so, the committee [Advisory Council] worked well, ... because it had a clearly defined role, to advise the board on policy matters. We developed certain policies like the sexual harassment policy and a major modification to the open door policy ... with the change in governance, it's role is changing. Is it supposed to develop a whole new model of governance? Is it supposed to somehow get the strategic plan out to the college community and back again? ... I felt Elizabeth [the chair of the Council] was overwhelmed at the last meeting ... partly, she had a cold ... partly, the task seems overwhelming. She has all these things that are really important and people aren't interested because they're too busy doing other things, getting degree programs going, going to meetings, work in their own departments, so they're burnt out. ... another thing ... it's harder to get back to constituents, harder than when we were small ... so you can't bump into people in the hallway in the same way and discuss these issues and know who your representative is and even what the committee is doing. ... I continually find myself with these lists of candidates that I'm supposed to vote for committees ... and I don't know who they are, I don't know what their understanding of the issues are, I can't make an informed choice ... I think that is seriously weakening the committee structure ... so I think the structure is under a lot of strain. (Cathy)

Cathy speaks here of no longer bumping into people in the hallway; she refers previously (p. 210) to fewer talks in the hall with administrators. Comments on a decreasing number of informal exchanges, often with reference to hallways, with the sense of something said in passing, recur. What piques my interest in these comments is the degree of regret, the sense of unhappiness, that they sometimes seems to reflect. I wonder how I can best understand the apparent depth of emotion that sometimes is associated with this change in interaction.
The perspectives people present on participation are complex, diverse and sometimes contradictory. There is a practice that people say is consistent with the premise at least sometimes, at least for some people. There is also experience that people say is at odds with the premise, at least sometimes, at least for some people. In a related way, the historic participatory symbols continue to be expressed at least sometimes, at least for some people. They also are seen to be eroding or at risk of doing so, at least sometimes, at least for some people.

There still seems a pervasive sense that Multisite is a nice place to be, that there is much of value in the characteristic way of doing things. There is ambiguity concerning how much it remains unchanged, however. There are different attitudes about whether and how it ought to change. New faculty seem to compare the present situation at Multisite to other institutions (e.g., Lew, p. 208); they seem to prefer Multisite. Longer term faculty compare the present to the past at Multisite. Some founding members (e.g., Wendy, p. 207) are pleased with a sense of continuity in one or more of the participatory values. Other founding members (e.g., Barb, p. 209) feel sad that the old way is being lost.
Two Particular Processes

I began the second phase with two questions concerning the budgetmaking and strategic planning processes. I wonder how people at Multisite interpret these processes and how I can best understand these processes. In this section, I answer the first question. Later in this chapter, I answer the second.

I organize the presentation in this section in two ways. I describe what is said about budgetmaking first and then what is said about strategic planning. Within these subsections, I present what informants say according to their degree of involvement in each process. Some faculty members were actively involved (i.e., took part in meetings) in budgetmaking, for example; many were not. Some people have had no involvement in strategic planning at all; some who were involved in earlier stages are no longer active; a few remain involved. It seems reasonable to wonder what, if any, patterns emerge as a result of these different degrees of involvement (i.e., participating, not participating, initially participating and then withdrawing).

Budget process. When I speak to those who were active in the budgetmaking process, I sometimes ask about it. An active union member describes it as unreal.

(S: I had a fair bit of puzzlement as I watched the budget process ..) It's not real, it felt quite unreal to me ... I mean I won't engage in that kind of budget process again, if it's
anything like that next time. (S: So what would you do?) It may be that we’re hardening a little bit here. We’ve also had all these joint projects and structural change proposals dropped on us with language like some or all these will be implemented and I think, well, there’s a hardening on that [management] side and there was a hardening around that budget process. We had 2 weeks to respond to that proposal and were told any responses had to be in the form of some alternatives .. so .. we [the union] dropped 3 policy grievances last week and are about to drop a whole bunch more. We are getting .. angry. (S: By dropping you mean initiating rather than giving up?) Yes. (pseudonym omitted)

Sometimes, a faculty member who took part in one or more budget meetings brings up the topic of budget. Andy says some people felt set up.

I think, first, at some of the meetings, like that one on the budget, when we all went across to the Junction [the union’s budget forum/workshop], I came back and a lot of people said "hogwash" .. and some people felt set up but in a way it was kind of funny, because they knew we couldn’t find anything and maybe that’s good enough for them to find out that, well, it isn’t an easy process, so that people could empathize with the people who are having to do this stuff but that couldn’t be a stated goal, of course. (Andy)

Some faculty see the decisions of the budget period of great significance in terms of values of respect and trust.

The institution runs well because of trust in management ... but laying people off caused a shift in thinking .. so some of the magic is eaten away. ... Layoffs of people who were highly respected ... it showed a lack of concern for individuals, for their welfare. .. There is a fundamental shift in the thinking of people towards institution, fundamental, people are no longer thinking I owe this place. ... There’s a falling apart of old thinking about the institution. (Luke)

Sometimes I ask about constraints on the discussion. Somebody says budget is not an issue to trigger strong response.
(S: A puzzlement... but I also thought I saw limitations... on what they would say, boundaries... but I couldn't get a sense of what the norms were.)... Well... it's always a puzzle how much of which we wish to oppose is from outside and how much is from inside, and there is a point when you throw up your hands because the government is doing it again, imposing limitations on programs and possibilities and other things to do with the college and so you don't know whether your enemy is within or without or if the Board or administration is not standing up in the way they should be and I think that some of that limitation may come from not knowing where that boundary is. ... I think if you hit the right issue, you'll find very few boundaries to that but I don't know that we've hit it in the last 6 months. ... [a few years ago] when we were negotiating [a new collective agreement] and our workload was being messed with, partly by the provincial government and partly by our administration... I was quite sure that we would have gone out [on strike]. ... We were told that we were going to be cut, so what do you do, we've haven't got it straight yet what our role is as a union and as faculty members, that's going to require some thinking. (pseudonym omitted)

People who were not active in the budgetmaking process sometimes bring it up. Jim, a relatively new member, says the process exemplifies openness and consistency.

(S: ... tell me what you can put your finger on that makes it special and nice.) Sure... I guess the openness of management and I guess that gets to the aspect where decisions are brought down to the lower levels... and what is done is what is said. I think it's what keeps the people, the place happy. ... [contrast to previous workplace] To me, that's [consistency] what it comes back to because there is that openness. The classic example is the budget cutback. ... Here they say this is the problem, help us find the solution so once the solution is found, it was acceptable because everybody to a certain extent had been involved in looking for the solution, whether their solution was adopted or not was not the point. (Jim)

Dan says he tends not to get involved. He also says the issue determines how much people engage and he uses an attempt to close a bookstore as an example.
(S ... I was here for budget process and it seemed ... some constraint, some holding back.) I'd say that was probably accurate. (S: Has that been changing?) .. probably talking to the wrong person, talking participation, I tend not to get involved. ... If it really affects us, then yes. ... One example, about 2 years ago, they were going to close the Northcampus book-store or make it part time, and boy, people mustered. ... They made management reconsider and come up with some innovative ways to keep that bookstore here and going. ... The point is that was pretty heavy participation but almost at an antagonism level, because people were really upset. ... (S: Would it be the case to say the participation is really there when it's an issue that triggers ..?) Yes. ... Again, what's happening is there is just so much going on that you just can't keep track ... so you have to pick, we won't worry about that but this is an issue we will [pay attention to]. (Dan)

In a group conversation, I ask about budget. Anita answers, the others chime in.

(S: During the budget ... the union president spoke eloquently at a Board Meeting, and said ... we need another way to deal with budget ...) In the Strategic Plan, one of the objectives was that there would be union representation on the budget development so it looks as if management has heard and has decided to change, to provide a mechanism for greater input and therefore greater ownership, which if you're going to have to start to rob Peter to pay Paul, it's a darn good idea (Amy: Co-opt them!) to get the rank and file on side as you make those decisions (Ada: Rather than being invited at the 11th hour of decision making,) because then you could have rebellion but I still have the feeling around here that ... mechanisms are in place to allow people to be heard and to make changes ... although I can't off the top of my head think of an example. (Anita)

The perspectives people present on budgetmaking are less diverse and less ambiguous than those they present on participation as a general theme. Among the faculty who participate in the budget process, no one speaks as if they see the process as participatory, for example. Active participants speak of it being unreal, of feeling set up, of layoffs leading to a lack of trust and commitment. Those who
do not participate sometimes seem to contradict themselves. Anita and her colleagues speak of management providing a mechanism for greater input, for example. Then they seem to negate this apparently positive interpretation by speaking of robbing Peter and of people being co-opted. When people speak positively of budget process, they seem to focus on the extent to which information is made public. Jim speaks of openness in his interview, for example; some faculty members said much the same thing in conversation during the process itself.

**Strategic planning process.** (In this section and the next, pseudonyms are omitted, for reasons of confidentiality.) I ask some faculty members who are active in Strategic Planning about the process. One committee member says it is a strange process, it represents a breakdown in process, and what it is producing is a management document.

(S: Tell me how I can understand the Strategic Planning process, that I've seen bits of over time.) That would be a tough one, it's a fairly strange process. ... I don't get the feeling that the rank and file of the college have had a lot of input into it at all. ... The company that's brought in develops strategic plans of businesses where it is expected that management makes the plans and other people go and carry them out. They can sit together in a room and develop a plan and expect implementation of it whereas in an educational institution like ours ... the expectation is, a plan would be developed, discussed by those going to be affected by it, that they would have major input, discuss the ramifications. After much more extended democratic process, the plan would come forward, before anything's put into practice. There is a breakdown, in my view, in that process, because there is so much else going on. ... I see a real problem, that's a major thing that's happening and a lot of people are just not aware. ... It's supposed to guide our work, our plans. ... One of things that came out last year (at budget shortfall) was we shouldn't spend so much money on mileage and that's one of the reasons management
meets more in South campus. How does that conflict with strategic plan? The plan says we should be trying to have management keep in contact with the faculty. ... I find, I think most committee members do, there's not a lot of opportunities to discuss it with faculty. ... (S: In the last Advisory Council meeting, George said the plan is an institutional document, not a management document. I think he repeated that.) It's a management document. Management drew it up; we responded to it in the steering committee but it is very definitely a management document.

Another committee member, describing the process as backwards, says that the Steering committee is not steering, it is bicycling as hard as it can to keep up.

The Council got brought in late. George wanted a strategic plan and so he got one. He had already brought in the group to do it and they had started doing it before he brought in a steering committee and then it got pointed out to him that it probably should be a function of Council so subsequently the steering committee was made a subcommittee of Council and basically the order of things happened in a totally backwards way and the steering committee was never steering at all, it was bicycling along as hard as it could to try keep up with something that was already set in full motion, so I'm a little cynical about the strategic plan. ... It was George's decision, it was kind of an impulsive decision; he's very emotionally committed to it ... and yet he got this ghastly, godawful company to do it that talks with all this language that nobody wants and he's finally thrown that out after paying however much. ... It's a good idea, though [to have a plan]. ... (S: Where is it now?) I think that management is trucking right ahead.

A number of committee members say it is impossible to get people to respond to the plan. One person links this to the way it has been developed as well to how busy everyone is.

Well, it is an almost impossible job to get anybody to read it. People don't care, they don't see it as something they have much role in shaping or how it will influence their future, and it will, if only in the sense that people will use it as a defense for whatever happens from here on in, they will point to it. But I can understand people's reluctance to engage it, partly that there's a list of motherhood statements about the way we should be with nothing very concrete about how we will accomplish that. ... There is so much going on that it's hard to focus on something that abstract and to take it very seriously, and then
the question's, where did this come from, did this come from any process that involved any one else but management so in what sense is this created by a process?

Some people say they are cynical about the process; some people say administrators are defensive when people respond to the plan.

I was in the part that gave input and we put all this stuff in. They [administrators] were defending it quite strongly, their particular version of it so I don't know why they had to be there, you know. The other sort of thing, I just thought it was just crossing "t"s; there wasn't a whole hell of a lot ... I think that brought out a bit of my cynical or skeptical side and I really thought, do we get to participate in the nuts and bolts of this after we get through this motherhood stuff. I know it was more than that but at the same time, I didn't feel that I was really getting to participate in the real specifics. ... I don't know, but I will say that I really felt the presence of the administrators in the room quite strongly and sometimes a real kind of defensiveness that .. well, it didn't inhibit me but another person ... it sure inhibited him ... he didn't say any more for the rest of the meetings.

Some faculty who once were active in the Strategic Planning process are not active now. Some of these people use a word that recurs above: cynical.

I was part of the plan or committee last year; the plan was largely drafted by management, though there were study sessions or whatever, with wide participation. I feel quite cynically like it's a bunch of words that management will use to say this is how they've arrived at where they're going, seems like it's taking a lot of time ... people aren't talking about the real issues.

One person speaks of lip service.

I was part and parcel of, initially, of it and I was really pleased ... but, in the end, I don't know if anything's changed in the plan [after all the input]. ... That's where I talk about lip service, I wonder is that's what it'll turn out to be. ... It may not have been the intention but in the end I'm not sure that the voice of faculty and staff was in line with what management saw and I think that's why people aren't responding. What was I reading?... All the responses of the strategic plan [go in] and then George's going to write it and just
the way it was written, what's the point then, why ask us, and that may not have been the intention but it certainly was how I read it and the direction from the government, this is not a blame on George or management, it's the direction they're given, when you've got x number of dollars to work with.

One person says that people feel intimidated in the presence of administrators.

In that strategic plan process, we felt that a lot of the decisions were made and you could disagree but the other side was trying to defend it so that really constrained the discussion. ... You had a group of people who sat down and wrote most of the document ... and they really had to go through this process where everything that they'd laid out was being questioned ... and consequently, they responded, I sensed, in a controlled and negative fashion to any new suggestions and input. And also ... I went there feeling that I would have some input on the document, not that I would debate whether the commas should be here or whether this should be item one or item three. ... After one or two meetings you began to realize you weren't going to .. the agenda was sort of set, the parameters of the agenda, and at times those meetings were .. quite difficult for people. Some people were intimidated by people and the kind of responses from the people who were originally involved in the process. (S: the administrators?) Yeah. ... Those strategic planning meetings, I thought, I don't think this is going anywhere, I've got other things to do.

Many faculty have had no formal role, past or present, in the Strategic Planning process. They have access to written materials, including minutes of meetings and to early and later drafts of the plan, which were widely distributed. They may or may not seek information from those who are committee members. Many say they are not paying much attention to the process. A number of non-participants critique the process, however.

Probably with the (transition to the) university college, there's a need for expediency and if I could see anything happening that could circumvent some collaboration and
consensus practices that we've had in the past .. for example, there's a fair amount of criticism about the strategic action plan. When I saw that, that did not strike me as the way things had been done in the past. There was some participation but not the kind that I would think would normally be involved in preparing such a document for this organization.

There was a stage, there were representatives from all the different departments that went to work on the strategic plan. Those representatives thought they were going to start making a strategic plan and instead they were given this document and then they met for months, for quite a long time, but all they were doing was refining the words in the document that was originally set.

Many faculty comment unfavourably on the language of the plan. One person says the language gets in the way of understanding the document.

The plan is a good plan, if you take the idea and the concept of it, but it was so difficult to read and to understand that I tend to think, oh, forget it. It was too much a commercial industrial mode, not an educational mode in its presentation but the content of it and method of implementation is a little optimist [meaning the intended increase in FTEs which the plan specifies over the next several years is unrealistic]. I don't think we'll do it in that period of time but overall this college has a very good reputation for being prepared for whatever comes up and it's true too.

Another person suggests the language implies a particular style of management.

The document was unacceptable in that language ... just totally inappropriate to an educational organization. God knows how any organization could operate on basis of that language unless you have just a command institution, where management functions like high priests and says, of course, this is meaningful, it means whatever we say it means.

One person explores what is troubling about the language used in the
The strategic planning process: I don't like it. well, I do and I don't. I think planning is important; I don't like that they've hired outside consultants who are fitting us into some sort of template that is represented by a computer program they've used, a bunch of universal language. We get fit into a mold that exists in a template that exists on a computer screen. the jargon, we end up being, we make a product. There's a very materialistic kind of philosophy industrial products and threats is negative language to express challenges. I'm not so sure I like talking in jargonese because it tends to change the thinking and it tends to structure the thinking along binary roots and I tend to see a lot of middle things where you have threats and opportunities and everything gets divided. I think it is no accident that a long time ago, in the early days of computers, there was a decision to be made whether a computer would be analog or digital, and the decision was made to go digital, which is binary switches as opposed to analog. seems like a lot of the thinking that comes out of our computer aided thought processes tends to be digital type thinking as well so I think this is an example of that.

The perspectives people present on strategic planning are considerably less diverse and less ambiguous than those they present on participation as a general theme. They also are somewhat less ambiguous than those people present on budgetmaking. Among the faculty who are or have been participants in the strategic planning process, no one speaks as if they see the process as participatory. Cynicism seems pervasive in these accounts and is stated clearly by some faculty. Within this group, one person speaks of a breakdown in democratic process; another offers the striking image of a steering committee struggling to keep up with something already in motion. Active faculty speak of the rank and file having little input and of the difficulty of getting people to read it, to take it
seriously. Among the faculty who have not been participants in the strategic planning process, some people make comments that seem to confirm that most people have had little input to the plan, have not read it and may not take it seriously. Among faculty who comment on the strategic planning process, many express concern with the plan’s language. One of them says that the language is important because it structures the thinking.

**Participation: Interpreting What People Say**

In this section, I attempt to answer the question, What does participation mean to people at Multisite? I develop my answer as I work among (a) what people say about participation, (b) the questions I have about participation, including those with which I began the second phase and those that emerge as it proceeds, and (c) various concepts that seem useful.

I begin by looking at participation in the past and over time, under the heading, (i) Meanings Over Time. I explore what limits the expression of the theme, under the heading, (ii) Constraints on Participation. I work with other topics that concern meanings, including the budget and strategic planning processes, under the heading, (iii) Participation In Context. Each of these
subsections is both analytic and interpretive; I become more interpretive as I proceed.

Meanings Over Time

I come out of the first phase puzzled by what participation means to people at Multisite. In this section, I begin to interpret what they say about participation in the past and in the present. I do so, under the headings of (i) Participation in the past, (ii) Multiple meanings, and (iii) Evolving and equivocal meanings.

**Participation in the past.** When people speak of the early years, they speak of being deliberate in creating an institution and in shaping its social structures. They speak of establishing a participative approach to decision making. They speak of magic, charm, pride.

I'm always amazed that even through thick and thin, that there's some thread, it's almost a magical thing, it's like we all want it to work, it was always there, it's like a soul. (S: Nicely expressed.) Yeah. ... It was there in the early days, it was something like we're special and we can weather a lot of things and it was there when we were small. (Rita)

We could go to a faculty meeting or even a union meeting and there'd be maybe 80 people there and you'd know everybody and the union president who stand up in front of the room and talk to everyone by first name. ... An introductory lunch, where everybody gets welcomed back, would have been almost like a family meal before. ... As a place to work, part of its charm before and part of what gave us the underlying energy was the fact that everybody knew everybody. (Hal)

Part of that autonomy we had was our creativity and there is a lot of pride that goes in with that, and I don't mean being proud or ego, pride in our jobs ... pride of the accomplishments and we're that kind of people here, we're proud people here. (Barb)
When people speak of the early years and the way they did things, I hear the quality, the feel, of a saga. A saga entails a system of belief historically grounded in common effort; people share a special sense of an institutional self; a good share of people come to hold in common a credible story of uncommon effort and achievement (Clark, 1980). The sense of highly valuable place and performance develops; an emotional loading is added so that a sense of romance and mystery turns a formal place into a deeply beloved institution (Clark, 1971, pp. 500-1).

The idea that a saga entails emotional loading, that is, that the story represents a strong emotional connection between the teller and the institution, helps me understand my impression that the gaining status story did not have the "feel" of a saga. The story of the early years, in which people establish their participative approach, has the emotional loading the status-gaining story lacks. It has warmth and engagement. It has the related senses of specialness, of achievement, of beloved place. This emotional loading seems to answer reasonably well why the comment that Multisite is better than any other college sector institution recurs. It explains the taken for granted nature of comments that assume institutional success and superiority.
The refrain of "we're still better than the rest" sometimes refers to the institution generally, to its management, or to the retention of community college values. Barb, for example, says “we got it made” in comparison to other institutions in terms of the quality of interaction (p. 209); Adam says Multisite is “in better shape than the other institution” because of leadership at several levels (p. 208). Jane comments on success in retaining community college values.

I think people really believed in this [ideal of social purpose], and have done their best to follow through on that. Of course, it's becoming increasingly difficult; as the years have gone by, money's not available and you have to start turning people away ... I think I see that happening. I hope we'll never entirely lose sight of what we started with out in the beginning, and I think this college probably does a better job of it than lots of other colleges. (Jane)

The story of the early years evokes powerful images of the good old days. The early years were not just of period of positive affect and wonderful achievement, however. According to some accounts, and consistent with commonsense expectations, some people were excluded from the "in group." A “real” past that is more complex, more diverse, than the story of the past is not surprising. A saga need not be a strictly factual historic account; it need only be credible as history. It often is highly selective and exaggerated but it has important ingredients of truth and is based on historical reality (Clark, 1980).
Multiple meanings. When people speak of the early years, they speak of
decision making, of values, of a style of interacting. When I ask about
participation, people speak of decision making, of values, of a style of interacting.
I make two inferences from that pair of observations. One is that the
establishment of the college and of the participatory process are intrinsically
linked in the comments (and, I infer, in the experience) of many founding
members. The other is that participation is used in a variety of senses; it has
multiple meanings. Like most words, it has connotations as well as denotations.
Its denotation (consistent with Epp's definition, p. 177) concerns the degree of
involvement of organizational members in decision making.

Barley and Knight (1991) describe connotations as broader, more reflexive,
less immediate than the "standard" definition or denotative meaning.
Connotations have more encyclopedic contents associated with the expression's
use; they are layered on top of denotations. Symbols are connotatively rich and
typically communicate multiple meanings in a layered fashion. The denotation
may be the least important meaning among these multiple meanings (Barley and
Knight, 1991).

I am suggesting the following. The distinctive style of interacting and the
organizational values that are associated with participation have become
connotations of participation. Connotations such as a respectful manner and the maintenance of harmonious relations have come to be valued in and of themselves. For some people, these connotations may have come to be the most important meaning associated with participation. For some people, decision making may have become the “background” that is ignored; the participatory values are the “figure” that is the focus of attention.

This idea, of an emphasis on connotation, can help answer my earlier question (pp. 206), What does it mean to say that if the appearance of participation is all you can get, that’s better than nothing? What does it mean to say that we will always have the facade of participation and that’s a good thing? It means that the speaker values a connotation (or connotations) of participation, such as the style of interacting, in and of itself. (That I find these comments puzzling suggests that I expect to the hear the denotative sense of participation and feel confused when it seems not to be what is meant.)

Another way to approach the multiple meanings of participation is using the idea of perspective as Geertz (1973, p. 110) uses it, to mean a particular manner of construing the world. I am suggesting that as people speak of participation, they sometimes easily move among common sense, scientific, and “religious” perspectives (these are outlined above, pp. 74-75). I sometimes hear a religious
perspective when some informants' speak of the theme of participation, for example, and I often hear a common sense perspective when people speak of the practice of participation. People move “more or less easily, and very frequently, between radically contrasting ways of looking at the world, ways which are not continuous with one another” (Geertz, 1973, p. 120). This provides an answer to my question, What is a useful way to understand the pattern of comment in which faculty move easily among apparently inconsistent perspectives concerning participation?

**Evolving and equivocal meanings.** Meanings often are multiple; they always are evolving (Barley and Knight, 1991). The participatory values of respect and openness, for example, entail multiple and evolving meanings. At Multisite I infer that respect means people have high regard for everyone's work, regardless of organizational role; for everyone's perspective, regardless of whether one agrees with it; for everyone as an individual. It means all persons are worthy of special attention and consideration. Openness means that anyone can attend any meeting and participate in the discussion; that people are interested in their colleagues' points of view; that people are frank with one another; that most information is public, and so on. Respect and openness both are expressed in a process in which people take the time needed to hear from all who wish to speak.
Both values also underlie the style of interacting. These participatory values are rich in meanings and largely taken for granted. I hear taken for granted meaning, for example, when people hesitate for a moment when I ask what respect means, what openness means.

The primary sense of respect at Multisite seems to be positive regard for the other, regardless of organizational role. I infer it is grounded in the value clarification processes of the early years. I wonder, as I reflect on the first phase, if George and Linda use respect with a meaning different from that historic meaning (p. 176). To respectfully submit a modest proposal, for example, seems to me the language of overt ingratiatiation; it is language that affirms a significant difference in power. One might say that the phrase is a matter of style and not meant to be interpreted literally. However, each time it was repeated, I found it jarring; it had the ring of something that did not fit rather than the ring of a customary formality. The phrase is directed to those with hierarchical position; it implies deference to position. This seems a profound change from the founding sense of the value of respect: all persons are held in high regard. I sometimes hear evolving meanings when I hear people speak of openness or respect.

I wonder if I sometimes hear equivocal or slippery meanings when I hear people espouse openness or respect. (By equivocal, I mean subject to two or
more interpretations, sometimes with the intention to mislead or confuse. By slippery, I mean not firmly fixed, not to be trusted. I take each to entail ambiguity concerning intention.) Openness, for example, often is used to indicate that most organizational business is conducted in public. At a Board meeting, Peg reiterates organizational values and then says she will outline the union’s process in the in-camera session. Openness also is used to describe the availability of information at Multisite. George reiterates the value of openness, for example, in the first budget forum. Some people see the great amount of information available on budget as a positive indication. Others, however, seem to say all the details are not useful. One council member, for example, questions whether the group needs to deal with “the business details, the minutiae” (p. 119). It may be that the availability of information has come to be labelled openness, regardless of the relevance of the information. I wonder if the following fallacy underlies some of the positive comments: if participation means information, then information means participation.

Thinking of meanings as slippery, evolving and multiple may inform some specifics of language use I find puzzling in the first phase. One specific is the recurring emphasis on tone that I find pervasive at Multisite. During the budgetmaking process, for example, people speak of the spirit being right, the
positive tone, the constructive approach. I hear a commonality in these expressions: attention to form rather than to substance. That is, there is an attention to connotations, like style, rather than denotations that concern decision making; this shift to connotations suggests a change in emphasis over time. I wonder if confusion (or discomfort) with distinguishing form from substance underlies the apparent confusion between the terms form and forum (p. 123) that recurs. Historically, people say the organization often provided forums for participatory decision making. Now, some organizational events seem to have the form of those forums but do not provide a forum for participatory decision making on substantive matters. It seems reasonable to suggest that some people look at these events and are confused by what they see. It seems possible that some people may emphasize matters of form to keep attention from matters of substance. In a context characterized by significant change, it is not surprising that some central meanings are ambiguous, complex and shifting and that language use hints at some confusion.

So far, what emerges about the meaning of participation includes the following. Participation is a multifaceted phenomenon. Its facets include beliefs that concern decision making and values that guide decision making processes. Most of its facets (i.e., denotations or connotations) have multiple meanings; all
these meanings have been evolving over time. What participation or any particular participatory value means in a particular circumstance is often ambiguous and sometimes equivocal. Participation can be thought of as a rich network of meanings, many of which are taken for granted, at least much of the time, by most people. Indeed, participation can be thought of as several rich networks of meanings, in the sense that people may use any one of Geertz’ perspectives when they speak of participation.

**Constraints on Participation**

I come out of the first phase with the sense that people sometimes seem inhibited, that there are things left unsaid. I wonder what constrains participation. This is the question of the discrepancy between premise and practice; it is a question of meaning. In this section, I explore what factors limit the expression of the theme of participation, under the headings of (i) Present circumstances, and (ii) Other constraints.

**Present circumstances as constraints.** When people speak of participation in the present, they often speak of the time needed to attend meetings and to prepare for meetings. They often speak of fatigue.

Right now meetings are driving me crazy. I'm really happy for being participatory but I've got to fill in the time somewhere else ... but participating fully really means you have
time to prepare yourself for meetings. ... I'd arrive at these things [meetings] with no chance to think of it before unless I worked every evening and 15 hours on the weekend so that's the other side of that, I think that demand for more productivity, more for less stuff, I don't know how you can do that, something's got to go. (Andy)

The fatigue is just incredible ... most of us (active people) are too tired and too overwhelmed. (Leah)

The workload at the department or program level has increased; those demands seem to take priority.

I think a major thing for us (in this department) is the immediacy of our own work so we are less involved in the whole. (Mary)

You really become more focused on your own area and your own set of duties and responsibilities and less generally interested in what's going on in other areas and less generally feeling part of what's going on in those other areas. (Adam)

Faculty often speak of participating less; they sometimes speak of participating differently as well as participating less.

I'm observing some of the committee structures and I see people withdrawing ... I don't see that broad perspective, that broad base of participation or the quality of participation, I think because of workload, people are not going as well prepared ... people are saying no a little bit more often. ... the people who are most concerned are there at every meeting, the other people are saying, I don't have enough time for that and the broader elements of the college really aren't that well represented,... what I pick up from people is that there are some committees that are no longer working. When there's a committee that is going to have an impact on our department, I make sure I'm at those meetings and prepared. (Adam)

Faculty speak of a set of interrelated circumstances (i.e., time pressure, information overload, increased workload, and fatigue). I consider these
circumstances to be limiting factors (Opler, 1945, p. 201) that restrain the expression of the theme of participation. These limiting factors seem to inform (although not fully answer) two questions. Each concerns a particular dimension of what participation means at Multisite. One is the question of how participation is changing, of how participation in the present differs from participation in the past. The other concerns the apparent discrepancy between the premise and practice of participation. One of the ways in which participatory practice is changing is that people say the discrepancy between theme and experience is getting wider. People say they do not have sufficient time and energy to participate fully in matters that concern the whole organization. Many people say they are participating less and differently; they take part in fewer group processes and when they take part, they focus more on specific issues they believe likely to have an impact on their own unit.

However, the current circumstances do not explain fully the discrepancy between premise and practice at Multisite. The discrepancy existed, at least for some people, in earlier periods. Some informants speak of in-groups and out-groups in the early years (Leah, p. 189), for example; some describe themselves as not having a lot of clout (Andy, p. 205). I infer that there are other factors limiting the full expression of the theme.
Other constraints. In the interviews, I sometimes ask people about norms that guide what happens in meetings and about whether there are constraints on participation. The responses I get offer a consistent sense of how people respond in public forums and different and sometimes contradictory interpretations of that way of responding. Eva, for example, says she does what she thinks is safe.

You see, I always struggle with that, I'm not really sure what to say, because I don't know what the boundary would be, I don't know what is allowed, put it that way, I don't know what is possible and so I say what I think is safe. (Eva)

For some people, like Rita, the way people respond is familiar and deeply valued.

Certainly, it has a reputation of being harmonious and that is valid, that is true. ... I have never been to a meeting where somebody has like really yelled at someone or somehow really defamed their character, like there's boundaries, and I don't think in my experience it has never been crossed. (S: Can you give me some sense of what the boundaries are?) .. There is a sense of loyalty, certainly ... but it's an unwritten thing, it's not like it's a rule, it's more like ... an ethical concept, more, you don't do this, it's not good. It's not just it's not good manners, it's not respectful and somehow that feeling of respect is there. ... It's almost like a belief system that you've incorporated somehow. (Rita)

For others, like Cindy, it is stagnant and in need of change.

I've always found it too sweet for me, to the point that people are afraid to make waves because you don't want to upset this superficial feeling. That's going to go, I know it is, and I'm for it. I would rather people be honest and say what they feel and progress can be made. ... If you do something that upsets the boat you know that you're putting the knife in the administration, they're great people, really nice people and you don't want to upset their dream. ... There's the fear you don't want to hurt somebody. ... Sometimes it's better to say something .. got to be cruel to be kind, because people as individuals are so nice .. decent, good people to work with, but not always perhaps making the best decisions in
the position they're in so you have this, this is a really nice guy but if he's making a mistake, there it is. (Cindy)

Leah sees a deliberate strategy in some of the "niceness."

We're very nice to each other around here but I'm not sure we should be as nice all the time. ... Some people cultivate that as a way of, if you disagree with me, you're not being nice to me and I'll feel persecuted, so that's a deliberate strategy there. (Leah)

A few people, like Leah, make explicit that members with non-participatory agendas can exploit values like loyalty, trust, and respect. I infer from what I see and hear that values integral to the theme of participation prohibit some responses, at least on the part of many people. These participatory values underlie norms that restrict response and hence are one of the constraints on participation.

There is a comment that seems to challenge my inference. Someone says, "if you hit the right issue, you'll find very few boundaries" (p. 216). However, the same informant also says that when people are unsure "whether your enemy is within or without," they will tend not to oppose that which they wish to oppose. To avoid showing opposition when the situation is ambiguous means to avoid challenging most of what is happening much of the time. I am suggesting that although some issues (e.g., closing the book-store, p. 217) may trigger relatively strong response, much of what happens is guided and constrained by well
entrenched cultural norms that encourage a non-confrontational approach. (The book-store example is interesting. Although it may be an exception to the norm of nonconfrontation, it is consistent with a number of other entrenched norm. A staff member’s job was at stake, for example; also at stake, practically and symbolically, was service to students and community at a location sometimes seen to be neglected.)

One way to understand the development of these norms over time is in terms of the idea of an organization as a clan (Ouchi, 1980, as cited above, p. 156). In a clan, members learn traditions, all of which are implicit. This is distinct from bureaucracies, in which members learn rules, some of which are explicit. In a clan, members are socialized to share common values and beliefs; these are the basis of implicit social control. Clans do not depend on contractualism or surveillance; they achieve a high degree of discipline because members are socialized to believe that the individual's interests are best served by serving the interests of the whole (Ouchi, 1980, citing Kanter, 1972). Clans provide great regularity of relations and may be more directive than more explicit mechanisms; they can be very efficient in mediating transactions (Ouchi, 1980, citing various authors).

I hear a focus on the interests of the whole in Jay's comments.
I think most people who work here, if not proud, are [at least] very very pleased with what they find here. ... I wouldn't say there haven't been egos, there is always egos, but surprisingly low, the amount of problems. ... People have been more than willing to back off for a higher principle ... like teaching. ... When we say people have the interests of students at heart, I don't think that's lip service. (Jay)

I hear a clan's degree and form of discipline in Andy's comments.

I think gossip was a pretty big social control factor in this place, that's the one thing I would say. That was a fairly .. one of the main means of social control. .. Rules are really pretty well adhered to in a level, in the sense of how you deal with people in meetings or situations in a professional, not a personal way .. it's in a sense saying, well, the dark side has to be, you know, put under control. (Andy)

I also infer that there are factors other than cultural norms limiting participation at Multisite. Some faculty say that one's organizational role (whether faculty or staff, whether academic or non-academic faculty) is associated with whether one participates. Some faculty say this may be a matter of who gets listened to as well as who feels comfortable speaking. Some faculty say when they speak, they may get no response. They interpret this to mean it is futile to speak.

Even if you object, nothing. ... It goes on deaf ears. ... I never ever felt comfortable, speaking up in a large group at this college. At Inland College [where informant had previously been faculty member] I was also on committees and I always spoke up. There, you certainly wouldn't do anything to upset anyone there because they would come down on you ... but if you wanted something, you put a good argument forward. Here .. I don't know why I don't do it, I'm not afraid of being punished here, like at Inland. When I came here I tried to do it the same way and I was just ignored, they'd say well, that's nice, Cindy .. maybe that's the reason I don't do it, it's a waste of time. (Cindy)

Like, I think what happens to you, you're not liable to have someone say, geez that was stupid .. you know, or take you on. What you're liable to do is sort of .. I think, if you screw up it's really .. it's just a plop, it's just going to die. You're not going to get
affirmed as being bloody well wrong or not doing your home work or something else. It's just going to... (S: fizzle?) Yeah, and then consequently, sort of, someone fizzes their reputation and the informal place is affected by it, that there isn't a... that kind of thing, that spot to say, well, boy, you sure screwed up, however difficult that might may be, and the person can at least say, yes, I sure did. (Andy)

How one perceives one's skills in discussion may be a constraint.

I can go back to another experience [outside the college]... in which [the players] included prominent academics and lawyers. When we had a meeting... they would shoot down anyone who came up against them. The people just wouldn't [speak up],... geez, I'm not going to get chewed up by one of those guys, you know, and I think... some people here are not sure that they know the game, that they're not going to make a social faux pas, that they're going to screw up in some way so better to shut up. ... You need to have the savvy, and I'm not sure that everybody has the chance to get that. In other words, the people with the most experience have the most savvy and the people, as a rule, who are lower down have, including staff people, have had no opportunity to say how does this stuff work. A lot of guys in shipping and receiving don't know if they want to get something through in a meeting that they ought to... how are they going to do that, how do you get people's attention at a meeting. (Andy)

Exploring constraints on participation informs what participation means at Multisite, in the following ways. One meaning of participation at Multisite now is rooted in a set of interrelated circumstances (i.e., time pressure, information overload, increased workload, and fatigue) that have increasingly come to characterize the organizational context. People say that they are participating less and participating differently; they often are quick to point out these circumstances as limiting factors. Another meaning of participation is rooted in long term norms; these provide guidelines as to what behaviour is socially acceptable.
These norms underlie the comfortable and valued Multisite style and may underlie the atmosphere of restraint that pervades the budget period. These norms may limit the response of some individuals more than others; some people may be unaware that norms are limiting their response some or much of the time.

To this point, I have described participation as a rich network of meanings, in which the meanings are multiple, evolving and equivocal. There are meanings explicitly articulated and layers of connotations difficult to tug out. I also have described the practice of participation as constrained by a variety of limiting factors, some less obvious than others. I think I have made some headway in my exploration of the meaning of participation. I find this exploration incomplete and unsatisfying, however. As I consider the question of what participation means, images of people seated at budgetmaking and strategic planning meetings come to mind. I have the persisting sense that there is something other than those limiting factors, identified above, that limits participation. There is something else I need to tug out. I focus in on what is happening now, on how to understand participation in its current state.
Participation In Context

In this section, I continue to explore the meanings of participation. This exploration is organized to develop my response to the remaining questions I have about participation. It is presented under these headings, (i) An emergent theme, (ii) Organizational processes, (iii) “What’s missing?,” and (iv) Questions of meaning.

An emergent theme. Two comments stay with me; each uses the word subtle.

And change is often good, I admit that. ... We're now requiring more [academic] credentials from our instructors. ... The university college has emphasized that ... well, I guess it's becoming more professional, that's the only thing I can think of. ... (S: You might say that sort of thing happens over time, we become more concerned with credentials.) Yeah, but it's just interesting that it's happened [now], you know, we've been around for awhile. ... I have been asked in this last year more than I've ever been asked about credentials. ... That has somehow attached itself to the fact that we're a university college. ... I'm not sure, I say the directions come from management, which come from the board, which come from the government. When I review government documents, the intention, in fact, mandate, for the university college is to retain its comprehensiveness and be community oriented, that's why I'm talking about all these mixed messages. Things are very subtle around here. (Barb)

(Barb's comment assumes that universities emphasize academic credentials whereas comprehensive colleges do not; hence, an emphasis on credentials is a shift away from college values.)

It seems the task is endless, made worse by the demands that just don't go away so the pressure is on all the time to get up and deliver all you've promised because there are people lined up at your door ... so that puts pressure on you in an already complicated
situation. If you go from the ground up, you don't have the transition, but if you're
turning the place into another [kind of institution] you have to be fairly subtle about the
way you operate to accomplish that and in the end also I'm sure there are people who are
uncomfortable with it and there are other people who although they may be comfortable
with it are just feedup and frustrated with all the work. (Chuck)

I hear in Barb’s comment awareness of a strong hierarchical structure and
concern that those with hierarchical power may be less than straightforward about
their agendas. I hear in Chuck’s comment the assumption that when an institution
becomes a university college, those committed to the new institutional form must
be less than straightforward about their agendas.

I also hear in Barb and Chuck’s comments a hint of the “something more to
tug out.” From what I see and hear, I come to infer that decision making is
increasingly done on the basis of hierarchical authority. Leah says there is a shift
from participation to consultation, for example, and more authority vested in the
president.

A lot of things have happened in those, what, 15 or 20 years [since the college was
founded]. The government has taken direct control over programming that we once were
able to determine locally and as management has changed, the tendency among them has
been to centralization and management control. ... And that's not just a difference in size
... I guess it's a bureaucratization, also a difference in who has the right to make a final
decision. ... It's shifted in some ways from participation to consultation, which is we'll
give you a chance to tell us what you think and after that we [management] are going to
make the decisions. ... Management style becomes a key issue when there are cuts ... so
it's hard to distinguish between the president and the times and what management style
did this way or that way. .. Certainly I felt when George came there was more authority
vested in management than I'd been used to up until that point. On the other hand, he is
and he remains one of the better, more consultative in the system. (Leah)
Barb says people don't feel empowered anymore.

At one point, there were avenues in which our voices were heard by management. ... But then as we got larger and larger, physically we were separated from each other... left less of a voice. ... Certainly a part of it is the bigness but part of it is that the directions from the government have come down to management or to Boards. ... And that's the way it is, those are directions. Management and the board still want to hear us, this change is as big for them as it is for us, but because of the directions from the government and the funding ... people don't feel empowered anymore. (Barb)

Andy says there is less a sense of being able to get at an issue.

Even though we have the whole thing with participatory there's less of a sense of being able to get at whatever issue or problem or get it somewhere where it can be looked at or talked about ... ahh!, participation, now it comes to mind, when it comes down from administration then I get to participate but how do I get somebody to participate in dealing with the issue or problem that I've got and I don't know, how do I do that? (Andy)

Celia says there is a sense now that management will do what they want.

I think there's been a distancing between staff, faculty and management, so that for myself I don't get the feeling we can shape things the way we could before. ... We have a new board that seems to be coming up with lots of its own decisions, things starting to filter down from the top, things initiated by the principal, that sort of thing. ... [on hiring new instructors] Well, there was certainly lots of forums and lots of discussion .. but I think there was more of a sense that despite all the forums, whatever management wanted, they'd do. I guess part of my thinking on that is with this run-around about how necessary the Ph.D. was and who was insisting on it and because there was so many conflicting rumours about that. [Informant says some administrators said the university people were insisting on Ph.D.s but some university people said they were not, they would look at experience as well as academic qualifications.] ... Again we didn't, there were so many people sort of involved in that that you never talked to face to face ... it was just sort of us talking to management, management talking to everybody else and coming back and so even if our input was as important as before you didn't feel that because we were sort of at arm's length. (Celia)
I am suggesting that the belief that there is an increased emphasis on hierarchical authority can be seen as a theme in its own right. It is a belief or premise about how things are done, more specifically about how decisions are made. This belief I am calling a hierarchical theme affirms the priorities of the Ministry and the senior administrators. It is a belief or understanding that opposes or circumscribes the expression of the theme of participation. It can be termed a limiting factor or, more specifically, an opposed or circumscribing theme or a countertheme (Opler, 1945, p. 201). I shall call it an emergent theme, by which I mean a premise that emerges as increasingly influential in the context and that limits the expression of a traditional (i.e., historic) theme.

What people say in interviews provides a sense of how this shift from member involvement to managerial prerogative may have evolved. The organizational context seems to have been infused with anxiety over funding, with fear of cutbacks, for some time, at least according to some accounts.

When I started [mid 1980s] I could still sense that there was some .. still an effect of that period of cutbacks in '82 or '83 .. so I think that that was something that was a factor when I arrived. People were anxious about budget, they were anxious about money, I sensed that a little bit, there was some uncertainty. There was that .. that while some things had remained stable for some time, the issue of money was a point of anxiety. I suppose it was that people wondered, if this happened to us in '82, could it happen again, that kind of an angst. (Eva)
Andy speaks of insecurity, caution and competitiveness; he associates these with concern with funding.

I'm wondering if we tell any stories anymore. I'm not sure there's any time for that and I think we're really careful but then maybe not. ... I sense a fair amount of caution on people's parts in terms of .. you don't hear many people making .. statements. ... I think that people usually, like, there are things happening and people are expressing, well, that's a crock or boy, there's this and that. ... I don't hear people stating their opinions about the place, I don't hear people stating their anger or their disappointment or support either. The kind of .. is the participatory thing .. that everything is channeled, in other words, are we to some extent in this participatory thing, to some extent co-opted into some .. I mean, this does not suggest some diabolical sort of thing going on up there ... I just don't hear people making many mistakes ... I work next to the [particular department] here. ... They'll say, we're proud of this department, which is a strange thing in itself. ... Joking and stuff, that's changed, I'm not sure it has anything to do with the university college. ... I don't know .. I think .. people are just more cautious. ... When the crunch came and there were layoffs, rumours of layoffs, and then that's happened a second time ... and anytime you asked anyone how they were they said, very busy, very busy. ... everyone says this as if it were necessary to say that. That seemed to be, I must establish and prove to you that I'm very busy, everyone is saying that to everyone else. There's almost a, well, you couldn't be as busy as I am, kind of answer, a kind of competitiveness. (Andy)

Someone speaks of a decline in faculty influence and of a context in which people “pussyfoot” when dealing with those who allocate funds.

Well, management is making commitments to the ministry and we [union] don't know what they are. .. We'll hear about them but we've long ago lost any sense that we'll be asked what the commitments should be. .. Things are run by us. Being run by us is different than us being among the people at the table making the decision. ... I think our voice was very much eroded by those ten years [in the 1980s] of bashing education. ... The faculty as a group, as a voice in the institution, seem to be heard with a preface always, you have to watch out for these people, they're always out for their own interests. There was a time when that wasn't true .. I think that's made quite a difference to how people think about speaking on issues. ... But we're always on the defensive. ... People partly aren't there to join a collective decision making process or collective voice because they are .. launching a degree in 6 months. ... It's astonishing, lots of people have done it with no release time whatsoever, have done it on top of their teaching loads. It's a tribute in many ways to what's possible. (S: Have those people asked for release time and not got
it and they go ahead and do it anyway or..) Sometimes, sometimes they're told there isn't any and sometimes they get it, sometimes they don't. There doesn't seem to be .. none of that's discussed either, that's all in the dean's power. I think part of what's going on is that access to money and resources and therefore in some cases survival hinges entirely on the dean so everyone pussyfoots around the dean. ... I hear department heads complain about issues, like the 6 day week. ... Those issues are brought to them for consultation. [They don't say what they really think, when the dean asks for their response.] They say [to the union], well, we can't do anything. For goodness sake, 5 years ago, they would have assumed they had the right to speak to that issue and to decide it at a meeting, whether it was a good idea or not. (pseudonym omitted)

This hierarchical theme helps me to interpret the budgetmaking and strategic planning processes. I identified two related questions in the first phase. One is the question of how people at Multisite interpret the budgetmaking and strategic planning processes; the other, of how I can best understand those processes. To answer the first, I presented above what people say. To answer the second, I use the idea of this emergent theme.

**Making sense of organizational processes.** During the first phase, I observe the budgetmaking process. During both phases, I observe the strategic planning process. I try to make sense of what I see on the basis of what people say of their participatory process. That is, I use the denotative sense of participation (i.e., the sense of substantial member involvement in decisions) as an interpretive device. My observations remain a source of ongoing puzzlement; I do not see participation. As I reconsider those observations, I use the idea of an hierarchical
emergent theme (i.e., that hierarchical authority is the basis of decision making) as an interpretive device. My observations now seem to make sense.

In hierarchical decision making, the decision maker decides on the decision style, including who to involve and to what extent. One model of decision making, for example, offers the decision maker five levels of employee involvement: two levels of autocratic decision making, two levels of consultative decision making, and one of team consensus (Vroom and Jago, 1988). In the budget period, there seem to be at least two processes in which administrators decide on the level of involvement.

The first process occurs “off stage.” This is the process in which some administrators develop the draft budget plan. My information is that the drafting group is a subset of management; the group does not include those whose positions are eliminated. I have no information on what level of involvement, if any, occurred within this group as it prepared the draft plan. The second process occurs in public. It consists of the meetings I observe in which members of the organization are asked to respond to the plan. If these meetings are seen as forums in which the decision maker shares a problem with subordinates, the level of involvement can be seen as consultation that occurs in a team meeting (Vroom and Jago, 1988). However, if the meetings are seen as forums in which the decision
maker informs subordinates of the solution to the problem (i.e., the decision has already been made), the decision making process is autocratic.

How one interprets the budgetmaking process depends in part on what aspects of it one pays attention to as well as how one interprets them. Jim (p. 216), for example, seems to focus on the call for suggestions and the availability of information. The definition of the task can be a focus as well, as it seems to be for Andy when he says, “they knew we couldn’t find anything” (p. 215). Those who pay attention to the parameters of the discussion tend to see no substantive involvement of members of the college (other than administrators) in the decision making. “A lot of people said hogwash” (Andy, p. 215). The interpretation of no real involvement, of autocratic process, is consistent with the comments made by many of the faculty who comment on budget in the interviews. It also is consistent with the comments made by all those among my informants who were involved in the process. However, the style, the form, of the forums of the budget period seem to harken back to a period in which people say team consensus was the process of choice.

The Strategic Planning process can be seen as similar in pattern to the budgetmaking process. Again, people are asked to respond to a document and the decisions that it represents. Some committee members indicate that the presence
and perceived defensiveness of administrators inhibits authentic response. There is an ambivalence about these processes. They seem participatory in tone and in form; in most interpretations, they are not seen as participatory in substance. Yet, there is no public challenge.

I am suggesting that the budget and the strategic planning processes are in essence instances of hierarchical decision making. They can be seen as involving a degree of consultation or they can be seen as essentially autocratic. They cannot be seen as participatory processes, at least in the denotative sense. I am suggesting that the hierarchical nature of these processes is consistent with the idea that hierarchical values are becoming more influential within Multisite's network of meanings. This is consistent with many of the comments people make on what is happening now. It also is consistent with my suggestion that respect may be taking on a new meaning in the context, a meaning more compatible with hierarchical decision making than with member involvement. I make a connection between this idea of a hierarchical emergent theme and the idea of participation as a central cultural symbol, as follows.

I use the phrase, a central cultural symbol, with a specific meaning (Barley & Knight, 1992, p. 12). A symbol becomes central because it signifies and mitigates (makes less harsh or painful) contradictions fundamental to the society's
worldview. It enables cultural members to cope with contradictory forces that threaten the integration of a society. All societies have a handful of dominant symbols that become dominant by simultaneously connoting fundamental contradictions (Barley & Knight, 1992).

I wonder if the theme of participation has functioned symbolically to mitigate the organizational reality of hierarchical relations by signifying the contradictory force of egalitarian relations. Many faculty speak of respect for all roles and of egalitarian relations as characteristics of the culture in the past. Some faculty speak of respect and egalitarian relations as continuing; other faculty, however, speak of relations at Multisite as less egalitarian. Some faculty speak as if there has been a decline in respect for all; others are afraid there may be. I wonder if the decline in participation is associated with increasing tension concerning the nature of relations. I wonder if participation as a symbol increasingly fails to sustain the myth of egalitarianism.

“What’s missing?” At this point, a question identified earlier comes to mind. As I observed the events of the budget period, I wondered “What’s the matter; what’s missing?” The idea of something missing is made explicit in Andy’s comments on how things have changed.

I would say that what’s happened is that people have become busier and busier .. while its friendly and still informal to an extent, there isn't .. much time for, there isn't any slack to
speak of in the system .. there isn't, the kinds of stuff that takes place toward community building, in terms of the college community, there isn't much time for that now .. I don't think there's a whole lot of tolerance for people telling their story, I don't mean their personal story, I mean their story within the institution, where it used to be .. a bit more .. a kind of stuff or culture or maybe the whole society's changed that way too but there doesn't seem to be much of that but maybe that's just my experience .. it's almost .. not something that's easy to .. define but there's something that seems not to be there. (S: Is it something to do with the quality of interaction or the interest in one another?) Well, I think it is to some extent. (Andy)

The something that seems not to be there seems related to how people relate to one another. In other comments, Andy says Multisite was egalitarian in the past; he says it seems less so recently. It seems reasonable to suggest that the something missing for Andy is (or includes) egalitarian relations.

Egalitarian relations are intrinsically linked with the denotative sense of participation; they underlie the high degree of member involvement in decision making that people say was traditional. It seems reasonable to suggest that some people participating in the budgetmaking or strategic planning processes may have been confused by these processes; some people may have been wondering what was happening. Someone, for example, says about the strategic planning process, “that did not strike me as the way things were done in the past” (p. 222). Many people comment that these processes were not participatory. As an observer, I was wondering what was happening, wondering how to understand what I saw. Someone describes the budgetmaking process as unreal (p. 215).
This may mean she could not make sense of it, either. It seems reasonable to suggest that the old way of doing things and hence the old way of making sense of what is happening are a part of what is missing.

Related to the perceived decline in egalitarianism and involvement in decision making, there may be another facet of participation that is missing or in decline. I think I hear it in Jane’s account.

If we have a problem in [our department], I used to know exactly who to call and the best way to approach them, and probably what their answer would be, simply because I’d been here for so long. I got to know everybody. Now I probably have to look them up in the phone book. ... that will inevitably be different. We used to govern by chats in the corridor and verbal agreements and knowing how people reacted to things and being able to count on their attitude as one of cooperation but as we get bigger it will all have to be more formal and need to be negotiated rather than just discussed. ... People just don’t have time anymore ... and therefore it’s being left more and more to either administrators to just do it without consulting anyone or to a few people who may have time to go to the meetings who may not be the very best to do the job. (Jane)

Jane refers to chats in halls, the phrase that triggered the question of what significance, other than sociability, these chats have. People sometimes speak of them with a sense of loss. I hear in this account a link between these chats and the consensus building process. Jane’s account suggests a socially mature approach to conflict resolution. Conflict management surfaces in Jay’s comment, of “realizing confrontation is not the way to get things done” (p. 188). It also is present in what Jim and Eva say.
Oh, there's conflict [here], the difference I feel is recognition of the other person's views. It's a mature conflict .. which I certainly didn't find in industry. (Jim)

I know two people, at least, who are new here who came from very .. difficult situations in other institutions and each time they come to a problem, they're extremely defensive and you have to settle them down and say, this isn't a problem here, you don't need to get worked up, it doesn't matter. In fact we'd prefer that you didn't get worked up .. but at the same time they also have to understand that some things take a little longer here, because it's quite thorough and that's the sort of thing that I'm so afraid of losing because it's so special and that's why even if you get people who are complaining, they simply don't leave because they couldn't have it any better. (Eva)

The old way of doing things provided an informal, personal, patient process by which people built consensus and maintained harmonious relations. That approach may have worked so effectively that many participants were unaware they were “doing” conflict resolution as they chatted in the halls. The conflict management dimension of participation may be in decline; on some issues, it may be missing. During the budgetmaking and strategic planning processes, for example, it may be that the consensus-building processes did not occur. The decline of participation as effective conflict management may be associated with a number of factors. The traditional Multisite style required more time than seems available in the current circumstances. The lack of time to work things through patiently means people must either confront what they do not like or let it pass. The organization's traditional norms inhibit any comments that seem
confrontational. The increased emphasis on hierarchical authority inhibits any challenge to those with hierarchical position.

I am suggesting that the "what's missing" question can be answered by saying the traditional participatory way of doing things is missing, at least some of the time, for some people. What is missing or may be missing is a way of involving members in decisions, of managing conflict, of interacting with one another, of making sense of what is going on. In any substantive organizational change, existing value and meaning systems are altered (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 434). What is missing for some organizational members is a stable set of meanings concerning how we do things here.

I first wondered what was missing as I observed the events of the budget period. I wondered that again as I re-read my conference paper on the budgetmaking process. As an observer of budget events, I felt confused. I could not construe what I saw as participatory practice. I was uncertain (at that point) whether people at Multisite saw those events as participatory. My conference paper captured something of what I saw. It left out a great deal. What was missing from my paper was an expression of much that was puzzling, ambiguous, and uncomfortable.
Questions of meaning. To this point, I have described participation as involving a system of beliefs that entails layers of meanings, some less obvious than others. I have described the premise of participation as something which is constrained and limited by various factors, some less obvious than others. I have said that as a way of doing things, it is changing or may already have changed significantly.

(I have some ambiguity concerning the essential nature of this change. It may be a shift from democratic process to autocratic process; it may be a shift from a process that seemed democratic but concealed the centrality of a small group of faculty who made the critical decisions, in which case the shift is, at least in part, from one in-group to another.)

When people speak of participation in various periods, two contrasting images emerge. One image of the founding years, for example, suggests all were involved in decision making; the other, that there was a select in-group that made the decisions. One image of the status-gaining period is of an emergent consensus; the other, that a real consensus may never have developed.

When I consider organizational processes in the present, two contrasting images emerge. One image of the budgetmaking and strategic planning processes is reassuring. It is of an organization moving to approval of a budget and of a
strategic plan with little overt conflict. It entails events and processes that seem, by and large, public and well-mannered. This image exudes consensus and clarity; it is the strongest image in my conference paper. The other image is troubling. It is of processes that are presented as participatory but do not seem to permit substantial involvement. It is unclear to what extent events and processes entail agreement, opposition, or any intention to deceive or coerce. It suggests dissensus and ambiguity. When I observe public events, the consensus image is central; dissensus seems to lurk in the shadows. When I speak with individuals privately, the two images keep shifting as to which is figure, which is background.

Some degree of discrepancy between premise and practice always seems to have been present. However, the idea of an increasingly strong hierarchical theme suggests an increasingly wider discrepancy between the premise and practice of participation. It also suggests profound changes in the organizational context. Hierarchical position as a source of power entails more influence, for example; membership in the organization, less. It is a context in which people "pussyfoot" when dealing with those who allocate funds, in which one sees a competitor for funds where one once saw a colleague. It is a context in which people perceive more centralized decision making and less participatory decision making. In an odd sort of way, these changes seem both well concealed and just
ready to burst the surface. It seems too subtle for an observer to identify; it surfaces as people reflect privately.

The meaning system that I call participation is complex and dynamic. It has multiple meanings; it entails different and sometimes incompatible images. It is changing from what it was in earlier periods; it is not entirely clear what it was, and for whom, in earlier periods. The context in which participation is expressed and constrained is changing. One critical aspect of that context may be a re-negotiation of the meaning of participation. The budgetmaking and strategic planning processes may be specific forums in which that negotiation takes place.

Ultimately, strategic change is a negotiation process. ... In this negotiation process each group tries to sell its vision of the future to the others (sensegiving), even as it is engaged in the process of trying to figure out what the others want and to ascribe meaning to it (sensemaking). Realistically speaking, the upper echelon members can dominate the definition of the negotiated reality because of the influence they hold over possible visions of change (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 446).

In this chapter, I have focused on what people say about decision making. Beliefs and values that concern decision making do not occur in isolation, of course; they exist within a web of organizational meaning systems. They are intertwined with networks of beliefs, including those that concern social relations and institutional mission. I move on to explore the themes of family and mission.
In this chapter, I describe and explore the theme of family. By this, I mean I attempt to understand what people at Multisite mean when they say they are family. I come to this exploration as follows. As an observer in the first phase of the study, I notice that people use the word family much more often than I am used to hearing it in a workplace setting. Some people say, "we're like family here," for example; others say, "we are family." As an interviewer, I notice that when people speak of early periods, the phrase "we were family" recurs. Family is a theme in the ordinary language sense: it is a subject that recurs in discourse.

Early in the first phase, I ask a number of faculty members what family means. They say, it means caring, it means we take care of one another. Later in the first phase, I have a conversation just before a budget meeting. An administrator, who seems upset, says, "what you've got to understand is how
difficult this is, it's important you understand how unusual this is. ... It's the people... it's the pain. We're family. We take care of one another." It seems as if he is distressed and frustrated that there is nothing he can do for people who are laid off. It seems as if the belief of family may have implications for action.

Over time, I begin to wonder if family also is a cultural theme in Opler’s (1945) sense: an understanding or premise that stimulates, controls or guides behaviour.

I am more tentative in exploring family as a cultural theme than I was with participation. As an interviewer, I ask people general questions about their organizational experience and listen to what, if anything, is said about family.

This chapter is in three sections. In the first two sections, which primarily are descriptive, I present what people say about family in the past and in the present. In the third section, which is interpretive, I explore what people say and attempt to understand what they mean by family. I find that as I attempt to describe and explore what people say about family, I am describing and exploring what people say about social relations and how they are changing.
I quote Keith, as he talks about the status-gaining period. He speaks of concern with losing comprehensiveness and with losing “that sense of warm community, ... we were nurturing, like a family.” Hal speaks of family and warm feelings, too; he also speaks of stability, of shared attitudes, of a social network.

There really was a long period of stability. It became a family operation and that produced a lot of really good warm feelings. Despite the fact the union and management tussled over things, I think it was perceived by most people here to be a very, very good place to work. ... That's always what I remember, when we started thinking about being a university-college, because I remember our college being small, compact, relatively stable, lots of people with the same kinds of attitudes and feelings and all that kind of thing and people were friendly. There was a fair social network amongst faculty and staff, a tremendous number of things to do both between campuses and within campuses. ... Before, we were able to offer a fair number of courses and a broad range, that's changed a little. ... More difficulty in arranging places to park, in arranging .. all that stuff that comes with growth and probably a depersonalization in some senses of the whole operation. We could go to a faculty meeting or even a union meeting and there'd be maybe 80 people there and you'd know everybody and the union president would stand up in front of the room and talk to everyone by first name. Now we're looking at potentially four hundred. ... We went to an introductory lunch [this September], where everybody gets welcomed back .. That would have been almost like a family meal before. Now I can sit at a table with 10 people and I won't know 6 of them. So that's really changed. There's some sadness in that. As a place to work, part of its charm before and part of what gave us the underlying energy was the fact that everybody knew everybody. There were good and bad people around but everybody knew everybody. ... It was friendly .. it changes the nature of the institution. (Hal)

I am interested that Hal associates energy with knowing everyone. I am uncertain how to understand that. Wendy, like Hal and Keith, also uses the word warm. She speaks of feeling supported.
I suppose the thing that impressed me the most at a personal level ... [describes particular personal situation], and I went to talk to the dean about whether it was possible to work a bit and he set up a whole series of possibilities of work we needed done and [he said] here's what it looks like [pick what you want]. It was the most generous thing. Kelly (the dean) was very generous and warm about it, and I thought, in a university, I would have got a cold stare on this one because you didn't even admit that you had children. I really felt supported when I needed to be, both by my colleagues filling in spaces and by the dean. (Wendy)

Marg speaks of the early days in terms of being involved in decision making concerning new facilities. She says, “I could say I want this and it would happen. It was wonderful to be in on ground floor, being asked what you wanted” (p. 188). Marg also speaks of faculty being involved in various tasks outside their regular duties and sometimes including their own family members in organizational workteams.

In those early days, everything was so relaxed. Here's a story. When we left Princess school, our new site at Main Road was not ready, so we moved to George Street School. We threw everything into a pick-up truck. The Dean said, when you're ready to go, just go. I had to arrange the move, so the students and I carried everything out. The students had their cars, and we all physically went together to George Street and set up our own tables. ... We had to initiate all these things for ourselves; there was no structure. We laugh; now we have to fill out three pieces of paper to request moving things from one room to another. ... The last move was over here, in 1983. We came in here in May, the long weekend, the hottest day in the year it turned out to be, high 90s. We didn't drive the trucks, by then they had a little more [provided]. Our shipper and crew, they drove the rental trucks. ... All of the families helped. It was a family move. We all brought husbands and kids and had a family day. ... We were in little groups so everyone could get acquainted with people [spouses] you didn't know. ... They put on lunch and a big BBQ at night. It was wonderful to me. ... The next day, my husband put the [classroom] tables together. We had to have classes next day. ... It was like family. We knew everyone. It was wonderful. (Marg)
Pete describes a setting in which everyone knew everyone and "rubs shoulders" with everyone.

It was really rural. Everyone knew everyone. There was more of a balance between South and North in terms of size. To most of us who came from a university setting, the comprehensiveness was different, and really nice. We worked with, rubbed shoulders with, people from office careers, farriers, trades. College wide days were really college-wide days; everyone was there. It was a different side on education than Tradition U, a new experience and for most of us, quite a nice one. (Pete)

The image that emerges from these accounts is of an institution where social relations were warm, close, friendly. In all this congeniality, of course, not everyone liked everyone else. This did not seem to matter. Hal, for example, notes above that there were good and bad people around; he implies that the friendliness meant that that was not of much concern. Rita says something similar as she speaks of how nice it was when everybody knew everybody.

Oh yeah, everybody kind of had their place. You may not like so and so but everybody kind of found a place where it felt okay. It became a part of the program that so and so didn't like so and so. It was no big deal. (Rita)

I find something puzzling in the way that interpersonal friction is acknowledged but quickly dismissed. There is a sense that exceptions do not test the rule. Also, in all this sociability, there is a sense that some social experiences
are less than pleasant for some participants. Andy talks about gossip as a social control and talks about roasts and how sometimes, a nice place can be mean.

I think gossip was a pretty big social control factor in this place. ... It's in a sense saying, well, the dark side has to be, you know, put under control as it were, and I would say the dark side has come out .. I mean it would come out in the roasts, when they roasted somebody. We don't seem to be roasting people anymore. ... One instance I remember was a person ... he was involved with one of the staff people in a romantic kind of a liaison relationship and everybody knew about it and eventually he left and they had the roast and of course they made a number of .. comments that were relevant to the relationship. (S: And they wouldn't have dared say that in another context?) No, that's the roast but it wouldn't have been said in the context ... but he didn't really know how to handle that, he was a mild little person and people started circulating all sorts of jokes about it and stuff like this, he wasn't able to, he just got scapegoated, he wasn't able to mobilize any support or tell people to .. you know, so those things kind a took place. ... I guess that's an interesting thing, I'd never thought about it before, because it's such a nice rational friendly kind of a place, but it can be mean, yeah, it can be really mean, yeah, when you say it, that's a funny way to put it, but it can be mean. (Andy)

(It seems worthwhile noting that Hal and Rita are talking about the early years; the roast Andy describes occurred later.) When people speak of the past, they speak primarily of warm, supportive social relations. They sometimes speak of stability and shared attitudes and values. They often speak of knowing one another; they speak of friendships in the workplace that extend to the personal sphere. Not all interpersonal relations were positive; this does not seem to have mattered much. In what people say, I hear an understanding, a premise, about social relations. It guides how people are to act with one another. Being family means everyone is warm, friendly, sociable and supportive.
Family: Speaking of the Present

In this section, I present some of what people say about social relations in the present. People speak about changes in interaction and in what attributes of the individual, such as having graduate degrees, are seen to convey higher status. People also speak about attitudes to different types of programs and of an increase in competitive attitudes and they sometimes speak of their feelings about social relations in the present. I describe what is said on these topics, in the order given.

Speaking of Changes

When people speak of social relations now, they often speak of changes, including changes in style of interaction and an increased emphasis on status and how it is conveyed.

Changing patterns of interaction. When faculty speak of their experience now, they often speak of how social relations are changing. They sometimes speak of less congeniality, less inclination to socialize, less time to talk to people.

(S: What other things come to mind that have changed?) There was congeniality and trust too. It used to be, I mean, I'm sounding like my parents' generation .. but the college was a family. It consisted of staff, it consisted of students too. .. There were pub nights and everybody would go, so that trust and that familiarity more than anything. (S: People mention a lot knowing everybody and the informal thing. Is that gone or changed or
localized?) It's localized in departments and in campuses, like, you don't talk to people in North Campus, heavens. (S: And that's fairly recent .. or has it been developing?) It's been developing, and now I see too a sense of territory really being a part of the university college. (Barb)

(S: Tell me something else, something that's changing, just whatever comes to mind.) ... Some of this is related to the university college and some of it is related to aging. You're 14 years older and people change and we're in an area that's high change. I do feel we are moving to a little more centralized model of administration. ... I'd say there's, again, it's a function of age, in the good old days, there used to be pubs on a Friday night. We'd get to know one another. There isn't quite that feeling of people wanting to spend time together. The people in 1980 didn't have young children. They were, you know, 30 or just married. That excitement of being together in an adventure isn't there. You're in this institution and you slot in somehow and you've got your private life out there. (S: Do you feel some sense of loss when you remember the "good old days" or is it just different?) I somehow feel I have less time now and that could be an age thing .. and I somehow seem to remember having time to think about things and develop things but I think I forget how hard I worked then. There is that whole thing of the excitement of starting something .. on the other hand I wouldn't want to go back and do that now. ... I think about the good old days, I just think I had more time to sit around and talk to people and that's true. You've got more students, you can't talk to them all. .. Just in terms of class size, the number of people around. (Byron)

Some faculty (like Byron, above, and Cindy, below) say that people talk to one another less.

At that time (before gaining status), I didn't feel that there was any undercurrent. It was very open, it was very comfortable and people seemed to have time for each other. I'm not saying people didn't have anything to do. We were all extremely busy. There seemed to be more time. Now, I see people I haven't seen for some time and they say, "hi, I'll catch you later," whereas before there was time to talk. I don't know if that's because we are in a different building. Maybe. No, it's not the building. It's just that people are so busy. The planning and the organizing, this whole university thing just came in without any release time. ... You take on more committee work just to make sure if it's going to happen it's going to happen right ... and it just snowballed and snowballed. (Cindy)
People often say that in the old days they knew everyone; sometimes, they say that now there is not that cohesiveness.

(S: That kind of activity [“family move” to new campus] that builds that sense of group, do you see it now or different forms of it now?) I think it’s missing. I really think it is. We go to, we don't have that many meetings, maybe two or three a year, where faculty and staff get together for a general meeting or some other meeting and we're so large. We look around and don't know the others. We don't have the same cohesiveness and I don't think there is any opportunity to. (Marg)

Comments on not knowing everyone recur so often and sometimes with such a degree of emotion, that I wonder if there is something important under the surface of those remarks. As the pattern continues, I begin to ask about it.

(S: Tell me what the college was like when you started.) It was fairly small, friendly. When you went in the coffee room, even as a new person, you'd recognize many of the faces. ... I think everyone agrees nowadays you go to a function and you don’t know half the people. You can’t put a name to a face and place them and say, oh that fellow works in Business. You can’t do it. Just who are all these people; I guess that one works here. ... Sometimes it’s just a sea of strange faces. ... I'm sure you do lose some of your team spirit when you increase your size quickly simply because you don't know the interactions and personalities so there's things you lose. ... We have been fairly cohesive. Whether we lose that as we get bigger, I hope we won't but I think maybe we will. (Lynn)

You are kind of nostalgic for when it felt like a real family, because in the olden days, that's what it was. So now you go to something and you don't know 40% of the people. ... (S: A lot of people comment on how they used to know everyone. Can you articulate what the loss is when you go from a world in which you knew everyone to one in which you don't?) I guess just more impersonal and .. but what it also makes you do, it brings the old people really close together. .. Really hanging out and all show up at the same things ... (S: It's interesting to an outsider how often people say, “but I used to know everybody,” and it seems that it's so meaningful to people, but I'm not clear I've got exactly what the meaning is.) It's that small town feeling, an ambiance of security. (Rita)
**Speaking of status.** Faculty sometimes speak of changes in what seems important to people. Some faculty say that some colleagues are more concerned with their status.

Now, I don't know whether it's because we expect it to happen. There is a certain amount, in my opinion, a status thing, a "them and us" type thing, developing. Like, for example, we get mail to us labelled professor and this type of thing. Now we are getting professor on office doors. It's just something that never happened here; we've always been very low key. I'm afraid I'm feeling we're getting these dominant people coming in. .. Looking at programs and their heads, thinking of those programs that are converting over to degrees, I've noticed that Peter [head of a program that offers a degree] is getting very arrogant, really arrogant. I just find there's an arrogance. Not so for Ken [another head of a program that offers a degree]. With Peter, there's a certain arrogance that wasn't there before. (S: Are you connecting that to offering degrees?) Yes. I noticed Peter started to dress differently. I think he'd like to see us use the title of professor. (Cindy)

Some people speak of having a faculty club.

There really are some who would like to see it become a real university, complete with faculty club and all that stuff. There's nothing wrong with that. I remember years ago, some faculty saying, clearly feeling guilty, we need a faculty club; we have to get away from students sometime. .. So there's very clearly that kind of thing around here and when it became a university college, that popped a cork out of it. .. Wow, here we go; a faculty club; I want Ph.D. on my license plate. That's happened. Some of my old colleagues, been here since the 1970s, and they think, wow. (Hal)

Some faculty speak of bigger egos.

If it's a community college [rather than a university college], there's a lot more interaction. Academic egos aren't so large. Now it's "I'm a professor now" [kind of attitude]. .. (S: Just so I'm clear on what your saying, you're seeing the people coming in for the university sections as that college professor type? ) Oh, even the people who have been here for a long time, now it's the university (emphasis) college, our ego is larger than it was. (S: Can you elaborate on that?) Well, they feel they're a part of the expansion, and sure they should, but that doesn't mean they've become a better person or
a better instructor, or worth any more money than they were. It’s strictly ego. (S: And you see that as characterizing some of the people in the university courses?) And in administration: "I was instrumental in the growth." (Bob)

The comment that academic credentials are more important now recurs.

Scholarly activity .. that's being more encouraged. That's going to change us a little bit. .. It's certainly spurring me on to keep on getting credentials to keep a job. .. When we become a university college, people become more aware of who's got what. .. I find it a little disconcerting. ... I always take courses, but I like it for its own sake. ... There's a real snobbery there when it becomes a .. (S: Paper chase?) A paper chase, or a credential race. Like [saying] so and so has his doctorate, has he [someone else] got his Masters yet? (Rita)

Some faculty speak of a tension within departments concerning academic credentials.

It's not that the people here aren't still nice and friendly. It's just that as we become bigger the opportunities to interact have become fewer or at least more superficial. You're on countless committees, and you don't have the same sort of dynamics and I do sense that there is a tension between those who have Ph.Ds and those who don't, between those who are approved to teach upper level and those who are not, which ties in to Ph.D. (S: And that's related to the change to the university college?) Definitely, absolutely, I did not see any of this sort of thing before, and I would say it's largely being perpetuated by those instructors who not only have Ph.Ds but are flaunting them. .. A small group who I used to get on well with who all of a sudden are saying things in conversation like, oh, but you don't have your Ph.D., when I try to discuss the relative pros and cons of hiring [persons with] Masters who are good teachers. They just slam the door: we have to have Ph.D.s, we won't have credibility. (Susan)

A number of people comment on the suggestion that faculty consider using the title of professor instead of instructor.

There was a memo that came around, [asking] is it time now to change our name? We have been called instructors up to this point. Should we now be professors, [the memo
asked]. ... We have one feeling, we like the idea of instructor because it does keep sort of
equal feeling from person to person, like you're dealing with a colleague, there's no
hierarchy that's really set up. We all are instructing at different levels but we all are
instructing but once you put in the different levels, ... there is potentially a prestige or
some kind of barrier set up from one to the next. (Ada)

It [whether to take the title of college professor] has never been an issue before. We'd
always been instructors but I can see that that might become a hot topic. It hasn't as far as
I know .. then there'd be people calling people doctor. There was encouragement to use
your title and stuff. (S: Are people doing that?) I don't know; I haven't heard much about
that but it wouldn't surprise me if that did come. I'd be disappointed because those are the
little things that fracture the structure and set up distinctions and the barriers firm up in
time once you get labels. I hope we don't start to get special labels, we want to think of
ourselves all as instructors. (Celia)

Some faculty say that some people are more likely now to ascribe lower
status to certain roles within the institution. Some people speak as if the respect
between faculty and staff is eroding (e.g., Barb, p. 209). Some faculty also
express concern that there is, or might be, less collegiality among faculty. Some
faculty, however, speak as if collegiality is already conditional and likely to
become more exclusive. Walt, for example, says that there is a very collegial
relationship with faculty, one in which people are not categorized as academic or
careers but then he adds, “although there is a distinction with the trades group,
partly because they are in the other building and also an attitude about higher
learning. My feeling is there will be a split eventually” (p. 211).
The idea that some people believe some programs and their instructors have higher status comes up again and again. It is unclear if this is a change in attitude or a change in the degree of attention paid to a well-entrenched attitude.

Speaking of Attitudes

In this section, I report on two categories of comment that recur. In one category, people say they or their colleagues seem to value some programs more than others. In the other, people say they see a competitive attitude displayed more often within the organization.

Attitudes to other programs. In some comments, like Walt’s, a distinction is made between Trades and other programs. Jane also speaks of the attitude some faculty have concerning Trades and their instructors.

I don't think it [attitude of looking down on Trades programs/instructors] is a major problem even now but I think it has always existed and probably has exacerbated itself now but I don't see people being really unhappy. It's always existed; it's just human nature. If you've got the welding guys out there with their dirty fingernails, and then other people sitting in their offices thinking deep thoughts, they are always going to think they're superior. ... That [attitude to trades] is another thing [like the attitude to staff], we worked hard at that here, just as we had faculty and staff in the one group. I think people consciously worked not to have that kind of feeling, if possible, but .. (Jane)

Some faculty who teach in the Trades programs speak as if they feel under valued and as if they think academic programs are overvalued. They speak as if
this has been going on for some time. One instructor speaks of broken promises and of feeling token.

There has always been a wall between academics and trades. ... Trades seen as cussing and swearing and nice academics. ... The emphasis has been so much on the academic, on higher education. ... When we'd received the status, they announced 20 or whatever millions to go to status and redoing the North campus and when it was broken down, there was to be 4 million for the Trades programs and that didn't come through. And it dragged on and on and they started talking that they should expand the trades on another campus. And we lost, first of all, the 4 million had been promised and it came down to more like one and a half which really got everyone kind of upset. And then management and the board decided we don't have space here to expand trades and they should look for a separate campus so they can use that money somewhere else and they will work at getting trades off campus. Well, shit, here we go again. We did have something going for us and again [we're] knocked out again. The walls started to build again. ... If I look at what the college had done in the last 10 years in the way of trades, nothing has expanded. They have not brought in any other training. [It] may be cruel saying that, but we do feel at times token to keep this place going as comprehensive. (Trades instructor #1)

Another trades instructor speaks of hard feelings and a lack of support within the organization. He says devaluing of trades is getting worse within the broader context as well as internally.

Oh, yes, the push for degree granting status has taken up tremendous time, resources, that possibly ought to have been shared with other groups, and other groups gave their support to the expansion to degree granting and are not getting that type of support back for enhancement of their programs from the academics. There's a lot of hard feeling about it. (S: In Trades specifically, or in Careers?) I can only speak for trades but I know people in other areas that feel pretty much the same way. It hasn't been all positive, that's for sure. It gives us more of an alienation; resources have been drawn from other areas to put in that direction. We've probably all made some sacrifices; our programs have made some sacrifices and hence our students. ... The marginalization stuff never stops. We have a heavy duty mechanics instructor here who teaches out in the weather; he really has no building; the students are out there in the rain and the snow and the mud and certainly mechanics have to do some of that. I fail to see where its an ideal learning situation. I would like some of the language, history, math courses, to trade places with him in January just for a day and see how fast we get a new building. ... The excuse we hear is
that heavy-duty mechanics have to learn to work out in the weather. Yeah, but once they're a heavy duty mechanic, they probably don't need the manual as much as students do. ... (S: It feels like a bias to trades?) Bottom of academic barrel, and yet it's the heavy duty mechanic who's paying the salary of the arts instructor at UBC. (S: Do you see any change in that bias?) It's getting worse. Trades people in Germany are as respected as doctors or lawyers. Well, lawyers aren't respected; as respected as doctors or accountants ... because of their contribution to society and no one can do without them. ... That's not recognized here. (S: And that's not changing?) It's getting worse. ... Our counsellors, even, ... if student says he's intending to do trades, the counsellors says, why would you want to do that when you could go and take university. ... Counsellors don't have work experience; the only thing they know is school. ... I don't want to give you the idea that I'm against people getting doctorates and masters; they're certainly necessary; I don't know that they're right for everybody. (Trades instructor #1)

In some comments, the distinction that is emphasized is between vocational and academic programs. Marg contrasts past and present relations between these two units.

They [faculty in academic programs] do get more holidays and PD. Now, I'm sure that's something they'd never admit to. ... (S: Is that a source of resentment or just a difference?) No, no, we understand; we joke about it. ... We do feel at times we're not considered. They don't think we're here because the academic meeting schedule is designed for the university college, the academic instructors. If we go to meetings, it's really difficult to fit them in. We go but we have to cancel classes. ... Our students have a difficult time participating in functions because our noon hours are different. ... That's probably more of an irritant to us than anything. We think they probably didn't consider us when they scheduled this for a certain time. There are a lot of us, like all the Trades area, are in the same position we are, and ABE and other Career areas and we are on a different schedule. ... When the academic instructors started in Sept 1975, that was when the academic came into the college, before that, we only had the odd class of math at one school and English ... we all had a retreat for one weekend at UBC, although we were very small, maybe 50 of us. That was wonderful. We all felt that it didn't matter if I was a vocational instructor and you were academic. It was just a wonderful time for us. We all got to know one another. It was casual. ... We were in groups and changed and mixed around ... and we'd go on walks and eat together. We were all a very close-knit group. (Marg)
In some comments, the contrast is between two sets of programs in one institutional unit: those that grant degrees and those that do not. (Both instructional units, Academic and Careers, offer both degree and non-degree programs.) Cindy says programs without degrees are ignored now.

There was a feeling from the Career areas that remained two year diploma programs that they were, in the process of the transition, being ignored. And that is a feeling that I and I know a great number of my colleagues have had since. That we are no longer .., we do a great job and in the past there’s always been .. deans and other people saying .. they were here once in a while and talking to students. Stroking, we call it. Everybody needs to be told by somebody that you're doing a good job. That used to happen and it doesn’t happen anymore. That’s quite hard to live with. You tend to be forgotten. ... I don't feel as important now in the whole, personally. Gosh, I'm a person that needs to be stroked and I don't feel I am as important [as I was]. (Cindy)

A competitive attitude. Some comments suggest a more competitive attitude pervades the social setting. Some people speak of an increased rivalry between campuses, for example.

[In the old days] the intercampus rivalry was never more, I don't think, than something we kidded about. (S: What is it now?) Oh, I think there's more of it now. The development of the South Campus, at a quicker rate, more buildings, facilities, programs, has left us somewhat in the shadow, in a sense. (Hal)

Some people speak of competitiveness as a internal tension now.

I would say, I do detect a little bit more of people looking around to see what others were getting. (S: Competitive?) Yeah, yeah, things that maybe didn't matter before, now the resources are important. ... You can see it seems there's more at stake now. Is your career, your department, your area, going to jump or are you going to stay back and sleep? So there is a little bit of that. ... The college kind of came out of grass roots participation in [immediate area around] North Campus. ... South Campus got that
building in recession time and it sort of pulled a lot of energy there and then that community started to grow and North didn't get facilities and it's been left to molder, and it's just now that we're getting something going [here at North Campus] that should have happened 10 years ago. ... The groundswell of support that happened for the university college (at a series of public events) happened at North Campus. That has been the history of the college, yet more and more things are pouring into South, so there's that kind of tension in the institution. (Byron)

Some faculty speak of an increase in the sense of territory and a decrease in a sense of the whole organization.

You used to know everybody and people were mixed in in offices so you knew what Office Careers were doing, for example. You talked to everyone in every discipline and kind of had a good overview of the college. That's not possible anymore and maybe that's why it's harder to get into making decisions. You just don't have the global view anymore and you just kind of end up in your own little area and trying to push your thoughts out from there and it's not that clear .. where they should go and you just sort of feel like everybody is scurrying around .. trying to be the first one before they get left behind. (S: In terms of?) In terms of getting programs, in terms of getting people, in terms of getting resources, getting space, it's more of a fight because it's not like everybody sitting down together and working it out. It seems like a big organization where you're in territorial fights and that kind of stuff. (S: More competitive?) More competitive. (Celia)

Some faculty speak of increased competition within divisions concerning allocation of funds. Some people say that the highly competitive budget process within one division is seen as unfair.

The feeling sometimes is that those who exert more pressure on the dean will receive a greater budget. ... This sometimes causes negative feeling. I don't like to see the budget process as a game. I would rather have a clear educational rationale for saying this is what's needed. It seems like it's arbitrary decisions. ... It's not perceived right now to be fair. ... (S: Is it a divisional matter or campus wide?) Well, first of all, it wouldn't affect the academic area in the same way because they don't need huge capital budgets. It's very competitive in the Career area. It creates animosity .. so it's a bunch of private enterprisers. .. I don't know how else to describe it; it's terribly competitive. (Eva)
Some faculty associate increased competition with a lack of unity among faculty. Leah, for example, says that people no longer feel they are "in the same boat" because they are in competition with one another.

The first place that people hived off from what was a fairly unified faculty was in the Careers area. ... (S: Tell me about roasts.) Yes, most people didn't ever leave here once they came so any one who did leave was generally retiring or moving to another job but typically we were a very unified community and it was a way of, whether you liked somebody or not, launching them in the world. We haven't done one for a long time and I don't think we'll do one again. ... I don't think we all feel like we're in the same boat anymore. I think we feel like we're competing, that we're defending territories. I really do blame a large part of that on ... on the way the Careers area has developed because it, it is really like a feeding frenzy. Unless you get your degree proposal in first, it won't get funded. It's like fighting for a place in the line up for the drinking fountain in kindergarten; it bothers me deeply. ... Academic [the Division] has now adopted the same model, the same kind of competitiveness, the "we'd better get it for ourselves, we'd better watch out for ourselves," this kind of stuff. ... The best department head is the one who can round up the most resources, not the one who speaks to general issues and that's a big change. (S: Sounds very political.) It's like a corporation and I don't like corporations. (Leah)

Speaking about Feelings about Social Relations

Among those faculty who speak of social relations, there is near consensus that the sense of family is gone or much weaker in the present. However, a few faculty members seem ambiguous on the matter. Rita, for instance, speaks, above, of the olden days when it really felt like family, with the implicit contrast to the present, when it does not. Later in the interview, however, she moves from
speaking of the sense of specialness to speaking as if a sense of family, albeit a dysfunctional family, remains.

And I guess when I talk about it outside of work ..., because at work, you're saying, oh, isn't it awful, do you know there's a grievance there, but you know, through it all, it's like a family. Like you can fight, and it can be a little dysfunctional but it always ends up being whole still. ... I don't know if it's an attitude, I find people are quite appreciative of each other and they express that appreciation quite a bit. (Rita)

Rita's comments, that people remain appreciative of one another, are not typical. Many of those who describe social relations in the present say the warmth, the closeness, the sense of family is much weaker, if not lost altogether. However, those who agree that family is much weaker do not seem to agree on how they feel about that change. Some faculty, for example, express a strong sense of personal loss with the perceived decline in the sense of family.

It couldn't be more exciting but there is a sense of loss that is disturbing. We had a sense of family. We were friends. It's still true, but so true then: we were friends first, colleagues second. (Luke)

Some speak of a sense of loss when they speak of not knowing people.

I have a feeling of a sense of loss. I just don't .. really don't know people. I probably know more people than most. And of course, if you're coming into the organization, you don't know nobody and I guess it would probably be years before you got to know a significant number of people outside your immediate area. Contact with administrators, I don't know if I've seen George this term; I might have seen him at a public event. I don't see Kelly (dean) very often, even though he and I are in the same building. Of course .. they (administrators) all spend their time at North Campus. (Pete)
Some faculty seem to come to a statement of loss slowly and perhaps reluctantly.

And now we have, what, 60 new people in the last 2 or 3 years so I'm going around and I'm going to see people I don't know all the time. ... It's being really nice meeting a lot of people. There has been positive stuff come with this. All I'm saying is that you have this difference, I'd say from a gut level statement, that's been .. that's been quite positive and there's some .. (S: Some sense of loss?) .. Don't know, it's just that I'm calling up people I don't know more often .. and I'm starting from that point with them, not having a face to put on who I'm talking to although I don't think that's always a disadvantage. (S: So not knowing people is not with a sense of loss but more just a difference?) .. I sort of .. I think .. I do see it as a loss. .. I do. I see it as a .. I just happened to .. be reading a piece in a magazine before I came here and it had to do with comparing more primal people with ourselves with the sense that everyone had a story. Everyone knew who they were, relevant to everyone else and, as a place gets bigger and it takes on a more .. perhaps .. things when people talk about scholarly activity and so on. Even the terms are sort of splitting a bit. That isn't necessarily true. Scholarly activity, some people go to some pains to say it's for everyone but I don't think anyone has really bought that. .. Anyway, my thing is again is of a kind of community, in the sense of being known, for better or for worse, isn't always .. [there]. (Andy)

Some faculty see relations as different but do not necessarily experience that as a loss. Some faculty seem uncomfortable or impatient with the topic.

First of all, [there's] always a problem with growth, whether it's becoming a university college, or not. When I came here, the place was only a few years old, small. You knew everybody on both campuses; you went to lunch together, had social activities together. It was a small, close-knit friendly group. As we get bigger, especially in South [Campus], over the years, I walk down the hall and there are people I don't know and as we get bigger that just gets .. I'll use the term worse, to the point I walk down the hall in North and I don't know 70% of people and I don't mean students, I mean employees, faculty and staff. I wouldn't label it good or bad but it changes the flavour of the institution for me and we don't have as many social interactions outside the college as we used to and we don't go to lunch with each other as we used to. Probably don't have the time as we used to. (S: Is there a sense of loss with some of that or just a sense of change?) Yeah, I guess it's a sense of loss. I guess the term we would use [would be],
well, in the good old days. That would seem to imply that these are the bad old days. I
don't necessarily .. it's just different, it's different.. So what else? (Alan)

A few say they have no such sense of loss and seem comfortable with that
statement.

Smaller to bigger is always going to be a change, for one thing. [It changes from] more
folksy, informal, to more formal. There are all these people I don't know, people I
probably won't know. (S: Is there some sense of loss in all that or not?) No, my social life
mostly isn't built around my work, for one thing. That makes a difference. Some people
really depend on work for their social life; they probably relate more to the organizational
culture in that sense. I relate to it a lot in the sense that I make input to a lot of things.
I'm not a member of a lot of committees but I tend to respond a lot, you know, these
things: respond if you have anything on this issue. (Matt)

People describe social relations in the past primarily as warm, personal, and
positive. Many people say social relations are different now. Many people say
they do not know many of their colleagues, for example. Some people say people
socialize less, talk to one another less, spend less time together. Some people say
relations are more competitive now; some people say there is more value placed
on status. Some faculty are unhappy with these changes in social relations. Other
faculty express no particular concern or regret. There seems near consensus that
social relations are changing; there seems to be multiple interpretations on what
that means.
Family: Interpreting What People Say

In this section, I interpret what I hear about social relations and how they are changing. I hear the sociological idea of community, often labelled Gemeinschaft, in what people at Multisite say when they speak of being family. I hear a decline in social relations of a Gemeinschaft type and associated with that decline, I hear a rise in social relations of a Gesellschaft type. I suggest that Gesellschaft values and beliefs constitute an emergent theme that constrains and limits the expression of Gemeinschaft values.

The Idea of Gemeinschaft

The cultural theme or premise I am calling family is a set of beliefs that concerns social relations and the values that underlie those relations. When asked what being family means, people say it means that they are nurturing and take care of one another. When people speak of being family, they often speak of knowing one another, of socializing with one another, of being friends. I hear the sociological idea of community, often labelled Gemeinschaft, in what people at Multisite say when they speak of being family.
Community or Gemeinschaft is a type of social union that is rooted in shared values and traditions and characterized by a strong sense of solidarity (Nisbet, 1966; Nisbet and Perrin, 1970). The prototype of all unions of Gemeinschaft is the family.

The kinship group serves as the archetype of Gemeinschaft. It is by all odds the oldest form, and its spirit, its sense of communal membership, even its nomenclature, tend to become the image of other, nonkinship types of Gemeinschaft (Nisbet and Perrin, 1970, p. 98).

Social relationships have a Gemeinschaft character when they encompass human beings as full personalities rather than in one or another of the roles, taken separately, that persons may hold in a social order. Communal relationships are characterized by a high degree of personal intimacy, emotional depth, moral commitment, social cohesion, and continuity in time. There is a focus on the whole: the whole person and the unity of the group. Gemeinschaft draws its psychological strength from levels of motivation deeper than those of mere volition or interest, and it achieves its fulfillment in a submergence of individual will that is not possible in unions of mere convenience or rational assent (Nisbet and Perrin, 1970).

The idea of community helps me understand much of what people say about the good old days. I hear the coherent set of values associated with the
sociological concept in much of what people say about relations in the early years. People speak positively of stability, of people tending to stay once they join. They speak of satisfying social networks; they interact more as full personalities than as institutional roles. Work tasks are combined with social activities; workmates socialize extensively outside of working hours; Marg's husband assembles furniture for her classroom, for example.

I hear the emotional depth that characterizes community when warmth recurs as a descriptor. I hear this depth, as well, in the apparent delight with which some people speak of events and activities in the early years. I hear community in the emphasis on friendship and a friendly style. Luke's comment on being friends first, the comments on pub nights and various other social activities, illustrate that relations were seen as friendship. Associations of Gemeinschaft are most perfectly interpreted as friendship, Gemeinschaft of spirit and mind based on common work or calling and thus on common belief (Nisbet, 1966, p. 47-48; Nisbet and Perrin, 1970).

I also hear community in Hal's comments on charm and energy and in the accounts that feature people working long hours on various instructional or community projects. Gemeinschaft tends to transform all labour into a kind of art, giving it style, dignity, and charm; the worker gives himself limitlessly, without
calculation of units of time and compensation (Nisbet, 1966, p. 77, citing Tonnies). I hear moral commitment when Jay says, "I wouldn't say there haven't been egos, there is always egos, but surprisingly low, the amount of problems. .. People have been more than willing to back off for a higher principle."

I hear of the less appealing side of community in what people say, as well. Community is characterized by informal social controls, such as mores and gossip. What Andy calls the mean side surfaces in his story of the roast. (The period in which that event occurs probably is later than the time when sense of family is strongest. It illustrates informal social controls.) I also hear in a story about layoffs something of the emotional costs that can come with communal relations. (No pseudonym used because the department may be identifiable.)

For a few years, we heard rumours of cutbacks and we just kind of went along and one day our department head was called into a meeting and she came out and we were cut like that. And we had no warning. We had rumours, but we'd heard rumours for years. We didn't think about it being the serious thing it was, so we did lose .. (S: Sounds as if that was quite difficult personally for people.) Oh, it was. We are a small department. We were very close. I don't think any of us ever had an argument. We loved being together; our meetings were always a joyful occasion; we had good meeting rapport; we'd talk about what to do. .. We were all good friends. Whenever there was a college function, we would always be together. We had a farewell luncheon [for those laid off]. ... We cried all afternoon. It was so hard for us.

Comments on the down side of social relations underline that Gemeinschaft is "a neutral, descriptive term as far as ethical preference is concerned" (Nisbet
Examples of genuine Gemeinschaft include the totalitarian nation, extreme social caste, and the ethnic ghetto as well as the village, the family, the parish; it would be a mistake to label Gemeinschaft as necessarily “good” (Nisbet and Perrin, 1970).

The idea of community helps me understand some of the comments I find puzzling. It helps me understand why people so often comment on not knowing one another, for example. I take these comments to indicate the loss of the sense of social intimacy that is central to communal relationships. This sense of intimacy is associated with trust, with security (as Rita says, that small town ambiance). The comments on relations being less friendly, more impersonal, seem to be an expression of that loss of intimacy. In a related way, I take expressions of sadness with not knowing others to imply sadness with the passing of communal relationships. What people say about social relations in the past evokes a strong Gemeinschaft image. A coherent set of motivations, values, and beliefs underlie social relations, a set that emphasizes cohesiveness, commitment, caring. What people say about social relations in the present, however, suggests that communal values are less often expressed.
The Decline in Community

In much of what people say about social relations in the present, as summarized above, I hear a decline in the sense of family. This raises the question of why that has happened, of what limits the expression of the theme of family. Some faculty suggest that the socialization of new people underlies whether the sense of family survives or is lost. Many faculty speak of various circumstances in the context that they take as limiting factors. Some faculty speak of changes in values and attitudes. I consider each of these factors to understand better how social relations are changing.

Socializing new people. Socialization of the new people seems a central concern for some faculty who are concerned with retaining the traditional Multisite values. Some people speak as if the relatively large number of new people means they will not be socialized to the old way.

My worry is .. that if we had only a few new people each year, they would very quickly get socialized to the old ethic but because they are coming in so fast and in such great numbers, I'm not sure if they are being socialized into the old ways. (Jane)

Some faculty, however, hope the new faculty will be socialized informally.

I think we're only able to handle a certain number of new faces each year; but I think people have adapted quite well and new folks who come in have probably each have been able to find 2 or 3 faculty members to connect with. It just takes time; it may be more difficult. (Eva)
Some new faculty speak of being sensitive to what is in place.

Because I'm new, I don't want to upset the applecart. ... Other people who are new have the same philosophy and that I think makes other people who've been around for a while realize that we're not here to threaten or change .. what is good here. (S: So a sense of respect for what's in place?) Exactly, exactly. (Jim)

Yet, some new faculty say there is little formal or informal socialization;

some say they associate mostly with other new people.

The feeling among some faculty members is that they really liked the college when it was in you know, some warehouse or whatever, at that time there were 40 people on the payroll, sort of thing .. so I think some people feel threatened by it [addition of degree programs]. ... In terms of any deliberate attempt to socialize us, I think they stuck me ... in an office with a person with a totally different discipline, which is fine ... so we're both in the academic so we have common interests there, we're both Ph.Ds, so we have common interests there, so I think that was an obvious attempt to do that. ... I don't have any problems with that and really, in terms of getting integrated into the institution and all that, other than the orientation at the beginning, you just sort of assimilate. ... I've heard that some people are threatened by the research and Ph.D. aspect of it to me that's just some sort of paranoia I'm picking up ... yeah, I guess in terms of socializing or assimilating, there hasn't been a problem. I tend to be more involved with people who are sort of new here versus the people who have been here sometime. (Lew)

Some faculty of long service suggest that they or their colleagues may have cold feelings toward new faculty.

And it feels .. almost, what would the word be? Possessive. Possessive of what you had, like this is ours, how come you're here, you're under 30. All the rest of us, average probably 47, 48 .. It was ours; it was small, and we liked it that way. It's hard to let new people in. (S: Do you think new people feel that?) I'm sure they do a little bit, I'm sure they do a little bit. I think it's something we really have to watch for because, the old boys club or whatever, old people, that sense of .. not wanting the new guy on the block to come in. That feels threatening. It feels a little bit cold. (S: Something you don't want
to share there?) Yeah, possessive was the word that really came to my mind, so that must fit. (Rita)

Most comments on socialization assume the individual comes into a department with colleagues who have extended service with the organization. However, some new faculty come into relatively new departments. Mary links her department's relative newness with the lack of a strong sense of the whole institution, for example.

Most people [in my department] have been here for just a few years or less. Most of us have a broad belief in being involved in the community, our professional community. We involve ourselves and students in various associations; we have a good sense of the outside professional community but I don't think people were ever immersed in the whole college community because we're not here that long. ... We like to feel part of whole; we have members on the committees. A huge priority for us is degree development. (Mary)

It is unclear what socialization to social relations is taking place. The communal values of being warm and nurturing seem not to be expressed in what some senior faculty say; they do not seem to emerge in what new faculty say about their experience either.

Other contextual circumstances. Many faculty speak of a set of interrelated circumstances (i.e., time pressure, information overload, increased workload, and fatigue) at Multisite. In Chapter 5, I labeled these as limiting factors that constrained the expression of participation. These same circumstances
recurr as people speak of the changes in social relations. Cindy (p. 267), for example, says people talk to one another less, have less time for one another, because of workload.

Another circumstance is the increase in number of faculty in recent years. People often speak of this, sometimes when they say they no longer know most people. Lynn speaks as if cohesiveness is likely to be lost with increasing size (p. 268). Some faculty speak as if size is a factor in the change in social relations. Some faculty speak as if size need not be a determining factor, however.

I think just with any community that grows numerically, you can't possibly know the names. Now, I meet new people at the lunch [at beginning of new terms] and I have difficulty remembering their names two weeks down the road. (S: I guess you meet them and then don't see them for awhile.) Exactly, in the old days, you'd bump into them everyday. When I was new, everyone knew my name in no time. ... One would like to think a family could continue to grow and still maintain cohesiveness but I suspect it will be increasingly difficult to do that. (Susan)

[In the old days] there was a sharing of values across the faculty that I don't see now as much, a kind of group spirit that I don't think we have any more. It has to do somewhat, although not totally, with the increasing numbers. ... There are more processes, committees, layers,... much less unity among the faculty on those issues. (Leah)

There are other changes in contextual circumstances that people link with changes in social relations. One is rooted in the low turnover at Multisite: many faculty are in their mid to late forties. Some faculty associate middle age with increasing personal demands (eg, Byron, p. 266). Another circumstance that
characterizes the institution in recent years is expansion into new facilities. Some faculty say there is less interaction because people are spread out in different buildings or in different campuses. Some faculty say even physical arrangements within a building can mean less interaction.

That's how I perceived it: a real emphasis on community when I came in. I think in some ways, this building, the physical structure changed that. The coffee room is way up in other end of building .. so faculty and staff from this area sometimes go up there but you rarely see a counsellor or someone from the business office up there .. and the business office coffee room is way over there and people said if they go in, all these faces look up at them, like, what are you doing here, because it's so unusual for someone to show up. ... The structure doesn't draw people to its centre for their free time, there is no central point. We used to, I knew everybody here very well, and anytime I had to talk to anybody, I could do it on a pretty informal basis. (Andy)

Some faculty suggest that those activities essential to establishing and maintaining a sense of community are missing now. Pete speaks of the past and credits management with "getting us together with some frequency and in a context where some culture building could take place." (p. 189). He says that those kinds of events no longer occur.

There used to be faculty meetings [with everyone present]. I don't think there's been a faculty meeting in years and partly we've just got too big and partly they just became a PR exercise by management. The odd time, when an issue came up that faculty were interested in across the board, it often became quite heated and produced initiatives that I'm sure management was not pleased with at all, so this doesn't happen now. (Pete)
When Pete speaks of meetings that no longer occur, he acknowledges that the increase in number of faculty makes meetings of the whole less feasible. He implies another change, however: a change in the values of management. I hear something similar in Andy’s comment on the lack of opportunity for people to tell their story (p. 278). Andy also speaks of time and of the absence of “slack;” then he wonders if there is a lack of tolerance for people telling their story. I hear in Andy’s comments a distinction between apparently objective aspects of workplace experience, such as time allocated to tasks, and subtler aspects, such as the values that underlie listening to one another. I am suggesting that a shift in underlying values as well as the other contextual circumstances is undermining the expression of community.

**Shifting Emphasis On Values**

When social relations have a Gemeinschaft character, people feel cared for and supported. They have a sense of belonging and of being valued as persons. Some faculty say they feel less valued, less secure; they have less a sense of belonging. Cindy, for example, says she feels isolated and less important within the institution. Marg speaks of not being considered and Bob of not feeling supported.
I hear a number of comments in personal conversation and in some interviews that suggest people feel less secure. Cindy (p. 274), for example, seems to feel insecure about whether others recognize she is doing a good job. Some faculty seem to feel insecure about retaining their jobs. Some faculty say they worry about how secure their programs are. Some faculty are engaged in various outside business or community activities that are, or could become, another source of income. Some faculty are teaching part-time at other institutions; they sometimes speak of “just in case.”

I talked to one person in particular that had a foot in another job, just in case this didn't really work out. He didn't have an upper level degree, a Ph.D. So I think some people feel somewhat threatened by it. Cases I know where people have been teaching some upper level courses, yet don't have a Ph.D. Someday they are not going to be able to teach those courses. (Lew)

Some faculty say that there are few jobs out there.

My sense is that there's a lot of kinda reconsideration and the problem is that's very quiet because there's no place else to go. Academics are being laid off all across the country. It's terrible out there. There are lots of inquiries about jobs, like, cries for help, from Alberta and a lot of institutions. (Leah)

Some faculty speak as if concern with job security is a central concern in the context now. Andy speaks of associations among layoffs and insecurity and competitiveness.
Anytime you asked anyone how they were they said, very busy, very busy. ... There's almost a, well, you couldn't be as busy as I am, kind of answer, a kind of competitiveness. ... One of the factors .. since '83, when people first actually were losing jobs. I think that what happened was that some sort of insecurity came in that changed things. Prior to that, once you had a job in an institution like this, you had a job and everybody thought that's the way it is. Of course, they found out that's not the way it is, and I think the trust level too, in the sense of .. not really knowing what .. and I think that stayed with us. So the changes have kept a little mild, maybe I'm projecting my own stuff on other people, but I think a little bit of a mild paranoia about what's coming down. So you change to university status and because there were two sets of job loss, the first one and then there was the [particular department] where they cut a number and then the third one was last summer with the cut of the administrators and so the focus was diverse enough that no one would know where the heck the next one might land. (Andy)

Consistent with what Andy says, Dan associates cutbacks with less attachment to the institution. Dan, like Leah, takes the absence of “roasts” to indicate a decline in sense of family. (I note that it is Dan alone who makes that link, although he speaks as if I had suggested it.)

(S: Someone said to me that it's too bad that I hadn't been to any of the roasts and then the person said, “I don't know if there's been any lately,” so tell me about roasts.) I guess the last one I went to was Mickey’s. ... It got a little vicious, that's what I felt. I was uncomfortable at his [roast] with some people's comments. .. I didn't .. that's just not fun anymore. .. I don't know if that's the rationale, maybe why we don't have them, or maybe the characters are gone. I hadn't thought of that too much, but you're right, it has sort of declined a bit. My thinking was that attachment to the organization has weakened, people give their heart and soul and now there are a few incidences with cutbacks and bumping in particular, particularly at the staff level. People saw their job as their being, as very close to it, and that bumping, that was a very bad series. Those people got moved from here to there and that shatters their confidence or the family feeling, a little less. .. You're right, there's a little less feeling of family. (Dan)

Luke links layoffs with a lack of concern for others’ well-being on the part of management and with a loss of trust in management on the part of faculty.
Those layoffs in the spring, of people who were highly respected ... showed a lack of concern for individuals, for their welfare. It caused a fundamental shift in the thinking of people towards the institution, no longer thinking I owe this place, I'll stay for ever. There's a falling apart of the old thinking about the institution. If comprehensiveness is eroded, the institution will fall apart really fast. ... It runs well because of trust in management but laying people off caused a shift in thinking. So some of the magic is eaten away. It can't be fixed. ... The layoffs were devastating to individuals. There is no recovery. (Luke)

Leah speaks of a decrease in the level of volunteer commitment.

One big difference between then and now is the level of volunteer commitment to the institution has been very very high .. and it still is but .. it's not the same kind. We could seriously entertain the idea of a free summer camp for children then. ... I don't think we could do that anymore. People are very tired and they're 20 years older ... [with] sick parents and teenage children. (Leah)

I hear a shift away from the communal values of cohesiveness, intimacy, and attachment, and I hear a shift to non-communal values. The idea of community as a sociological perspective has a conceptual opposite (in sociological thought), a kind of antithesis, from which it derives much of its continuing meaning. The conceptual contrast between the communal and the non-communal (or associative) is vivid and articulate in the sociological tradition; Tonnies gave it the lasting terminology of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft (Nisbet, 1966, p. 48). Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft are contrasting images of dichotomous types of social relations, each with a distinctive set of values.
Gesellschaft as Idea and as Emergent Theme

In this section, I consider Gesellschaft as a sociological idea and as an emergent theme at Multisite.

The idea of Gesellschaft. Gesellschaft, unlike Gemeinschaft, is difficult to translate into one English word. It is a special type of human relationship characterized by a high degree of individualism, impersonality, contractualism, self-interest, and loose, specific-interest oriented motivation. It proceeds from volition or sheer interest rather than from the complex of affective states, habits and traditions that underlies Gemeinschaft. The essence of Gesellschaft is rationality and calculation (Nisbet, 1966, p. 74). Gesellschaft engages the individual in only one of the aspects or parts of his or her total being, or at most, only a few aspects. This is in contrast to the sort of engagement characteristic of Gemeinschaft in which, in Dan's words, people saw their job as their being.

In Gemeinschaft, the focus is on the whole person and the group as a whole. Individuals essentially are united in spite of separating factors. In Gesellschaft, the focus is on the part, the particular role rather than the individual, the individual rather than the group. Individuals essentially are separated in spite of any unifying factors. This distinction helps me make sense of the comments that minimized the fact that some people did not like other people. In a context
infused with communal values, people are united despite the individual’s response
to different personalities. The sense of cohesion remains intact, making such
differences inconsequential.

Individual faculty members increasingly are shifting their focus from the
institutional whole to the operational unit. As people put higher priority on the
demands of their program or department, their participation in organization wide
activities declines. This was indicated in Chapter 6 as a constraint on
participation. Adam, for instance, says that the increased workload at the
department level means less involvement with broader issues and processes (p. 235).

Other characteristics of Gesellschaft surface in what people say about
changes in social relations. I hear an increase in the value ascribed to achieved
status as distinct from ascribed status. I hear this in the new emphasis on one’s
academic credentials and on one’s specific organizational role; there is now less
emphasis on the ascribed status of membership.

Gesellschaft types of relationship do not and, by their nature, cannot
command the same depths of loyalty as do those in Gemeinshaft groupings
(Nisbet and Perrin, 1970). I hear a shift to Gesellschaft in what Dan says about
attachment, Leah about volunteer commitment, and Luke about trust. I also hear a
shift to Gesellschaft values in the comments that suggest that the values of competition and self interest are more often expressed at Multisite now.

Gemeinshhaft groups may become altered by the rise within them of motivations, ties, and incentives of a more Gesellschaft character. The rise of Gesellschaft values may happen as a result of competitive pressures (Nisbet and Perrin, 1970).

**Gesellschaft as emergent theme.** I am suggesting that there is a decreased emphasis on Gemeinschaft values and an increased emphasis on Gesellschaft values. This rise of Gesellschaft motivations is a critical factor in circumscribing the expression of the traditional theme of family, that is, the expression of communal values. The Gesellschaft theme defines social relations in terms of self-interest; it values a rational, calculated approach to defining and achieving one’s own interests. It arises from and gains strength from competitive pressures. It entails a coherent set of values and motivations, as does the theme of Gemeinschaft.

I am not suggesting simply that a few values are less likely to be expressed. I am suggesting a substantive movement from one type of social union with its associated values toward a social union of an opposite type. This shift to relations of a Gesellschaft character is a profound change. It underlies and defines, at least to a great extent, the changes in social relations that people report. I assume that a
critical belief or understanding underlies this change and I call that belief the emergent Gesellschaft theme.

In Chapter 5, I indicate that as an observer, I ask myself “What’s missing?” In Chapter 6, I suggest that the old way of doing things, the egalitarian relations and the consensus-building approach to conflict management, are missing. That is, the traditional participatory approach is missing, at least some of the time. I now suggest that the old way of interacting, the communal approach to social relations, also is missing now. Less and less, social relations express Gemeinschaft values; more and more, Gesellschaft values are expressed.

Gesellschaft and Gemeinschaft are ideal types; these two basic types of relationships may be seen to be participating in the same social structure (Nisbet, 1966, p. 86). The shift in values is one that some faculty speak of in terms of sadness, of sense of loss. Other faculty say it is different but not necessarily worse. Some faculty may prefer a setting in which non-communal values hold sway. I suggest that one factor that allowed the increased emphasis on Gesellschaft values was that they had been held, to various degrees, by some individuals throughout the institutional history. Walt, for example, speaks of a lack of collegiality with Trades instructors (p. 211). Matt feels no sense of loss with the change in social intimacy (p. 279); Alan says it is different now; not
worse, just different (p. 279). One founding member says it was possible to accept the cuts of the 1980s (p. 194).

I suggest that some people held to the theme of family with the emotional identification, the involvement of the whole person, that is essential to true Gemeinschaft. Other people found in the Gemeinschaft character of relations something they valued, although they did not internalize the values to the same degree. Other people were more disposed toward the spirit of competition and self-interest than the spirit of communal membership; they do not have a sense of loss with the change in social relations.

There probably are things you can do to preserve that sense of family. ... We had a one day PD day last year. ... That drew together people with a sense of family and the year before we had done it with various workshops, speakers, lunch. So there are activities that can certainly be encouraged that help people feel they are part of the whole, part of the family. On the other hand, there were some who thought it was a waste of time and of money. A few, a vocal minority, just felt that kind of family stuff was nonsense: what do we need it for? (Susan)

In this chapter, I have focused on what people say about social relations. The beliefs and values that concern social relations exist within a web of organizational meaning systems. They are intertwined with networks of beliefs, including those that concern participation and institutional mission. I move on to explore the theme of mission.
CHAPTER 8

THE THEME OF INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

In this chapter, I describe and explore the theme of institutional mission. I use the term mission to mean an organization’s fundamental sense of purpose, direction, and priority. People sometimes use the term mission as if it entails the means of attaining the purpose as well as the purpose. That is, in everyday conversation, people sometimes conflate the “how” of purpose with the “what.” For that reason, I do not use the word purpose itself. There are a variety of other terms, such as identity and vision, that are sometimes used with the same or a related meaning. Given that I needed to make a choice, I picked the one people at Multisite use most often.

Mission was the theme I identified most tentatively in the first phase. As an observer, I often heard statements that implied or declared a shared sense of purpose. I sometimes heard the statement “our focus is on teaching” reiterated in
public forums, for instance. I wondered for a time if that statement was the mission statement. A number of faculty volunteered the comment "our focus is on students" in casual conversation. Some people also spoke of the commitment to the community, again in public forums and in private exchange. Sometimes they also spoke of teaching; sometimes they did not. As an interviewer, I came to recognize that a variety of comments could be seen to concern what the institution does; some of these comments also concern how it does it. In the second phase, I identified mission as a topic that seems important to many faculty members now.

This chapter is in three sections. The first two sections primarily are descriptive. I present what people say about mission, first, in the past and, second, in the present. The third section is interpretive. I explore what people say and I attempt to answer the question of what mission means to people at Multisite.

**Mission: Speaking of the Past**

When faculty speak of how they understood the institution's purpose in the early years, they sometimes speak of serving all members of the community.

(S: In that beginning period ... what was a community college? What sense did people have, what sort of institution were they building?) A traditional sense, but a very exciting one. This was a whole new animal in BC; it had been around in other places. Very much idealistic, not just an educational institution but a sort of sociological.. I'm not phrasing it well .. it was a means of serving the community and helping people who hadn't been
helped before. (S: Serving social purposes?) Yes, and it would be open to everyone, people who traditionally had been not served. We would help anybody who came to the door and educate them and give them a future and I think people really believed this and have done their best to follow through on that. (Jane)

Some faculty speak of comprehensiveness, which allowed and encouraged students to move from one program to another.

Those of us who came into the college system had come to believe that it was a comprehensive institution. That was what it was designed to be; the mandate was to provide everything from adult basic education through to vocational training, the first two years academic, whatever else you could put inside the four walls. There were night school programs that were traditionally taught in church basements and high schools, everything from water colours to second year history and I think a lot of us believed that that was the role. The role with community; this was a community college; that's what we were called. Most of us believed in the comprehensive nature; a second chance institution we were often called too, for people in the community who wanted to get back in to the university. .. And what captivated me in the first few years were that people were coming back after years and years. It wasn't a sea of 18 year olds at all, .. the average age was 24, 25, 27. A large number of people were waiting for it to happen; suddenly your classes were filled with, usually, women between the ages of late 20s and 40s; they were often 60-70% of class. You know the stories, ... of someone who came in to do Chinese cooking or something, saw that there were people doing grade ten Math in the room across the hall and you see the confidence grow and she completes her high school and moves ahead. ... It was an invigorating time ... and you realized what you were doing was serving the community. There was no sense in my mind that I had to produce something of high quality, 3rd and 4th year academic stuff, because the universities already were doing that. All we were doing was preparing people, many of whom wouldn't have had a chance to go on to university, so the comprehensiveness was crucial. (Hal)

Hal’s story of the person coming in to take general interest courses and carrying on to complete academic credentials (i.e., moving up the academic ladder) is a type of story that recurs in college settings. Such stories capture the
traditional sense of “laddering” in colleges, with the student beginning in a “lower rung” program. Jay also offers a laddering story.

Every instructor has stories of the person coming in with little self-esteem .. and ends up getting As. Typically, it’s a woman, in her mid 40s or late 30s. She’s raised a family. ... One story ... a young person flunked a course and this woman said, well, I’ll do it with you for support if you’ll repeat the course. The woman got an A and was shocked. She continued to take courses and to get As. ... I think that’s what excites all of us. Maybe you get that at a university. I suspect not as much, because [the institution] is not seen as a home-grown part of our community. To see the difference in the person; they don’t even recognize it in themselves ... but what they’re able to do, willing to take on. (Jay)

Some faculty speak of the commitment to teaching; some speak of attention to students as individuals.

The commitment to teaching was obvious. When I did my research on teaching [certain skills] and presented it to the department, it really got acted on. People started changing the way they taught. If you did come up with something, it was small enough and flexible enough that methods were changed. (Wendy)

Our focus is teaching, the individual student. We have always been nurturing, caring. ... Historically, we were known for our attention to individual students. ... Small class size is important; it gives the student access [to instructor]. (Keith)

Some faculty speak of the importance of training skilled workers.

I had some funny idea as a supervisor out in the industry that some of the colleges weren't doing the job they should be doing. Students coming straight out of school couldn't do what I needed them to do. ... I figured that if I was on the inside maybe somebody would listen so I became interested in the educational end personally and started pursuing that. ... I learned the Ministry and the colleges move in slow and mysterious ways but I stuck with it and now I try to teach my students some of the things I think they need to know. ... I include what the advisory committee thinks they need. ... In return, they hire all our students and make major donations to the program, so it’s mutually beneficial. (Bob)
Some faculty speak of a personal transition in which they come to value the institutional mission.

When I came in, in the beginning, I was into a university model. Demanding, ... the idea that if there is a 50% dropout rate, a high failure rate, it must be a good program. ... I changed to the college model, valuing helping those who wouldn't make it. ... I came to value that emphasis on laddering, on comprehensiveness. (Luke)

I went to the meeting [before we decided to seek university college status] when Mountain U presented their plan for doing a satellite campus here and I was absolutely outraged and it wasn't because of what they were doing to me but you see, there is something that happens. Some year or other, I got quite committed to what community colleges do, and I had come from a university background. This whole thing that may be outdated now, but the buzzwords "value added" were important for a little while. I think we add tremendous value to peoples' lives. ... You get committed to the variety of students and also to the community but also to making sure that the college has some connection with the area and you get used to people in the area caring about it in a way that people in other areas don't care about the university nearby and why should they? ... So when Mountain U came out to do this presentation and hadn't done any analysis of what the needs of people in this community were ... darned if I was going to see that inflicted on the community because it suited the aspirations of certain departments there but didn't have anything to do with this area. (Wendy)

When people speak of what they did in the past, they speak with clarity on what they were doing and why. Some people speak of coming in with a personal perspective shaped by their university experience and later coming to recognize that their perspective had shifted to valuing the community college mission.

People differ in what they emphasize when they speak of mission, however. In some comments, faculty speak of the whole organization, of the comprehensive curriculum and of serving the community. In other comments, faculty speak of
their own daily work. Some people emphasize attention to individual students, aspects of teaching a particular discipline, or preparing people for industry. Mission entails a variety of facets or dimensions.

Mission: Speaking of the Present

In this section, I present some of what people say about institutional mission, facets of mission, and issues that pertain to mission in the present. These comments are organized, as follows. The first sub-section presents the overview people offer on the mission at present. The second, what people say about particular facets of mission. The third, what people say about issues related to mission. One issue is offering courses on a cost recovery basis; the other is the role of the Continuing Education Division in providing a range of courses, especially general interest courses.

Institutional Mission

Faculty express a variety of perspectives on institutional purpose. Some faculty speak as if they are clear what that purpose is. Jay, for example, speaks as if the college’s traditional ideals remain intact.
Teaching is the focus here and admin recognizes that. There has always been a consistent vision between management and faculty. There has always been a strong community tie. ... We do not want to lose the community in community college; it's hard to separate community from college because it's so much an integral part. ... The constant has been the commitment to people, the commitment to teaching, the commitment to students, the commitment to community. That hasn't changed. (Jay)

Luke speaks, as Jay does, of continuing commitment to the traditional community college values. Luke speaks of laddering at the level of moving from a two year program to a degree program.

We're really committed to the spirit of comprehensiveness, of serving the community, the spirit of the community college. (S: How would you describe that spirit?) The spirit of the community college is, number one, giving access, that open door concept, it's a critical part. We're saying everyone deserves a chance, an opportunity. Number two, creating conditions so they can make the most of those opportunities. ... And courses for success make a difference. We have a 93% retention rate from 1st to 2nd year. That makes it very different from traditional university. We're hell bent on helping people make it. Three, offering a range of programs that allows anyone to come in and attend in one area and feel comfortable and have success and then they can continue and take something else. Continuing Education is a critical part of that, as is Trades. You can come in and do something and see what's available and transfer to Trades, for example. Part of the idea of 2 year programs .. people come in just wanting the 2 year certificate ... if somewhere along the way, they want more, then it's not that hard to jump to the degree. ... So the notion of a broad range of programs, so people can choose and move. (Luke)

Rob speaks of a shift in emphasis and of the integrity of offerings remaining intact.

Being a community college meant we had very clearly articulated goals which were to serve the community's need, not only in terms of academic programs but also business programs, dental assisting, auto repair, you know. (S: Career area?) Right, and what happened as the university college discussion began, was that obviously, those goals had to be qualified, in some ways. Certainly, there was a lot more emphasis on the academic angle of things. Now, how did that change the nature of the institution? Well, it certainly started us thinking about more deliberate liaisons with the universities rather than simple
articulation of courses. ... So more and more, the academic component became more excited, ... interested in digging back into the stuff of academe. ... That is not to say that the integrity of the place in serving its community was lost. It wasn't. We still do serve the community very well through our agricultural program and a variety of other programs like that but more and more, as the university element becomes larger and larger in the academic field, more we've added faculty, more we're looking for Ph.Ds., more we're looking for specialists and more we are being very picky about who we take and who we don't. ... I think some people thought the integrity of the offerings, the trades and technical, would be lost. That wasn't lived out. (Rob)

Walt also speaks of a shift in emphasis and says degree programs are consistent with the original mandate. He says job training was the primary emphasis in the institution's past and is now one of the institution's two functions.

Walt also speaks of laddering in terms of moving from a diploma to a degree program.

When I first came, there was a vision that this was more a typical BC community college. Its roots were very strongly in continuing education, with classes in churches ... and a sense of an adult learning place. ... The main job was community based, to provide [training for] jobs that people in the community wanted. Half a dozen years after I came, I could sense a change. We wanted to be the senior educational institution in the region. ... There are two groups out in the immediate community. One wants us to move forward on university side; they see a traditional university. ... There's another group out there who recognize what a community college does well: it takes people who don't have jobs and gives them something that enhances their ability to get jobs. ... We tried to go down the middle; the university college fits our mandate very nicely, as far as I can tell. The Career type of degree continues to support both groups with a natural two year stop, the diploma, and a natural carry on to the degree. (S: So you see degrees as consistent with the mandate and adding to it?) Yes. We are making a small number a little uneasy. At the expense of that, we made a much larger group happy. ... We're working more and more on ladder degrees, that's the way it's going to go for us. ... We're hiring people who understand the mission, which is diplomas and degrees. We're not hiring people who only think of this as a small university. ... [We intend to hire] people that understand what we are. There's got to be that dual role. Exactly what the word means: university college, both sides of that. Instruction comes first; second an interest in going out into the community. (Walt)
Some faculty speak as if they are uncertain whether the traditional institutional purpose is changing. Lynn, for example, seems uncertain whether college values will be retained. She repeats the phrase "more or less," as if tentative in how she defines that mission.

We're also trying to maintain being a community college and as a community college we definitely have a more or less "open door" policy. We're there to serve the community, more or less, whatever it is the community needs, which means you more or less let anybody come in. Of course, a university is far more selective than that. As long as we can keep that open door, we'll be okay. If we lose that we're no longer serving the community, we're only serving part of it. (S: Is that to you what determines whether you're a college, the open door?) No, it's also excellence in teaching and by and large we are very good teachers, and we have small class sizes, which helps, so there's a more intimate relationship with your students. It's the easiest thing in the world to go and lecture to 150 students; it's far different to teach a group of 20. (S: Is your sense that that emphasis on teaching is being retained or is it changing?) I sincerely hope it's being retained; I don't see anything to tell me it's changing; I think we'll find that out over time. ... I really have to wonder when we're turning away 18 year olds [who want first year] with good GPAs and we're putting on 3rd and 4th year courses with small class sizes. ... It seems to me something we do very well is getting people started and students who come to us for 2 years and then go on to a university will tell you that the good teaching here and the small class size has helped them ... so I don't like to see us turning them away. ... I'm certainly interested to see where we go with our Career programs and I have concern that they don't get lost in the rush to be a university college. We've got things like our Agriculture program, our Long-term Care Aide program and Trades and all these other things and these are really really important and this is what we're about, we're about preparing people for jobs. That's what we do. (S: As a department, as an institution?) As an institution, as a college, that's through education in different ways, so it would be very sad and very inappropriate if our career programs became less than they are now. (S: You're talking specifically about those one and two year programs that do not lead to degrees?) That's it, the complete programs that don't ladder into other things. Certainly, in the last year or two, all the time and from what I hear, extra funding, has been channeled that way. That's where the concern is for those of us not involved in those programs; we say, hey, just don't forget these basic career programs. (Lynn)
Some faculty speak as if people are confused about what the mission is at present. Hal says the label university college seems not to make sense.

There's a series of other things, like the question of once we become a university college, what does that mean in terms of status as an institution of higher education. There's no question there are people here who would like to see us as a university that develops its own programs, develops a line of research. And a lot of people who see the need to drop the name university college and call ourselves a university. University college is a hybrid; it doesn't make sense to most people. It doesn't make sense, I think, to the Ministry that spawned it in the first place. I think we have an identity problem at the moment. I'm not sure that we know what we are. (Hal)

Jim says people keep asking questions about the institutional identity.

I assume what they're after is to give more people access to a university education ... to the same standards and the same requirements. I see our function as not competitive to what the universities are achieving, I see it as complementary and strategically different, strategic meaning our overall mission is somewhat different, the same objective in the long run. ... If we philosophically take a stand, and we have a mission statement and work towards that objective and we can all accept that, then it [how we compare to other institutions in numbers of Ph.D. on faculty] shouldn't concern us. But if it's that other institutions continually assess us based on the faculty criteria of who does and doesn't have a Ph.D., once again, [it happens] if you don't clearly send the message that the purpose is to be different. ... I just feel it's really fundamental. I hear a lot of people asking the same type of questions. Are we supposed to be the traditional university? Are we supposed to be a polytech? ... So I just keep saying to them, well, where's the direction coming from, who's made the decision and why haven't they told us what they want? (S: Your sense is that was never made clear?) No, I may be wrong but it certainly hasn't been made clear to me at my level. (S: Are you assuming the intention was for it to be different?) I can only assume on the basis that it would make no sense for it to be the same. ... (S: In talking about not knowing about the direction, does that almost assume that somebody knows?) Exactly. I make this implicit assumption in everything that there's someone who does know and for some reason is not telling anyone. (Jim)

Some faculty speak as if the mission of the institution has changed.
I don't, I mean, I'm sure that people have said this before; I'm not sure whether people are getting a university or are they getting a community college, or are we going to end up in the middle, with being neither? (S: Is that a concern?) Yes. Yeah, I'm concerned with that community aspect of it. ... What becomes the primary mandate of the institution, you look at the change we're going through and our focus is really towards the degree and the four year student. ... I see it [the institution] as .. becoming in support of the four year student, the full time four year student .. just the recent decision to have differential fees, part time vs the full-time student. ... I think as an institution we made that decision, that the four year full time student is our primary student. (Adam)

There are multiple interpretations of mission now. Some say the traditional mission remains; some say they are uncertain if it will remain; some speak as if the present situation is confusing.

**Facets of Mission**

In this sub-section, I present some of what people say about various aspects or dimensions of institutional mission. Three of these aspects, the comprehensive curriculum, job training, and teaching, are essential facets of the traditional community college mission. (Another facet of the traditional mission, service to the community, surfaces in some of this comment. It is more explicitly the focus in the next section, when I present what people say about two particular issues.) The fourth dimension, aspects of academic settings, includes various characteristics some people associate with degree programs.
The comprehensive curriculum. The characteristic of a comprehensive curriculum is central to the traditional community college mission. Some faculty speak as if offering degree programs poses a threat to particular non-degree programs. Russ, for example, speaks of Trades program.

[When the talk of the university-college first started] It was bad news to start with, in my perspective as a tradesperson. I wound up in trades because I was no damned good in school. When we got word we were going for university-college status, I, personally and a lot of my colleagues really felt, damn, we're done under again. They’re leaving trades behind and we’re a really important part of whole and they’re putting more emphasis on the academic side so we had bad feelings. ... We looked at it: here we go again. We're sinking more money into the academic side, when we need it desperately on the Trades side, and the country needs it, but nobody has become aware of it, it seemed like. What the hell is going to happen to the trades because Canada does not turn out good trades people, compared to a lot of European countries. ... We just felt trades is not going to grow; it should; we're going to lose the comprehensive college for the community. My biggest concern [then] was that we've got to expand; we were and I guess still am worried about the academic side still growing. It [expansion] has to happen, has to happen on this site. The situation, the way it sits right now is that we .... have no more programs. Nothing. They call it an expansion; they went out of their way to make sure everyone knew that they expanded trades training. We did a lot of renovation here but it was a relocation, not an expansion. If you talk to management, they talk expansion. We figured it out; we actually lost space. (Russ)

Some faculty speak as if offering degree programs poses a threat to some or all non-academic programs. Barb speaks of a change in philosophy.

I think that there is a fear that other programs, like CE, Trades, Office Careers, will lose their significance because of the university college's emphasis on university oriented courses. Along with that comes the whole idea of comprehensiveness because without comprehensiveness you don't have CE, Trades, Office Careers. ... I think everybody wants to retain comprehensiveness but the fear is, that's not where it's going. The emphasis is the university college, [the fear is] that we have changed our focus. ... This has always been an exceptional institution and the tradition of the community is really important. ... John Dennison states, [in an academic paper on colleges becoming
university colleges] as you bring in more and more people, basically academic people, the philosophy changes because they're not used to a community college orientation. (Barb)

Ann speaks of “a fight for dollars.”

Before this idea of the university college came up, my sense of the community college was that there was enormous support on all fronts for all that we were doing [in upgrading and entry-level programs]. I always felt an on-going support for the kind of work that I particularly was involved in ... and there was a lot of discussion about maintaining what we already have and not losing any of the comprehensiveness of our programming. ... But I'm getting a sense as we move closer to it that there is going to be a fight for dollars and ... the question for me is how secure are some areas such as [my department] going to be in the expansion. (Ann)

Cindy is afraid the university programs will “take over” the institution.

Right now the mandate of our Career programs is employment. ... I have a real fear that this could all go and the university programs could take over the whole thing. (Cindy)

Some faculty speak as if the college and degree programs may be incompatible.

I'm sure if you talk to my colleagues in non-academic areas, they are feeling under the gun, especially some departments, like Continuing Education. ... If you see yourself as a comprehensive institution, then CE has an important role to play in that, no question. I would be sad to see that go because we've always had it. (S: Do you see it going?) Well, I don't know. On the other hand, I'm attracted to the possibility of offering enriched 3rd and 4th year programs. ... I don't know that the two are compatible. I see that as being a tension, trying to protect space and teaching dollars and parking lot space and all that. ... Comprehensiveness is the crucial issue. ... In a series of ways, we are comprehensive. In a series of other ways, we are just a series of things tacked together. My sense, from the community's point of view, we're better as a small institution doing all those things but maybe from an ministerial point of view, from an institutional point of view, that's not the best way to go. I don't know. (Hal)
Some faculty say they are uncertain whether the comprehensive curriculum will survive.

Of course, it (serving people who traditionally have not been served) is becoming increasingly difficult as the years have gone by. Money's not available and you have to start turning people away and you have to start making regulations about who gets turned away and inevitably, like everything else in life, it's the ones who have the least in the beginning that don't get in. (S: Is that what you see happening now?) Yes, I think I see that happening. I hope we'll never entirely lose sight of what we started with out in the beginning, and I think this college probably does a better job of it than lots of other colleges. ... The college tried to make statements about not giving up any of those values of the community college, the idea of integrated .. what is the word, comprehensive. I guess it remains to be seen whether we can carry through with that. (Jane)

However, some faculty, like Rob (p. 305) speak as if an increased emphasis on the academic side does not necessarily pose a threat to comprehensiveness.

Mary says it is important to maintain balance; she speaks as if that can be done.

That day [workshop on adding degree programs] was critical; the others [the other university colleges] told us of their ups and downs. What I thought was critical, what came across, was the concern with becoming too much like a university, with a focus on research, tenure, that sort of thing. What was critical was a focus on teaching excellence and that's where I think this college is still at, not publications and research. ... We're still responding to community but also we're providing a university education and perhaps a milieu for faculty. There's a concern with balance, for me; I could see we still needed to maintain balance. Like walking a tightrope. I still see the community college part still into outreach in the community, with continuing ed classes and things like that but also the region is under-served. We need degrees here; rather than building a free-standing university, it's expedient to add degrees. We're trying to provide the best of both worlds. (Mary)
Some faculty say that comprehensiveness is not threatened by degrees programs, or need not be. Luke disagrees with "either/or" thinking; Wendy recognizes the assumption of threat but does not share it.

Comprehensiveness will not be lost ... because of our orientation to general interest vocationalism. That holds in check the danger of moving to a university model. Our two year programs remain the heart and soul of what we do. ... We've always had that balance in programs. You can have an institution and programs that can address both academic and vocational needs. It need not be "either/or," either academic or vocational.

Everywhere I go, people talk either/or. (Luke)

There seemed to be a sense that we would lose comprehensiveness, that by definition, somehow, it would go. I guess I didn't see that necessarily as an issue except in the way that this just seemed to alienate the Trades areas more. ... I think there are two threats to comprehensiveness; one is the government itself, by supporting some areas inadequately. In particular, they are being absolutely seduced by OLA to offer ABE and so on. It's ridiculous that they have these community colleges and now they are thinking of setting up other kinds of community groups that offer things through OLA. I think that is the biggest threat, I don't think the threat is internal. The other one is in the demand from students for academic courses, but I think that was going to happen anyway too because of the number of students who can't afford to go to university and the other colleges are experiencing the lop-sided demand as far as the students are concerned, too, and you can't force them to take agriculture courses so I don't think that becoming a university college has changed that, has lessened the comprehensiveness. (Wendy)

There are multiple interpretations of what will happen, or is likely to happen, to comprehensiveness. On the one hand, there is concern, verging on conviction, that it will be lost. When people specify why they have this concern, they often say that resources will be directed to academic rather than non-academic programs. Some faculty speak as if the two sets of programs may be incompatible. On the other hand, there is the view that adding degrees adds to
comprehensiveness, or at least does not compromise it. Faculty who express this view, however, are aware that many of their colleagues are concerned.

**Speaking of job training.** Many faculty speak of job training as a core component of the original mandate. Some faculty (e.g., Lynn, p. 307) speak of it as the institution’s primary function. Walt (p. 306) speaks of job training as one of the institution’s dual roles in the present. When people speak of job training, they often do so in the context of how it relates to academic pursuits. Some faculty speak as if academic courses that are unrelated to career goals are a waste of taxpayers’ money.

The idea of education for education’s sake, well, that’s nice but that’s a hobby. It is. We try to run our department like a business, as much as possible. We’re training people to go to work in business, we try to set the example, it’s one of the ways of teaching. ... First of all, whether it [the university program] has any value as far as education is concerned, that may be a different story, because we’re training anthropologists to dig up bones. Who’s paying for that training? It’s all paid for by government, it’s all tax money, because industry isn't putting any money into it. How many bones do we need? What are we going to do with them? What value is that to anyone? ... Academic courses; we need some of that. I think more Science courses, real Science courses, like Physics, Chemistry. (S: Biology?) Some, some biology. (S: Can you guess what I used to teach?) Possibly biology. I have serious questions about some of the things we’re doing and there are a lot of university courses that are hobby courses. They really aren’t of much value to anyone other than for education’s sake. Whether the taxpayer should be funding that, whether they can afford to put up fancy classrooms, fancy buildings, for people to learn redundant information is really something that the taxpayers and government are going to have to look at. ... It’s growth for growth’s sake, not to serve the local community, not to serve industry, not to serve taxpayers, really not even to serve the student. A lot of these students going to third and fourth year courses don’t have a goal. (S: A career goal?) Yeah, or even lifetime goals, aside from education. They don't have set goals; they have to be headed somewhere. This education for education’s sake is something that the taxpayer can't afford. ... The more they're training people for redundant courses, the less respect they get in the community. ... (S: So your sense is the community is looking for practical job-related stuff and they aren't getting it?) Sure, sure, they're not getting the
growth that they need, in that we're running courses that will have no relationship to their gaining employment out in industry or in the local community. The community gets frustrated with that, it see things that aren't working, they say something and no one listens. ... A few times like that and industry says, why bother. (Bob)

In some comments, academic activities are described as different from job-related skills.

I guess I associate the word academic to some extent with formal learning and not particularly with the learning of a job related skill. ... (S: Do you see a move towards more emphasis on the academic?) The degree programs do that to some extent ... finding out about things for the joy of finding out about them, no other purpose. Any academic learns things for the joy of learning them, to try and get stuff right, to have your ideas correspond to reality. (Cathy)

In other comments, academic activities are a part of preparation for the workplace. Dan, for example, says academic studies are job-related but the time frame is much longer than in vocational programs.

The vocational student is going to be asking, what's in it for me. ... It's got to be that my employability is increased. You ask that same question to an academic and it will tend to be, well, I'm getting a degree. It's much less specific, much less immediate, much less job oriented. (S: Is that how you would use that term academic, to get at not being job oriented?) Kinda, I would use the word delayed. It's still job oriented; most people can't afford to take a BA just for the fun of it; just the time factor is at a different level. (Dan)

Some faculty say that students need more than a diploma to have good job prospects.

And we knew [when we were thinking of seeking university college status] two years just doesn't cut it anymore. Students will inevitably, if they're going to take their education and training seriously, they are going to need more than 2 years. To have significant job
prospects, in both the academic and career areas, they'll need more than a diploma so we truly were offering them half a loaf, less than half a loaf, so since times have changed, we should change and offer them four years. (Chuck)

Some faculty say a general education makes one a more adaptable employee in the long run.

It appears to me that the government is now questioning the purpose of education from a philosophical point of view. ... Now because so many people want access to university because it gives you a better job, the job criteria now is not did you attend university, it is now what did you do there. ... What has now become important is job skills and now people are going to university for job skills and not for the education so they've changed the philosophy of what education is and what university is for, and the emphasis is changed. What I feel is being lost is that ... the student who has the more general background will be superior in the long run. ... To me academic means more of an emphasis on the overall rationale or thought process ... more of a broad, general education that will allow them to adapt to the environment. ... [Whereas in] traditional college training, the skills you have are maybe useable for 6 months, up until a new idea or philosophy comes out, then you have to go back to school to get retrained. In the long run, I feel that student is more of a benefit to business and to society than the one who is specifically job trained and job skilled. The student who is well educated who will have skills to transfer to different areas for the rest of their lives. (Jim)

Some faculty say that what counts most is a balance between the emphasis on job training and on academic courses.

The emphasis has been so much on the academic, on higher education. So many are overtrained on academic side; they're very educated but no idea how to go out and find a job and keep a job. I've done it: [I've said] those academics, they don't have a clue; they don't know what a real job is. ... It's so easy to criticize. There's got to be a balance; we need the academic side, maths and science, and we need a good trades backbone. Now that the mining is going, the timber is going, what are we going to do? We still need buildings but we have to build them differently. We still need cars; they're no longer a luxury; we have to build them differently, so that takes in the academic side. It needs design and the general trades person may not have the expertise. ... People are becoming more aware [of issues like polluting the air and the need to redesign cars, for example.]
There’s going to be a shortage of tradespeople in the mid 90s. What we did last time, looked to immigration. (Russ)

One course I teach is half academic and half training. ... My course is a microcosm of what the college is. ... If you talk about education vs training, you get into all kinds of wonderful arguments. ... The college was much more geared towards what the community wanted; it had its feet far more on the ground, in that positive sense, far more than a university would, to use my analogy. It probably [still] is far less out of touch with the community, with the average student, now, and as we go to four years, I think that was one of the big concerns that people had here. For example, are we going to keep trades on this campus. Trades over in that corner and the bright people are over here, that's the bias, and if you talk to a mechanic, there's a wonderful logic in trying to trace the problem. ... We have different gifts so is that balance going to be lost; there is that word again: balance. I’m always suspicious of either/or questions because there’s no sense of balance. ... When we had those people in for PD day [concerning gaining university college status], what we wanted to find out was where the balance was. I've never thought of this before; ... [this interview] is a wonderful chance. (Jay)

The idea that job training programs and individual faculty members can combine academic and non-academic 'sides' or dimensions recurs.

So many of our Career programs, like Child Care Worker, Nursing, Social Work, accountancy, can be seen both ways, academic and training. Anything that is argued a profession has academic components. ... It borrows a huge body of knowledge from other disciplines, especially where we are now, looking into the next century. ... You can't prepare a professional anymore now in 2 years; they need critical thinking, problem solving. ... Increasingly, there is that duality, that technical and academic sides. ... (S: Would you describe yourself as an academic?) No, I would say there's an academic side to me. I think I incorporate a variety of ways of defining myself, I have an academic component. ... Academic often implies, rightly or wrongly, a tenured professor doing research, tied to the ivory tower, but there is so much more applied research being done now. (Mary)

However, the idea that the academic and non-academic spheres are, or may be, two different worlds also recurs.
There are some of us who really enjoy the academic environment and that not only includes the interaction between colleagues and the opportunity for that interaction but academically-oriented clubs for students, seminars ... all that. I think if you've gone through university [regardless of where or when] that's part of what that's all about ... the essence of being academic. Well, there's a lot of people around here who think that's a foreign world. ... I don't mean this in an demeaning way; if you're teaching people to type or to build houses, I don't think you necessarily have that same attitude, and why would you. I spent a lot of time working in industry and, in that period, I wouldn't have been interested at all in going to a colloquium. I wanted to go to something to be told how to do something better, and we did go off to company sponsored conferences. ... Those are different worlds in some respects. .. I do a lot of community work and enjoy it immensely .. but that's not the academic stuff, like talking to my colleagues about a truly academic idea, bringing in the guest speaker. That's stimulating. ... Different worlds; I'm constantly caught between them. I suspect that that may be true for a lot of faculty; there may be some who are committed one way or the other. Some would really like to see it become a real university, complete with faculty club and all that stuff. So how that survives in here I don't know when you walk down the hall and realize that the people who are gathered around you have been working on car engines for the last six hours. If you think of it in a historical sense, then obviously the two just don't mix. If you think of it in a comprehensive community college frame, then maybe they do. (Hal)

When people speak of job-training, they sometimes speak as if it is distinctly different from academic studies. Other faculty, however, speak as if academic skills are essential employee skills. Many faculty speak of a need for balance between job-training and academic studies. Some speak of balance within the institution’s offerings; others of balance within particular programs.

Speaking of teaching. An emphasis on teaching also is central to the traditional community college mission; many people speak as if college teaching is distinctive. Keeping that distinctive approach was a concern expressed during the budgetmaking period. Some faculty reiterated in conversation and in open
forums that small class size is essential to good teaching (e.g., p. 111). Some
people spoke of "the university model" as epitomizing what is not good teaching.

Many faculty say that college teaching is different from and better than
university teaching.

Talking about prestige, I went to five institutions to get my degrees. The best education
was at a junior college. It didn't have the same minds ... but the teaching was better. The
colleges had better teachers; they were really good. It's not to say there's not some good
teachers at university but on the whole, they're not as good. (Jay)

Some faculty say this is because a university context fails to emphasize, or
even recognize, the skills component of teaching.

There are two schools of thought, probably more, but generally you think, university,
lecture, community college, teaching, and the learning part is quite different. ... It was
very interesting to me to see how other people think. Then you get down to those who
had teacher training or never had. ... Things I consider automatic are quite a major hurdle
for an academic, for someone who never had any teacher training. They don't know any
other way than sitting up there and spilling out the information and then there are others
who are innovative and creating an environment for students. ... [The emphasis there is]
still the old lecture; in this kind of environment, there's more variety. ... It's the old
school, the old boy's thing, back to the days when it was [supposed to be] a privilege to
work with a prof and it was up to you as a student to learn as much as you could. They
weren't into learning theory. How else can you teach 130 students at the same time?
That's one thing I think as a university college that we can [contribute] ... is developing
teaching methods. That old saying, those who can, do, and those who can't, teach, is
garbage. (Cindy)

Some faculty express concern that the institution may move to a university
model of teaching. One issue that recurs when people speak of differences
between college and university teaching is class size.
I think there's pressure, in order to support the upper levels stuff, there's pressure to sacrifice what we do at the first year level. Historically, the college has prided itself on not shoving 200 people into a theater with an anonymous person at the front with 16 TAs with their own concerns but sort of now that we're one step closer to being a university, I fear that... Nothing's really happened [to suggest it will happen]; I'm a bit worried about that... that we'll do the first year on the cheap. At Mountain U, if I understand correctly, they have one guy doing all the first year introductory course, so he has 200 people as just one group. When I think of what goes on in our classes and how the students learn and they do have some say in how we do things, at least at the upper end, I'm just afraid that if people get too interested in the upper end of stuff, .. they'll just let us slide into that sort of stuff. I imagine it will take a while but you start to get classes of 60 and then 100 because once you get past a manageable class, really, once you go into classes of 60, you've lost it there. It's a small step to go from 60 to 200, the big step is from 35 or 40, which is pushing it. ... I get the feeling that there are more people around who are willing to say, yeah, why not. (S: Do you see that as inevitable?) I'm not sure anymore because I don't know where these decisions come from again because things seem to develop you know not where. Things seem to be coming from the board now, like courses in the summer and charging extra fees and there doesn't seem to be any debate about that and to me that raises all kinds of ethical and philosophical questions ... and if we say no, I don't get the same feeling [that it will matter] .. they'll say it doesn't matter, just hire sessionals to do it. Things like shaving off another 10 minutes in the block. We put in the extra hour because we felt student contact was important. Now we've had several shavings off of the timetable in recent years. One more and we are doing exactly the same hours as the university, and yet we've never consciously said we don't need any more time, we've just sort of shaved it off here and there and people are saying it doesn't matter and again who's decision that is not as clear as it used to be. (Celia)

Another issue is the institutional relation to students, sometimes described in terms of the presence or absence of friendliness or warmth.

[On whether the institution is becoming more academic] I would say, yes, it is becoming more academic. ... We used to have a very open door policy; that door is now starting to close a bit on the basis of your ability to read and write and that to me has created an academic fence, at least a barrier. ... I think there's actually a difference between the South and North Campuses. When I associate academia, I guess from my own university experience, there's less friendliness. It's colder. You come in and do the job, you're the student, that sort of thing. I think North Campus is a little further behind in that. A little more open door; the halls are narrower; you bump into students more in the cafeteria. In terms of academic coldness, so to speak, I think we're still quite inviting. (Dan)
Some faculty say teaching is different at the third and fourth year level. They say there is a deeper engagement with the discipline. Hal implies that one must be a scholar as well as a teacher at that level.

I think sometimes we forget that teaching at the 3rd and 4th year requires more than simply skill as a teacher. It really does require some deep and thoughtful and insightful contact with your discipline and I think that naturally breeds a desire to be with people who can share those ideas. Teaching first and second year requires tremendous skill and it requires you to have a tremendous handle on your discipline but no one in a second year class is going to ask you the kind of questions students in a fourth year class will. You really need to be more, what's the best word, more actually engaged with the discipline. In second year, you can get by by reading a few articles, keeping up with the textbook, and going to the odd conference. At fourth year that's not good enough; you've got to be on top of what you're doing, you've got to subscribe to the 4 or 5 journals. ... What comes with that is that whole other aura of the faculty club and all that stuff that goes on [in an academic setting] and it's an exciting environment. ... If we call ourselves a university or really push the academic side of university college, I can't help but see the alienation [of the non-academic side] ... so maybe we need to think of ourselves as educators and not as academics, in that sense. The problem is, the bind is, when you teach 3rd and 4th year, I don't think you can be just simply an instructor. You really do have to engage with your discipline. I think that's where the problem lies. ... [Comments on what is required in teaching higher levels] I never thought of it before; I think the third and fourth year does something to you. (S: Intoxicating?) Yeah, I think it is. I think for some people, it is. For some, it's just a realization, I haven't read anything for 10 years, I'd better get going. (Hal)

However, some faculty who teach at the third and fourth year level say they see differences among all levels of teaching but nothing especially significant in moving to the third and fourth year level.

I think 3rd and 4th year is as different from 1st and 2nd, it would be as different as doing a 2nd year class is different from doing a college prep class. In terms of ... the students are quite different and your presentation and what you expect are quite different. Not that one is easier or one takes less time than the other but there are different kinds of activities
involved. I'm sure there's a fairly large step involved in going from a 2nd year course to 4th year... it's more content oriented; the students are more self reliant. I would say there's a difference, but again, it's not that we [in this department] shouldn't be dabbling in both the college prep and the second year, that we shouldn't all be able to do both. We don't want to see a line between 1st and 4th either. (S: You see it more as a continuum than a big jump?) That's right, so I guess that's why we didn't want to see any hard lines, you know, like for instructors, like sorry, you don't have that Ph.D., you can do 200 but you can't do 300; that seems to be totally artificial. And it's not like you're going from 2nd year to grad school. (Celia)

(S: Tell me if there's something qualitatively different from teaching at a higher level to a lower, in your experience.) At a first year level vs a third level, there's distinct differences in terms of the difficulty, complexity, the depth. That's not to say that students at the 1st year don't find the material complex and problematic but 1st year level sometimes I find it difficult to even get them to crack their textbooks open whereas at the 3rd you've got them reading journal articles and assessing them and evaluating them and so on. So I do find differences. I would hope that by the time they take 3rd year courses they'd be in an area they're interested in and they're not taking it just to fill a science requirement or something. ... In my 3rd year course I hope it's people with a genuine interest in the discipline. ... Third year it's more stimulating and interesting because the challenges are there, you want to challenge your students on a different level. ... In the first year, you're getting into something that's specialized. Whatever subject you take, you're getting more specific than just taking a science in high school, say. ... I think as you go on year by year you find out what you really want to do in whatever discipline and I think you specialize and go further, unless you do a degree in general studies or something and you pick your path. (S: So are you saying that specialization is more a continuum?) I guess from my experience and from what I see here, perhaps, yeah, I guess from my undergraduate experience and so on, it was a continuum. It gets more specialized as time went on. (Lew)

When people speak of college teaching, they often speak positively of small class size, of instructors trained in teaching skills, and of a social setting that values warmth. When people speak of university teaching, they often speak negatively of large class size, of instructors likely to lack teaching skills, and of an impersonal social setting. There seems to be something approaching a
consensually-held single interpretation among those who speak on the topic that teaching in those two institutional settings is different. There seems to be dichotomous interpretations, however, on whether teaching is inherently different between the first year and the third year levels. When people speak of university college teaching, they often speak of characteristics they associate with academic settings.

**Aspects of academic settings.** Among the characteristics associated with academic settings are an emphasis on academic credentials, publishing, research, and the content of the discipline. Some faculty say they want to avoid those emphases. Some faculty say they think of themselves as educators first, rather than as members of a discipline.

The [department says] new people have to have the Ph.D. ... That doesn't sit well with me. I don't think there is any evidence that holding a Ph.D. makes you a better teacher or better informed on the subject. ... It seems to me the Ph.D. has taken priority over teaching. We want Ph.Ds who are excellent teachers but they must have the Ph.D. ... To me the Ph.D. is theory and research and I don't like theory and research; I don't think it makes a better teacher. ... I define myself as an educator, not as a [member of discipline], an educator who teaches [a particular discipline]. ... When I read some of the things my son is being assigned [at Tradition U], described with no words under 20 syllables, there's somebody's ego trying to talk about something that has no use, no utility, that irritates me. ... I'm very opposed to that “publish or perish.” ... Many universities have appalling instructional services; their teachers can't teach. ... [Stories of professors at Tradition U] This one guy, he read a book to students. He's still there. Other guys read lecture notes. To me, those aren't teachers and have no right to be in front of a classroom. (Susan)
However, other faculty say they identify with their discipline; they say teaching is just a part of what they do.

I think we [in our department] are discipline oriented; we all identify with the discipline. That's basically it. I see myself as a [member of discipline]. A substantive but certainly not exclusive part of my work is teaching. It's part of what I do, a central part of what I do but it certainly isn't all of what I do. ... I do a lot of reading, thinking; I do some research. ... It's at some personal expense, as these things always are, in terms of time; I can't say it all fits within some kind of a work force definition of a workweek but it's interesting to me. I enjoy it. ... The planning of the research included ... getting students here involved so it's also integrated with the work I do here. ... I've always done something research wise. [With becoming a university college] I think that it will be easier in a couple of ways. (Matt)

Also, some faculty support the emphasis on credentials.

What I'm saying is that the issue of qualifications isn't volatile for those of us who were hired on with less than Ph.Ds years ago but does it play a big part in our hiring of new faculty? Yes. Why? Because we're selling credibility as well as education. That credibility has to be seen by places like Victoria ... and has to be seen in these folks who are offering [highly specialized courses]. [It has to be seen that] They are doctors, experienced in scholarship. It has to be seen that its not a fly-by-night course. Many established academics ... would sneer at idea of a Masters teaching those courses; they want you to know everything, so now we're saying Ph.D. preferred. (Rob)

Some faculty say they think of themselves as academics. For Alan, being an academic does not require doing research.

What attracted me to come here [years ago] from Urban U, a highly research focused university -- I don't have a problem with that necessarily, but research wasn't my forte, teaching is and was and that doesn't cut it at a university -- one thing I found attractive, there was zero research. That didn't bother me at all and it totally teaching oriented and they were looking for high quality classroom instructors. ... One of the difficulties I had with the so-called 2 year institution, it really was not a 2 year institution ... 2nd year courses were badly under-enrolled and among the consequences of that ... you never really get to know students. They were around a year and gone. So one of the things
we'd be able to get going ... give the place some academic flavour ... host of things that make an academic institution a fascinating place to be, like colloquiums, seminars, invited speakers, ... We tried to have some kind of a ceremony so we set up an awards ceremony. [Now, with the university college] I see us perhaps as having an academic parade and graduation, a more formal ceremony. ... It has a psychological role. [benefits to students and faculty] You sit on the podium in cap and gown and each student files by and as the ones you had file by, you can't help but feel some sense of .. well, I don't know if it's pride. An accomplishment. I've touched those students, this is what we do, we teach. .. To me, this is what academic life is about. (S: Interesting, the word academic. It keeps coming up. It seems to have various meanings.) Personally, I don't consider myself a college instructor or a teacher; I consider myself an academic. The semantics are important, I think. What do I mean by academic? I mean I'm a person who seeks knowledge, constantly, not just here but at home, doing this or that. I talk to my students about this ... the bottom line to this is that it's not that the person wants to know about this stuff, it's that he has to know. That's what I mean if I call myself an academic. (S: It's not just the seeking knowledge ..?) No. It's like I have to know about this stuff. (Alan)

For Lew, being an academic does require doing research. However, he says he is uncertain how important research really is at Multisite and what scholarly activity means there.

I wanted to do research, I didn't want to get on the research treadmill, but I didn't want to be at a college where doing research would be difficult. The main emphasis [in the hiring process] was on teaching, that was made clear from the start and that's fine. And then the grey area was scholarly activity. I don't think they know what it is; it might not be as important as it was stated when I was hired on. ... They can hire Ph.Ds to teach courses, any courses, now because we're out there, we're available. But my motive for going through to do a Ph.D. wasn't just to be an instructor. I wanted to do the research. I think the more Ph. Ds they hire on, they're going to set themselves up for those sorts of feelings, the Ph. Ds I know and have talked to, want to do some research. ... The teaching aspect of it, it can be an academic process, because you have to prepare for the course, if you're good at it. I guess for me academic also means conducting research ... adding to an existing body of knowledge. It's a tough word to pigeon hole. I look at some people around here and they call themselves academics but .. I would say, you're not academics, you're just teaching. (Lew)
Shawn (like Matt) says his research informs his teaching; he understands the phrase scholarly activity to have a broader meaning than just the traditional sense of doing research.

I think, first of all, the interviewers appreciated my research background. I don't have any industry experience; they appreciated my experience in research and also they told me that they would encourage faculty here to do some research so that's another motivation for me to come here. ... Like in terms of %, this is just my own opinion, before [it became a university college] I think probably it was 95% of teaching and maybe 5% or 0% research; at Eastern University, it's about 50:50. So I would say for a university college, maybe 70%, 30%. (S: So half way between the community college and the traditional university?) Exactly. ... Scholarly activity, that's another interesting name, term, they use here. I think it is different from research in universities; probably it means you should develop some innovative teaching techniques and attend national conferences regarding teaching techniques, that's my understanding. It's not pure research, it's broader. I think that's more appropriate, because teaching is the highest priority here. ... But I do feel that doing some research does not conflict with good teaching; you can combine both. For example, when I taught [a particular course], I could incorporate more real world examples after my research experience; I could make the class more interesting. I got my feedback in my course evaluation and found they did appreciate those examples. (Shawn)

Many faculty, like Shawn, say that developing teaching skills is a form of scholarly activity.

[Speaking of the Learning Environment Committee, a group of faculty who produced guidelines on various topics in preparation for the transition]. A big one [topic] was on scholarly activity, on teaching skills vs adding to knowledge. If an instructor is developing skills and getting into alternate methods and student needs and with an emphasis on learning, really into teaching strategies, does that carry as much weight as, say, Science research? It was established quickly on the committee, they have equal value. (Cindy)
Some faculty are uncertain, however, whether the broader definition of scholarly activity really prevails. Andy, for example, in describing the term itself as splitting, said that “some people go to some pains to say it’s for everyone but I don't think anyone has really bought that” (p. 278). Susan says she feels betrayed by recent developments concerning scholarly activity.

I was in that Learning Environment Committee, in which we looked at how we could ensure that we retained our focus on excellence in teaching and learning and we made a series of recommendations, most of which have been totally ignored. They dealt with everything from hiring to classroom management. ... We emphasized over and over, when we were setting up, that scholarly activity must be available to all faculty; that it's just as important for masters as for Ph.D., probably more important. Something just came out; it emphasizes course work reduction for people teaching upper level courses and that's not what we decided before we became a university college so that’s why I'm feeling is betrayed. ... And the Stuart Smith commission came out very vehemently against this publish or perish idea. If a person wants, this is a fairly demanding career, although many of the public would not see it. I estimate that during the semester I spend a minimum of 60 hours on my job. ... Many weeks, I spend up to 80 hours a week. ... I don't have time to write and publishing, I resent the implication that if I'm not writing and publishing, then I'm not good [in my discipline]. If you are hired as an educator, then you should be assessed on your abilities as an educator. (Susan)

When people speak of how they interpret such terms as scholarship and academic or of the relations among teaching, research, being an academic, and scholarly activity, the pattern of comment entails an array of multiple and sometimes conflicting interpretations. Some faculty, for example, say the institution has developed a broad definition for scholarly activity whereby instructional excellence and innovation are valued as much as traditional research
activities. Other faculty say the institution is uncertain how it defines scholarly activity and on how much support it will offer to traditional research activities. Still other faculty say the institution continues to espouse a broad view of scholarly activity but its actions favour research activities over instructional technology.

When people speak of the different elements of mission, their interpretations fall into different patterns, depending on the issue. When they contrast college teaching with university teaching, for example, there seems to be a single interpretation: that college teaching is better. When they speak of whether teaching changes at the upper levels, there seem to be dichotomous interpretations: it is different qualitatively; it changes incrementally from each level to the next. When they speak of the relations among job training, academic study, and serving the community, there are no clear patterns of single or dichotomous interpretations.

An Issue or Two

There are a number of issues some faculty take as indicators of changes in the mission. One of these is the issue of cost recovery courses, which means students pay the full cost of courses rather than the usual subsidized tuition. The
other is the role of Continuing Education in offering a range of courses and going out into the community. To many faculty, these are separate issues in the context; to most faculty in Continuing Education, they are related issues.

**Cost recovery courses.** In the early years, financial costs were recognized as a potential barrier to access. Low fees were a means of enhancing access. The issue of cost recovery courses is of concern to some people at Multisite. Rob explains what cost recovery means; he says such courses negate the original mandate.

I think cost recovery courses, that's a huge issue right now. That means if you're going to offer Eng. 405, then you recover the cost from the student to put it on so rather than charging 120 dollars you charge 500 to pay for the faculty member, building costs, and so on. And the issue is in full hot debate at this time. The English department came out resolutely and said no bloody way. (S: Why?) They said that's the leading edge, maybe, of an attempt to make all courses cost recoverable and that will jack up all courses, not just for summer semester but for all semesters, to make education self-supporting. Well, all of a sudden you catapult the cost tremendously, although it does offer some students who can pay the opportunity to get the courses they need, the deficits or potential deficits need to be very clearly looked at. I think we're, I think the issue has to do with the honour of its original mandate to serve its constituents at reasonable cost, that's the terms of reference. (Rob)

Wendy sees the fight as a real split between faculty in the two instructional divisions.

There really is a fight over cost recovery courses; a real split between Careers faculty and Arts and Science. ... I think it's horrible. Philosophically, I mean. So do others; someone [at a meeting where it was discussed] gave an example of two operating rooms, where one is for those who can pay more and another with a big line-up. (Wendy)
Jane says she thinks cost recovery is a thorny issue and probably inevitable.

This thing coming up of fully cost recovery courses will be a real problem. How can you justify to a student, if he or she can get in in September, they'll get in for whatever a course costs now, but if they can't get in and come back in the summer and are willing to pay, they can have it for $450. That does something to your comprehensive and to the open door. ... I don't know, it's a very thorny question. I'm against it on the ground it makes 1st and 2nd class citizens. On the other hand, if you need and want that course and they're willing to pay, why should we deny it to them. I don't know what the answer is. ... I think most faculty are dead set against it, on philosophical grounds and also from a union viewpoint because if it's fully cost recovery, then they'll try to get it outside the contract and hire teachers as cheaply as possible. I think it's inevitable; I've no reason to say this, just my personal opinion. I mean, OLA is offering just exactly the courses we're offering here in South and they're paying $350 and apparently they have a waiting list. Quite apart from the point of whether OLA should be here doing that in our region, that's a whole other question, but obviously there's a demand out there, so it seems to me fairly inevitable sooner or later. (Jane)

Some faculty express mixed feelings about cost recovery courses. Pete, for example, is against cost recovery but he says management is going to do it anyway. He also sees some merit in the idea and sees the need to structure it carefully.

I'm against cost recovery. The [Academic] Division and particularly the English department strongly objects. They essentially said they won't take part. It seems to me management is probably going to do it anyway and if, for example, English says no, we won't do it, management will simply say to Community Education, you run some English courses. English doesn't own their English courses, so if they're going to do it anyway, it might be better try to control it. It seems to me cost recovery meets a least one basic principle of justice. It's going to make the worst off better off because we're going to get people in buying seats in very heavily enrolled courses and thus freeing up seats even for people who can't afford to buy the expensive seats, so it's going to increase the total number of seats and that's going to help everybody. In some ways, it's going to tax some people who can afford it or are willing to make the sacrifices. Now, just what that implies is you're going to be real careful how you structure that thing, that you don't start to offer sections in courses that you can only get by paying more money. ... if you offer
one section of English 350 in the summer on a cost-recovery basis and that's the only way to get that section, that's something else entirely. So I'm not so much in support of doing it but certainly understanding why the Board feels strongly moved to do it, recognizing that it may well be a thin edge of the wedge. With this government, God knows what they'll make of it. But if it's going to be done, there are ways you can do it that will produce at least good results in the short term. (Pete)

Some faculty (including those in the group interview) speak of cost recovery as courses for rich people.

I quite frankly hate the idea of there being another semester added for rich people. In fact, I just don't like it. (Anita) ... Often, we have students we cannot serve and if we start looking at how are we going to solve that problem, that's one option. It might not be the best, and I agree with you, I wouldn't want to see different rates of tuition for different people but if it can somehow be evened out, then let the people decide. Will they come, will instructors teach through the supper hour, and that sort of thing. I don't know that we're going to have any choice if we're going to serve the people in the region who in fact pay the taxes for this whole thing to take place. Sooner or later, we've got to figure out some way of offering courses. (Ann)

Some faculty see it as appropriate if it is to meet job training needs and if industry is paying for it.

I'm comfortable with cost recovery. What I'm not comfortable with is the same courses being subsidized by the government in regular classes and the same course being taught through cost recovery by CE for more money. I really believe, and this is different from the academic [belief], that an additional section should be provided if the demand is there by the industry served. If the demand doesn't come from the students, but from an industry for more sections, like the demand for computer courses. ... If an industry is paying for it, it doesn't bother me if it's the identical course, and the cost is different, but if we put on more sections of Communications just because there are more students who want it, I just think that's terribly irresponsible to put it on because of student demand. ... If you know you can only place so many graduates over a year, what's the point? It's irresponsible. (Cindy)
Some faculty members like the idea.

Idea of doing cost recovery doesn't bother me at all. We see it as an opportunity to do some special things in the summer, like maybe courses for existing teachers. ... Then there's the matter of when to take vacation; ... we like the idea; we would be interested. ... Overall, it all comes back to classroom space, adding classes, a lot of that's just associated with growth. (Edith)

The responses to cost recovery courses range from protest to enthusiastic support. Many people see them as inconsistent with the community college mission. Many people also see them as inevitable.

**The role of Continuing Education.** Faculty in Continuing Education (CE) have years of experience with cost recovery courses. Their courses traditionally have been seen as essential to comprehensiveness, as providing the first few “rungs” for the laddering process. Hence, their perspectives seem especially germane to the topics of cost recovery and comprehensiveness. (Because the division is identified, these informants are not given their usual pseudonym, for reasons of confidentiality.)

On cost recovery, some faculty in CE speak of adjusting to it, albeit with some difficulty.

We have a different perspective because we've been at it since 1984. We were very resistant to it; it was a blow, an absolute blow. Initially we received funding for CE ... we now base our classes on the minimum number. Ten years later, we're pretty good at it. (S: What's your reading of it as a campus wide issue?) It's a real issue, it's a real issue. ... One point of view is that if we get X dollars for courses and we're turning away students then what we ought to do is pay for extra courses so those students can come in and cost
recovery is one way you can do it. The idea is that there will be students who pay it and it's not a matter of right and wrong, these students need these courses. And then there are those who say, well, no, that's against the philosophy; it's wrong. I guess I've just become jaded in that ... cost recovery is just the way it is. (CE faculty member #1)

In the good old days, they really didn't have to charge a fee for a vocational course, the fee was just token. ... Now, we're very bottom line oriented, truly cost recovery. We went from very large to very mean and hungry. For a while, we really felt as if we were in business; if you wanted a job, you created good courses. ... On cost recovery, my response from a CE position is what's all the fuss about, there didn't seem to be a great outcry when we were forced to be cost recovery. Now I think the current argument is, we're creating a two-tier system, and we've had a two-tier system [for some time]. If you take our set of computer courses, it's the equivalent of the course funded from the computer department, theirs cost 60 to 70 dollars; ours cost the student 600 dollars. So there's a two tiered system and maybe other people are just waking up to that fact. ...We've argued over and over for not having the entry level job courses cost recovery. Raise your credit courses fee somewhat, take that money, help the part time learner. That's been an issue ... the treatment of the part time learner. If it's credit, then it's fixed fee structure. If it's a working person who's trying to get vocational upgrading through continuing education, usually, they pay through the nose. There's no question ... that two-tier system is there. Now we're talking about credit courses on a two-tier system and it's a whole new philosophical outrage occurring. (CE faculty member #2)

Some faculty in CE associate cost recovery with a decline in comprehensiveness. The decline is seen to result from a shift away from general interest courses and from community projects. The idea that some segments of the community are getting less attention now recurs.

A different segment of the community values us more. I guess a different group of people are coming in contact with us, from when we were a community college. (S: How different?) A group who probably see their children going to university ... also a group of people who now see it for their professional upgrading or the opportunity to finish a degree ... and the group I think we've probably lost are those looking for the second chance, coming back for ABE, those who saw us more as a comprehensive institution. ... That "open door" sometimes criticized as the revolving door, I don't know if we're reaching those people anymore. I see the changes in CE as a lot more professional groups and as dropping more and more of our general interest and community development. ... This whole cost recovery, and the need to generate revenue, means 90%
of my job goes to responding to the group that is easier to reach, easier to reach is not the word, that is probably more responsive to education. Ten per cent goes to personal projects that are close to our heart, that community development, that delivery of programs that we feel are needed, for groups that might not formally respond to us. ... In the old days, it was probably 50:50, that's a big difference. ... You work with the volume demands and this whole cost recovery, you don't spend your time taking down barriers to access. ... When you're charging students $2400 for certificate programs, they've got to be able to pay. (S: Is there a sense there that the institution is responding more and more to individuals as workers rather than as individuals?) Yeah, that would be a reasonable assessment of it. You still have the individual coming in but ... they're trying to protect their lifestyles or their jobs or whatever. ... I have a sense of losing that concept of the community college ... I don't see it only as a university college becoming a factor in that, I see cost factors and different kinds of things affecting it. Yeah, I definitely think we're losing that comprehensiveness and our ability to become a player in solving community problems, giving power to people to solve some of their problems or to develop some of their own projects. (CE faculty member #4)

It's quite a different .. environment to work in now because it's a much more mature community, bigger demand for the higher technical type stuff. ... The way it was, probably all of us spent about a third of our time with community groups; we were seen as facilitators. Now, I cannot afford to spend my time with a community group if there's no revenue in it and that's a major change in the focus of our department. ... I don't relate it to the transition, I relate it to our changing mandate, or the reality of our cost recovery, that drives you so much. (S: So an economic thing? Where does that come from?) An economic thing, it comes from the Ministry to begin with, because they don't fund sufficient. ... When I started, probably 75% general interest, 25% vocational, programs. Now, that's totally turned around. ... [examples of work-related courses that are highly specialized] (S: Very responsive to changes in the work place?) Very much so. It's a totally different world. (CE faculty member #2)

Every year we're cutting more and more general interest courses and doing more career oriented ones with some kind of certification attached, statement of completion kind of thing. When I started, it was much more general interest oriented, 75% of our courses were general interest, because that's what the community wanted. I'm concerned right now, that I'm listening to it but I'm not sure that we're not directing it. ... People are really pressed for time, money even is less a factor than time. ... You can learn how to dance but that's not a priority compared to learning how to type because it's possibly job related. We're offering probably 40% part-time vocational now; the community is saying they don't have time for this [general interest]. ... I think it has a lot to do with responding to the institution ... because after all that's what university is all about is credentials. ... The college itself is directing more and more what we're supposed to be offering rather than listening to the community. (CE faculty member #1)
One person, however, expresses the view that CE has not changed much, although the comment includes the qualifying phrase of “what we are able to do.”

The concept of community college was really capsulized in CE, because the word community meant for the people, meant you didn't have to have a grade 12 education. You could come and do CE courses; that was a really neat introduction. It was something for people to say that they were doing it at the college so we always say it's the first step to go on so in that sense CE hasn't changed. We are still the heart of the community college concept, we are the word community. ... In the olden days, we would not do as sophisticated courses but we responded very quickly. We took a community and said what will work here, we really looked for the needs. ... CE continues to do that. (S: Has that changed?) Not a lot. That's our job to find out what works best in our community and to respond to those needs. They certainly have become different. (S: What the community is saying they want?) What the community is saying they want and what we're able to do. ... Also, we're looking at laddering, for example, some of the new programs for now do not hold credit but at some point, maybe we will give a certificate and then that can be the beginning of a degree. (CE faculty member #5)

Some faculty in CE say they see a loss of comprehensiveness; some faculty say they do much less in the way of responding to the community. Some faculty say their work increasingly concerns workplace credentials and less often provides the “second chance” opportunity for the adult with little formal schooling.

Mission: Interpreting What People Say

In this section, I explore and attempt to understand the theme of mission. I want to understand what it means and how it is changing. I look at meanings that seem to be shifting and others that seem to be contested. I identify a
dichotomous belief I believe to be influential and some perspectives on it. Finally, I consider the meaning of mission at Multisite at present. I do this under these headings (i) Multiple meanings, (ii) An Underlying dichotomy, and (iii) Meanings of mission.

Multiple Meanings

Meanings at Multisite are multiple, shifting, and sometimes contested. I consider changes in meanings in two subsections, Shifting meanings and Contested meanings.

Shifting meanings. When people at Multisite speak of the institutional mission in the past, they speak of the values on which the community college, as an institutional type, originally were founded. Multisite’s historic mission is the historic mission of the traditional community college. As outlined above (p. 18), colleges were founded to make a variety of post-secondary programs accessible to a broad segment of the general population (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986, p. 157). The comprehensive curriculum, as already noted, was seen as a primary means to access. One way it provided access is illustrated by “laddering.” Reducing financial, geographic, and social barriers to post-secondary education also were means of making opportunity more democratic. An orientation to community and
the activities that entailed and open admissions policies also were means of encouraging students to come to the institution. An emphasis on teaching and learning and student services were all ways of increasing the likelihood of successful completion. When people speak of institutional mission, they sometimes speak of characteristics that concern the whole institution; sometimes they speak of what seems germane to their daily work, such as how they understand teaching. Sometimes, faculty speak of the various institutional components that support the mission.

When people speak of mission they reveal a multifaceted understanding of what they are doing and how they do it. What people say about mission entails an overarching purpose and the strategies, structures, and systems that support that purpose. In the past, I infer that there was a degree of consensus on mission. A number of faculty articulate clearly the traditional community college mission (e.g., Jane, Rob, Luke, above); there was a sense of a single, albeit general, interpretation of mission in the early years. In the present, there are multiple interpretations on the state of the mission and on various aspects of the mission. Some comments suggest the historic mission remains; others, that it has changed; still others, that it is uncertain what is happening and what will happen. One reason for multiple and complex interpretations is the multifaceted nature of
institutional mission. Some faculty seem to attend to certain aspects of the mission more than other aspects. Some faculty seem greatly concerned with comprehensiveness, for example, whereas others are concerned with retaining the focus on teaching excellence and still others look to commitment to community.

Another reason seems to be that people vary in what information they use as the basis of interpretations. On the topic of comprehensiveness, for example, some faculty speak of the perceived relative emphasis on academic courses compared with Trades; other faculty, on academic courses compared with other non-academic programs. Some faculty take the decline in general interest programming as an indicator of a decline in comprehensiveness. Other faculty take the continuing presence of a variety of programs as an indicator that comprehensiveness is retained.

Comprehensiveness seems to have different meanings, depending on what indicators are being monitored and on what information is available. Some people in CE speak of the loss of comprehensiveness, for example, on the basis of a marked decrease in general interest courses. Rob, among others, speaks of it being retained on the basis that a great range of courses continue to be offered. It is unclear if Rob and others are unaware of the decline in general interest courses or if those courses are tangential to their definition of comprehensiveness. To
some faculty, retaining comprehensiveness seems to mean maintaining an array of programs, possibly without regard for proportion. To Bob, it means retaining the historic proportion among programs.

(S: Somewhat related, do you think the college has kept its comprehensiveness, compared to before the status?) That would be impossible, if we’re growing in some areas and stagnant in others, you don't have that kind of comprehensiveness, as far as balance in numbers are concerned. (S: Is that something of concern?) Oh, definitely, unless there are serious changes, I'd almost anticipate that in 10 years they'll close this building. (Bob)

The general interest courses once were the entry point to the institution for a segment of the community that some faculty say is now less likely be included. They say there has been a shift to courses that provide work-related skills, often highly specialized courses. Certain sorts of community projects were another means to encourage participation; some faculty who used to work in these projects say they do much less community work now and most of what they do is oriented to providing institutional revenue. The segments of the community most likely to be involved with the institution now are those likely to seek out opportunities, those taking higher level courses, those seeking work related credentials.

Just as the meaning of comprehensiveness seems to be multiple and shifting, so is the meaning of community and of responding to the community. Some faculty, for example, speak of continuing commitment to community. It
seems unclear what they are saying they believe and on what evidence they base that belief. A person who says commitment to community continues, for example, may believe that it continues to the same extent or in the same types of project or simply that it continues to some extent or in some types of projects. The belief itself may or may not be well founded; it may be based on past experience, present experience, hearsay or wishful thinking, for example.

In comments about the present, the community itself often emerges as a context populated by other institutions, industries and other employers that are the focus of Multisite’s programs. In comments about the past, the community is more likely to emerge as a context populated by individuals and informal groups with needs and interests that are the focus of Multisite’s programs. This is said by CE faculty member #4, for example (pp. 333).

The meaning of laddering seems to be shifting. When people speak of laddering in the past, they usually speak of people coming in to take non-credit courses, such as general interest courses or high school equivalency courses. When people speak of laddering in the present, they usually speak of providing the opportunity to add a degree to a two year diploma. In a sense, the meaning remains the same: to have one program provide the basis for moving to a higher level program. In another sense, the meaning has shifted. First, it has shifted to
more attention to the higher level programs. More subtly, perhaps, it has shifted from an emphasis on a means to overcome social and psychological barriers to an emphasis on dealing with educational prerequisites and credit courses, a shift from a focus on the individual to a focus on institutional structure. The stories of laddering in the early days tend to concern a particular student and to emphasize that student’s need to become confident in a classroom and comfortable in the institution. Those dimensions remain in some of the comments on laddering now but they are less frequent and seem less central. Many of the comments on laddering in the present seem to emphasize the sequence of prerequisites between programs.

This shift in the meaning of laddering explains something that I at first found puzzling. On the one hand, faculty who teach in the Trades programs say they feel threatened because training for industry seems undervalued; they say they are concerned with the emphasis on what one of them labels “redundant courses” when the country needs skilled workers. On the other hand, faculty in CE say there is a shift in their division away from a community and general interest orientation to an orientation to work-related skills. The apparent contradiction is that one unit sees a shift away from job training; another, a shift towards such training. However, what is consistent in these patterns of
interpretations is that each shift can be seen as a move up the academic ladder, as it is traditionally construed. Work place skills, often technical, are a higher rung than general interest; credit courses in academic areas, higher than Trades. The comments make sense if the institutional orientation increasingly is to higher level courses.

There are some facets of mission and some systems intended to support the mission, as indicated above, that have been characterized by shifting meanings for some time. The comments of faculty in CE indicate that changes in their program mix occurred in response to the budget cuts of the early 1980s, for example. Also, various modifications of some of the original processes and policies of the traditional community college have evolved over the years. For example, many institutions that began with open admissions to all programs came to insist that students have their reading and writing skills assessed to facilitate appropriate placement. This was a response, at least in part, to students making limited progress in programs for which they lacked educational background. Someone refers to this problem as the open door becoming a revolving door (p. 333). Many institutions also adapted their systems to the needs of specific programs, so some of the practices to enhance access were emphasized more in some programs than others. In practice, the mission of the community college was neither monolithic
nor absolute although people sometimes speak of it as if it were. Lynn's repetition of "more or less" seems to acknowledge the relative and non-monolithic nature of various strategies and systems for the traditional mission.

**Contested meanings.** Some meanings and the issues with which they are associated seem especially salient to some faculty now. The meaning of research, for example, as it pertains to university college teaching, emerges now as a contested meaning. In the early days, those faculty who saw research and related activities as something they wanted to do, did it on their own time (e.g., Matt, p. 323). Among those faculty who had done research before becoming college instructors are those who were glad to give it up (e.g., Alan, p. 324) and those who found they had no time for it. (Rob and Wendy both say this, although I do not present their comments). The meaning of research as it pertains to college teaching was a non-issue then.

There are a number of ways in which the meaning of research is ambiguous now. One is in its relation to what one does in the classroom; another is in its relation to institutional expectations for faculty members. Some faculty say doing research would take too much time from their instructional duties. Some faculty say their research enriches their instructional practice. Some faculty value what they see as increased institutional support to do research. Others are uncertain
what support there is. Some faculty say they resent the implication they should do something they think is tangential to their instructional duties.

A related topic is scholarly activity, which the institution defines more broadly than research traditionally has been defined. Yet, some faculty are uncertain what it means, who will do it, and how much institutional support is available. There are various interpretations both on what is the case and on what ought to be. In a related way, there are multiple interpretations on what it means to be an academic. The terms scholar and academic each can be seen to have several dimensions. These include the processes of discovering or creating knowledge, disseminating knowledge to various audiences, developing instructional strategies and techniques to pass on knowledge more effectively, and applying theory to practical problems. These dimensions occur in various combinations and with different emphasis in faculty comment.

I infer that these dimensions and the interpretations around them were non-issues in earlier times. In the early years, the institutional emphasis was on the process of teaching. Some instructors may have construed that process with an emphasis on demonstrating skills; others, on disseminating discipline-based information. These and other emphases are not necessarily mutually exclusive and seem to have coexisted comfortably under the label of college teaching. The
overarching emphasis would have been on process. In the present, some faculty are labeling themselves or their colleagues as researchers, academics or scholars. For some faculty, for example, working with third and fourth year courses means a shift to a deeper engagement with the discipline as a body of content. For some faculty, being an academic means the joy of engaging with that content.

This shift from an emphasis on process to more emphasis on content is made explicit by one faculty member.

I guess we feel a little threatened ... we're generalists, most of us. We know process but often don't know content all that well. What has emerged is I guess a more discipline approach to CE. If you come in with a degree in Social Work, we bring in a specialist to do CE in Social Work, we bring in a specialist to do CE in nursing, that kind of thing and then what happens to us as generalist, but I don't think anyone is personally .. well, personally feel like they are going to lose a job or anything like that but you invest so much in something professionally and then you wonder what's going to happen to that. (CE faculty member #4)

There is a cluster of phrases (teaching, training, scholarly activity, doing research, being an college instructor, being an educator, being an academic) with multiple and contested interpretations now. Interpretations concern their meanings and the connections among them. One way of looking at this cluster of contested meanings is as follows. At one time, essential components of the institutional mission could be summarized as three areas of focus: community, teaching, job training. Each of these was a particular approach to attaining the
traditional mission; each entailed its own ways of doing things and its own set of meanings. None was seen to be at odds or otherwise incompatible with the others. Indeed, each was seen as an essential component of an integrated whole, situated comfortably within the overarching mission. In the present, another component has been added. The addition of degree programs has resulted in contentious interpretations concerning the other components (community, teaching, job training). This has happened, I suggest, because of the thoughts and feelings some people associate with degree granting institutions. I hear a core dichotomy underlying some of these contested meanings.

An Underlying Dichotomy

In this section, I explore, first, the nature of a dichotomous belief and, second, what people say about it.

"Either/or thinking." Some faculty take a dichotomous view of post-secondary institutions, or at least consider that such a view may be feasible. When Luke (p. 312) says everywhere he turns he hears either/or thinking, he means the view that an institution is either a college or university but not both. The assumption is that colleges and universities are two different institutional types that cannot co-exist. Hal, for example, wonders aloud if college and
university values are inherently incompatible. This dichotomous view can be seen as a predictable outcome of the typical university student’s experience in Canada.

As noted above, universities and colleges historically have been very different types of institutions in Canada. Many faculty are graduates of at least one Canadian university.

This dichotomous view also can be seen to be reinforced by academic reports on the field of which Multisite is a part. A few faculty members have graduate degrees in Higher Education or related areas of study and have a sense of the historic development of the institutional types. Some faculty have read the limited literature on university colleges in British Columbia. Barb, for example, refers to a paper by Dennison (p. 310). As outlined above, that literature emphasizes the contrast between college and university values.

Dennison & Gallagher (1986) write about distinctions among post-secondary institutions (i.e., colleges, universities, technical institutions). All three institutions must give attention to the functions of teaching, training, and research, they say, and then they distinguish among them, as follows.

The more significant difference among these kinds of institutions should be their relative emphasis on the learner and what is to be learned. In the case of the university and the technical/technological institution, the constant is what is to be learned; the learner is the variable who must master what the institution declares is to be learned. Historically and quite correctly, universities have had a preoccupation with entrance requirements and standards of performance because they know from experience that students cannot master what is required unless they have been prepared in advance for the level of performance
to be demanded at the university. Similarly, universities have placed relatively little emphasis on the art and skills of teaching because they have rightly assumed that students must rise to meet the institutional requirements rather than that universities must meet the particular needs of the students. ... [Concerning the community college] The single thread in this whole process is the individual student and the objectives of that student. ... The college instructor can not lose sight of the student any more than university scholars can lose sight of their research responsibilities. The scholar's primary allegiance is to a discipline; the community college instructor's primary allegiance ought to be to the student. (pp. 150, 151)

What Dennison & Gallagher (1986) say about the two settings is consistent with many of the beliefs people at Multisite express. Dan's comments, for example, that the student is expected to come in and "do the job" (p. 320) and Cindy's comment on the lack of attention to teaching skills (p. 319), illustrate this. Many comments concern the matter of primary allegiance; the pull of the discipline vs the focus on students. Dennison & Gallagher write of all institutions having the same functions; they say the difference is a matter emphasis, as if they are speaking of a range of points on a continuum. Yet, I hear a dichotomous view as they delineate the primary concern in each. Their description captures accurately significant differences between colleges and universities, as most typically experienced in Canada. It seems reasonable to suggest that their comments have influenced the interpretations of some faculty in the field, including some at Multisite, but it is difficult to say to what extent.
I hear also something that explains one of the first substantive (i.e., concerning the transition) comments a faculty member at Multisite made to me. Early in the first phase of the study, someone volunteered that he and his colleagues had not wanted the university college (p. 99). We were concerned with losing what we had, he said; we were concerned with a "poor fit." I hear in this now the assumption that the differences between university and college values may be significant enough to mean that the two sets of programs cannot co-exist.

This dichotomous view also can be seen to be associated with other interrelated assumptions. One assumption is that in the competition for resources, the academic programs will have the advantage. Implicit here is the assumption of hierarchy; if programs are different, one must be higher status, the other, lower. Implicit also is the assumption that the higher a program is on the academic ladder, the more social, political and financial support it attracts. Many of the comments that concern survival of non-academic courses seem rooted in this assumption. A related assumption is that in a struggle between college and university values, the university way of doing things will prevail. I hear this assumption in the many expressions of fear that the university model will take over. Some faculty say the shift to university values is taking place already at Multisite. They see university values expressed in such things as larger class size,
less time in class, selective admissions, more emphasis on research and credentials and less emphasis on teaching skill. Another assumption shows in the tendency some faculty have to see a variety of changes as a move to the university model. An increased emphasis on credentials or on more selective admissions, for example, can as easily be seen as responses a college sector institution makes to external demands. Yet some people speak as if such changes change the essence of the institution. I hear in these comments the assumption that both institutional forms are monolithic, with certain characteristics universal across the institution, as if colleges always have small classes and universities always have large classes. As noted above, however, Lynn's repetition of "more or less" suggests recognition that the form was never monolithic.

**Perspectives on dichotomous perspectives.** Some faculty, of course, do not hold the belief in two dichotomous sets of beliefs and values. Wendy notes that there seems to be the assumption, that bringing on degrees means comprehensiveness will be lost, for example, although she does not share it (p. 312). Luke sounds frustrated with what he labels "either/or" thinking. Some faculty speak as if there is no reason to think the two sets of programs cannot co-exist. I hear this when Mary, for example, says what is required is balance. Some
faculty (e.g., Jay, Mary) speak of programs that have both academic and non-academic components; Mary speaks of having an academic side personally.

Some faculty have experience as students or as faculty members in educational systems that have a variety of institutional forms rather than just the dichotomous types that historically have characterized the Canadian context.

Several faculty speak of experience with four year American institutions that take teaching as their primary focus, for example.

I spent a lot of time in California. I'm amused at everybody's angst over these colleges becoming universities. ... All these fears, whereas in lots of places in the States, all sorts of tiny institutions develop into excellent colleges ... colleges often are four year degree granting institutions. It just seems a non-issue to me. Twenty years down the road, no one knows what this will look like. These issues won't even be considered. (Jay)

A few faculty know that some Canadian universities began as colleges.

Chuck speaks of the origins of a local university when he talks about the status-gaining period.

The finance minister came over to a rally ... and when he got up to speak, he basically announced the government was going to do it. ... He went back to Victoria and seemingly forgot about it. ... He couldn't get out of his mind he wanted a university. He was of two minds whether this was going to do the job because it was a university college, and was that the same thing ... and he eventually went to talk to ... his neighbour who was just retired as president of UVic and he [the retired president] said ... that's exactly what happened at UVic, ... it started off as a college and people would transfer to UBC. And he [the retired president] said that college had less standing then than Multisite has now and was much smaller, and if question is, is this a university that will be credible, the answer is yes, and that did it for him [the minister]. (Chuck)
Some faculty who do not believe that the two institutions are based on sets of dichotomous values seem to recognize a potentially influential aspect of that dichotomous thinking. In Wendy’s comment, that adding degree programs had the effect of alienating the Trades more, I hear awareness that false assumptions can create a prophecy that is self-fulfilling.

The belief that college and university programs are inherently incompatible seems highly salient in the organizational context. It is a dichotomous belief, in that it asserts that an institution is either a college or a university but not both. However, the beliefs expressed about that belief are more complex than “either/or.” Some faculty speak as if it is a real dichotomy; some, as if it is a false one. Some faculty say they are uncertain what to believe. Some speak as if believing it can make it so: a false dichotomy can produce the outcomes of an actual dichotomy.

One possible outcome recurs in what people say; some faculty suggest that the institution may split in two sometime in the future. That possibility seems implicit in Hal’s comments that the two sets of programs may be incompatible (p. 317). Some faculty make it explicit.

I think that in the next 20 years you'll see this place grow, this is my own prognosis, not the institution's, you'll see South grow into a fully rounded academic institution and North probably more into a poly tech. (Rob)
The idea that Trades will separate recurs.

I think there's a feeling that there's some breaking up happening. There's stories about trades having their own building somewhere. One thinks that that is just a case of that evolving into another institution, which I think is inevitable, in a way. The region's growing ... that's fine, if it grows to that size and grows apart, fine in a sense but we don't want to devolve until we aren't big enough or ... you lose touch with comprehensiveness and I think it has been maintained but I think everybody can feel the world is changing very quickly and that we have to be open to that kind of thing. (Byron)

Some faculty make a distinction between the institution remaining as one structurally but not being an integrated whole. Hal, for example, suggests that in saying that “in a series of other ways, we are just a series of things tacked together.” Celia says she is concerned with fragmentation.

Another concern is the separation of the academic from the other operations of the college. [The concern] that career would be further removed, prep [high school/pre-college level courses] would be further removed, and vocational would be out of sight, so that it wouldn't be a comprehensive, even if everything was going on in the same place they would be so segregated that they might as well be separate institutions. (S: So some loss of feeling a part of the whole?) Yeah, fragmented and certainly my department works in quite a few areas because we ... do a lot of the prep. We want to hang on to the prep stuff. Some departments were quite happy to hand that over to somebody else ... that wasn't the route we particularly wanted to go. (Celia)

In Celia’s comment, the meaning of comprehensiveness goes beyond the programs that comprise the curriculum; it entails an integrated institution,
integrated in the sense of shared values, not just shared housing. She expresses
concern not only with structural separation but with normative isolation.

The Meanings of Mission

In this section, I consider what mission means at Multisite. First, I consider
this in terms of how institutional mission is defined, generally. Second, I consider
it in terms of the beliefs concerning mission that seem influential now.

Defining mission. It seems reasonable to equate the early years at Multisite
with the initiation of an institutional saga. Clark uses saga to mean the strongest
possible identity an organization may assume, it is “a mission made total across a
system ... it turns an organization into a community (Clark, 1980, p. 235). It is
most likely to occur, and it occurs most easily, when a new institution is being
established. It requires that a group of people become involved in the creation of a
college; they are deliberate about values and purpose and the nature of the
institution they intend to create (Clark, 1980). What people say about the early
years, when they talk about participation, about being family, about the
institutional mission, is consistent with the initiation of a saga.

On the one hand, there is a sense that the various values and beliefs that
comprised the organizational culture were established in those early years. People
speak of articulating and clarifying values in the 1970s; people who join the institution in the early 1980s say that the culture was established by that time. This sense of an established set of beliefs is consistent with the following observation, concerning post-secondary institutions. "Usually, the mission evolves organically over time and individuals pay little attention to how it changes" (Tierney, 1989, p. 46). On the other hand, there is the sense that some people are monitoring what is happening carefully. Some people say that what they do and how they do it has changed significantly over time. Faculty in Continuing Education speak of being forced to offer courses on a cost recovery basis, for example, one describes it as "a blow, a real blow." People became especially concerned with funding in the early to mid 1980s; some people speak of a sense of caution, of insecurity, permeating the setting then. These funding concerns continue over time; they seem influential in the decision to seek university college status. Some faculty say adding degree programs was incompatible with the historic mission; some say it was "fear driven."

I am suggesting that multiple interpretations concerning mission, how to retain it, and what constitutes change or loss, began to surface in the early 1980s and continued through the gaining-status period and into the present. I also am
observing that a culture and its beliefs are never really established; they continue to evolve.

On the interpretations of some faculty, the mission can be seen to have changed already or to be in the process of doing so. In the view of others, the historic mission continues as it was. This gives rise to the question of how to understand mission and what it means to say a mission has changed. If mission is conceptualized within a rationalist view (in Tierney’s term), the two conceptions that dominate the higher education literature are the saga and the adaptive approach (Tierney, 1989). A saga is associated with high commitment internally; it provides a clear sense of identity and a connection with the past. It may be that some faculty (e.g., Luke) speak as if the saga remains the mission; others (e.g., a number of CE faculty), as if the saga has ended, or soon will. Because a saga is a normative (value-based) mission, the question of whether the mission has changed can be difficult to answer. It depends on what values one monitors and on what information is used to decide if the value continues to be expressed. Because a saga demands narrow institutional commitments, it may limit the institution’s ability to adapt to environmental changes. Hence, an adaptive mission has been favoured by the higher education literature that emphasizes effectiveness.
An adaptive mission demands a malleable organization that seizes opportunities that arise in the environment. In this view, the question of whether the mission has changed is answered easily. The institutional mission is defined in terms of programs and policies; adding new programs or changing policies means that by definition the institution has changed its mission (Tierney, 1989, reviewing various authors). Within this frame, Multisite’s decision to seek degree granting status is a change in mission.

If mission is conceptualized within an interpretive view, the question of whether the mission has changed seems less relevant. Mission, like all sets of cultural beliefs, can be understood not as static statement but as evolving meaning that is socially constructed, at least to some extent. It will be understood as dynamic symbolic process rather than as concrete social fact (using Putnam’s, 1983, p. 34, terminology).

**Traditional and emergent beliefs.** In the early years at Multisite, in memory at least, there seems to have been clarity on mission. Some faculty speak of those years in terms of facets of mission at the organizational level; some, at the program level. Many slide back and forth between levels. The sense of mission seems to have been general enough to accommodate the differences among programs: multiple purposes, numerous means to attain them, and various target
audiences. There is nothing to suggest that the inclusion of some purposes was seen as a threat to others. There is the sense of a single interpretation, a sense of consensus on purpose: to make a variety of post-secondary programs accessible to a broad segment of the general population.

It is different now. There is no consensus concerning whether the old mission persists, and to what extent. Many meanings are multiple and shifting; some are contested. Some meanings have become salient because they are associated with academic settings; others, because they are associated with ongoing concern with funding. A number of assumptions seem to underlie much of what people say. I take the belief that university and college cultures entail incompatible values to be of central importance, for example. Faculty who do not hold this belief nonetheless recognize it as important to some of their colleagues. A related belief is that the university programs are accorded higher status and when funding is limited, university courses will be favoured.

Like the other traditional themes, the theme of mission is limited and constrained by emergent beliefs. However, unlike participation and family, there is no one dominant emergent theme that opposes the traditional theme of mission. Instead, there are a variety of emergent beliefs that oppose and limit it and a variety of beliefs that support it. Beliefs that limit the theme of mission include
the following. An institution is either a college or a university, but not both.
When degree and non-degree programs exist in one institution, the non-degree programs receive less support than the degree programs. Degree programs inherently are incompatible with the mandate of a traditional community college. Degree and non-degree programs may not be incompatible inherently, but for psychological or political reasons, it may not work out. To retain comprehensiveness means to retain as high a proportion of non-academic programs as obtained in the past.

Beliefs that support the traditional theme of mission, or may do so, include the following. Degree programs are compatible with the mandate of a traditional community college. The institution must adapt to changing demands, including adding degree programs. Degree programs are just another set of programs. Degree programs are a positive addition to comprehensiveness. As long as we have a variety of programs, we have comprehensiveness. These emergent beliefs are the subject of various interpretations, including to what extent any one is equivalent to, related to, or in contradiction of, any other. Some faculty hold one premise or the other; some seem uncertain what they believe.

The traditional theme of mission is the premise that our institutional mission is the community college mission; it entails three components: teaching, job
training, serving the community. The emergent theme of mission is, or seems to be, our mission now entails four components: teaching, job training, serving the community, degree programs. There are multiple emergent beliefs about how viable that premise is. The addition of another component, another facet to a multifaceted mission, can be seen as a complication, a complement, or a threat. All those interpretations are a part of the meaning systems now.
CHAPTER 9

A CULTURAL PORTRAIT: A KALEIDOSCOPE OF MEANINGS

One purpose of this study is to describe and explore the organizational culture at Multisite. In the first section of this chapter, I piece together a picture of the contextually-based meaning systems at Multisite. In the second section, I explore that picture. In the final section, I offer an overview of meaning systems.

Piecing Together a Picture of Meaning Systems

In this section, I sketch a cultural portrait by looking at traditional and emergent themes, the relations among themes, and the patterns of interpretations.
Traditional Themes: Speaking of the Past

I hear three sets of meanings at Multisite that I label the traditional themes of participation, family, and mission. By theme, I mean central premises that seem to have guided how things are done since the institution’s early years. Participation, for example, denotes a form of decision making that emphasizes active involvement of all organizational members. It also entails a set of related values, including respect, openness, collegiality, and egalitarianism, that guide the decision making process. Participation means seeking and attaining consensus on an ongoing basis on a variety of issues. It seems to have functioned as a “soft” means of resolving conflict and maintaining the harmonious relations that are highly valued. Symbols associated with participation include the joint union, which includes faculty and staff; and the network of democratically elected committees. Each of these reflects and expresses the participatory values.

Participation, as a set of symbols and beliefs, has come to entail layers of multiple meanings. Some values and practices associated with decision making process have become connotations of participation, for example. These include the distinctive style of interacting and the organizational emphasis on a respectful manner and the maintenance of harmonious relations. For some people, these
connotations seem to have become as important, or more important, than the denotative meaning of decision making.

In my first efforts to understand what participation meant to people at Multisite, I struggled to make my own sense of it. Some people stress some symbols more than the others; some people emphasize some values more than others. Those who value the participatory style above all else sometimes seem not to speak of the same phenomenon as those who value involvement in decisionmaking. The metaphor of a kaleidoscope helped me make this complexity coherent (see Note 2).

A kaleidoscope contains loose bits of coloured material and mirrors; changes of position of the bits of material are reflected in an endless variety of patterns. Turning the instrument causes the bits to move and, hence, offers an ongoing flux in the patterns displayed. The viewer can choose which bits to pay attention to and which patterns or configurations to notice. My metaphoric kaleidoscope offers a view of the patterns of meanings and their expression in the organizational context. The symbols and values of participation are elements in patterns. Some people value highly, for example, the joint union, a symbol of collegiality between faculty and staff.

2 Meyerson (1991) quotes a social worker who describes her work life and its ambiguities as “trying to find a place to stand in the middle of a kaleidoscope” (p. 137).
Participation in its denotative sense, as decision making, is a particular configuration of values and symbols, and participation in its connotative sense, as a style of interacting, is an overlapping but distinctive pattern or configuration of elements. Some people monitor the pattern that reflects the denotation, for example, and others seem to monitor various connotations. Thinking of meaning systems in terms of a kaleidoscope’s field helps me understand, among other things, why descriptions of what is apparently the same phenomenon vary so much. Some people explain participation with stories that centre on social aspects of particular events, for example, whereas other people describe it in terms of the process of decision making and the decisions made.

I label the belief that people are (or are like) family at Multisite the theme of family. I come to understand it to mean that Gemeinschaft or communal values guide social relations. These values include giving support to, caring about, and nurturing one another. Meanings associated with being family include cohesiveness, stability, warmth, sharing attitudes and values. Family is symbolized by social intimacy: knowing one another, socializing with one another, enjoying fluid boundaries between professional and personal activities and relations. When people speak of being in an organization characterized by communal values, they often speak of energy, creativity and charm. They speak
of organizational events that are like family dinners, meetings that are friends getting together.

Participation and family comprise mutually influential and supportive sets of meanings. Treating the perspectives of all members, regardless of role, with respect, for example, is consistent with valuing and caring for all persons to whom membership is ascribed. Engagement of the whole person with the community is consistent with the involvement of all members in the decision making process. The expression of each theme requires a context in which people listen to one another, have time for one another. I suggest that the characteristic Multisite style reflects the integration of these two themes; that is, it is guided by the values of both the family and participatory themes. The beliefs, values and norms associated with the themes of family and participation underlie the style of interacting and the social character of the setting. Hence, exploring these themes reveals the relationships among symbols and how they are related to activities in the setting (Smircich, 1983c, p. 163).

The metaphor of the field seen in the kaleidoscope suits the idea of two compatible belief systems. Each set of symbols and the individual elements can be seen to merge, separate, and intertwine again. The configuration that is the style of interacting, say, can move among the symbols of participation, then seem
to attract the symbols of family. The values of respecting and nurturing persons can intertwine, move apart and come together again. The image is of soft, pleasant colours, repeating patterns, and order.

I label the belief that Multisite’s mission is the historic community college mission the traditional theme of mission. Facets of that traditional mission include teaching, job training and service to community. Providing access to programs to all segments of the community is a central goal in this mission. The comprehensive curriculum is a key means of doing so and a strong symbol of college ideals. Laddering stories (e.g., of someone coming in to take a general interest course and going on to complete high school) purport to document real case histories that illustrate how comprehensiveness provided access; they symbolize attainment of an ideal and are often told with delight.

By and large, mission as a set of beliefs and symbols seems to have been a configuration in the background of the patterns seen in the kaleidoscope, with a symbol like laddering occasionally bursting across the field. Although particular aspects or facets of purpose sometimes were discussed, the overarching understanding seemed to be implicit: we know what we are doing.

The mission of the community college, as the name community college implies, is firmly rooted in communal values. These values guide social relations
and interaction internally and externally. The institution attempts to establish Gemeinschaft-type relations with all segments of the broader community, for example. Facets of the mission include knowing and responding to the community, nurturing the development of individual students, and providing job training that supports both potential employees and employers. Underlying these facets is the intention to make educational opportunity more democratic and to affirm the democratic valuing of persons.

The participatory approach to decision making also affirms democratic and communal values. Individuals participate, for example, on the basis of membership alone; that is, ascribed status rather than an achieved status is what matters. I am suggesting that the traditional Multisite style expresses all these traditional Multisite themes and also facilitates expression of each of them. Collaborative and consensus-building processes, for example, are essential to communal relations and participatory decision making. I also am suggesting that compatible and mutually supportive values underlie these themes and are the basis of their integration.

When people speak of the past, they often speak in terms of the beliefs I am calling traditional themes. These beliefs seem to have guided and shaped organizational action and interpretation to a great extent, at least in memory.
People seem to agree communal social relations, democratic process and a focus on community college ideals were seen as the way we do things. I am not suggesting, of course, that people say that each of these premises always was put into practice in perfect accord with the premise. I am suggesting that these premises seem to have guided practice to a great extent. From the perspective of participants, the context that resulted was a warm and friendly place, a special place people associate with personal support and institutional success.

**Traditional and Emergent Themes: Speaking of the Present**

What some people say in public of the present (e.g., that we are family, that we are participatory), many people say in private of the past. When people speak in private of the present, however, they sometimes speak of no longer being family, of having less participation, or of uncertainty about whether community college ideals will be retained. From the perspective of participants, the context remains friendly, at least to some extent, and the institution still seems successful. Some people seem enthusiastic about bringing on degree programs; they describe it as exciting and rejuvenating. Some people speak of increasing competitiveness now, however, and some people express concern with stress and burnout.
On the basis of what I see and hear, I infer that each traditional theme is less often expressed (i.e., acted out) now and less effective as a guide to action and understanding in the present. The decline in the expressions of the themes of participation and of family can be explained in similar ways. Some faculty attempt to explain the decline in one or the other theme, for example, in terms of circumstances in the context, such as heavy workload, that act as limiting factors. However, some faculty say these factors may be influential but do not fully explain the changes they see. I suggest that other factors also are limiting and constraining the expression of these themes. I suggest that certain values and beliefs that were less often expressed in the past are expressed (i.e., acted out, although not necessarily stated) more often now and are limiting the expression of the traditional themes.

One belief is that, more often, important decisions are made by those with hierarchical position. Another belief is that, more often, non-communal values underlie social relations. I call these emergent beliefs the hierarchical theme and the Gesellschaft (non-communal values) theme, respectively. These beliefs oppose, constrain, and limit the expression of the traditional themes.

What is happening to the expression of the theme of mission is more difficult to sketch than what is happening to the expression of the other two
traditional themes. One factor may be that the set of beliefs I call mission is more complex than those I call participation and family. Mission entails a number of premises. It is an understanding that something is known (i.e., we know what we are doing) as well as an understanding about what is known (i.e., our institutional purpose is to fulfill the community college ideals). The community college ideals themselves entail multiple premises (e.g., we train for jobs, teaching is our focus).

Mission also may be more elusive than the other themes because it seems more abstract to organizational members. (All the themes are abstract in the sense they are my abstractions, of course; the interest here is in the ease with which the members' can monitor the relevant organizational activity.) Mission concerns what is long-term and strategic whereas the themes of participation and family are assertions about how something is done. Decision making and social relations concern immediate, everyday, experiential activities.

For the sets of beliefs I call participation and family, there are emergent and dichotomous sets of belief about how things are done. There is a traditional understanding and an emergent understanding that opposes it, in the sense of expressing an contradictory understanding. As concerns mission, however, the set of beliefs is more complex than a dichotomy. The core premise of the traditional
theme of mission is multifaceted; it entails the three components of the traditional community college. Traditionally, there seems to be no perceived incompatibility among them. Adding degree programs to those components, however, seems to have resulted in multiple, complex and sometimes contradictory beliefs about the relations among those components. Among the various emergent beliefs that concern mission, some beliefs (such as, degree programs will mean the loss of comprehensiveness) oppose the traditional theme, in contrast to other emergent beliefs (such as, degree programs add to comprehensiveness) which support and enhance it. Interpretations that pertain to mission include speculation on the nature of different institutional forms (i.e., "either/or" thinking, that an institution is either a university or a college), on what might happen in the future and on what "signs" there may be now of future directions.

The multiplicity of views that are expressed can be seen in terms of a kaleidoscope's field. People monitor different elements and notice differently the various elements and patterns that approach and then retreat. To some, for example, the emphasis on the Ph.D. credential is seen as a threat. It divides the field; it pulls toward a different understanding of what teaching is. To others, this emphasis means an opportunity; it suggests more support to do research. To still others, it is just another element in the setting that is of interest to some of one's
colleagues. In a related way, some people will consider attending a particular event and decide they have better things to do. Some people will attend and later speak of it as participatory; others will attend and later describe it as “hogwash.” They are looking at the same field and monitoring different elements and different configurations, with different degrees of engagement.

The view in the kaleidoscope now has many elements and many configurations; configurations seem to shift more rapidly than in the past. The field seems busier, it displays more bits and more patterns. Along with the values and norms of participatory decision making, for example, there are the values and norms of hierarchical decision making. Along with a coherent set of communal values there is an equally coherent set of non-communal values. As patterns shift and reassemble, some elements seem to appear suddenly as if from nowhere. Premises that were once taken for granted, that are background much of the time, become the central figure in the field, recede and then resurface. The focus on teaching is one such premise; service to the community is another. Mission and its facets are less likely to be background now, more likely to be in the centre of the field. Values associated with academic settings seem to be more obvious in the display, sometimes juxtaposed against those associated with college traditions. This kaleidoscope of multiple and shifting and sometimes contested meanings is a
picture of the interpretations that constitute the organizational culture at Multisite now. One way of looking at these meanings is in terms of the patterns of interpretations (Martin & Meyerson, 1988; Martin, 1992).

Patterns of Interpretations

The picture of cultural meanings that emerges from the early years is consistent with an integrative perspective. There is a focus on shared values, consensus and clarity, at least to a significant extent. The picture in the present is more complex. There are multiple interpretations in terms of how best to understand institutional purpose, decision making and social relations now. Some people speak as if the one or the other of the traditional themes still holds sway. Some people speak as if the one or the other of the traditional themes is less often expressed or less widely expressed. Some people say there is still a feeling of family, for example, but now only within the unit rather than across the whole organization. Some people say there is still a degree of participation, but on less important issues. Some people say the non-degree programs may continue, but are less valued. Some people speak as if the relations already are non-communal, decision making is hierarchical or that what was a comprehensive community college is becoming more like a university. There is also a variety of thoughts and
feelings associated with those various interpretations. A particular interpretation may be viewed with acceptance, regret or indifference, for example. Many meanings are multiple, evolving and shifting. Some meanings, including a number associated with academic settings, are contested.

Amid these multiple interpretations, there are some patterns of interpretations that suggest consistency and consensus. The distinctive style of interacting continues; the gracious, friendly manner seems constant over time. People speak of their workplace as still a nice place to be; some say it is still the best college. People seem to go about their days with a sense of purpose and of commitment to their work. There seems to be consensus that it is good that people in the surrounding communities have the opportunity to take degree programs close to home.

There also seem to be patterns of interpretations that suggest inconsistencies and lack of consensus. I see inconsistencies between what people say they do and what I see them do with reference to decision-making and social relations, for example. I also hear inconsistencies between what is said in public and what is said in private. I sometimes hear conflicting views on issues that concern mission, such as the "either/or" view and I sometimes hear dichotomous interpretations, such as whether teaching higher level courses is different qualitatively from
teaching lower levels. I find I often slide from a focus on an apparently clear disagreement to a focus on ambiguity, however.

Hierarchical decision making is a clear contrast to participatory decision making, for example, but any particular decision may be interpreted as either hierarchical, participatory, a little bit of both, uncertain, unknowable, or unimportant. In a related way, one can believe that two sets of programs are either compatible or incompatible. There may be confusion over whether the supposed incompatibility is inherent or perceptual, however, and over whether the belief is deeply held or tentative. The patterns of interpretations on seemingly dichotomous matters often entail a multiplicity of views. The term multiple, to describe meanings and interpretations, recurs in the preceding. It underlines a focus on ambiguity and the apparent absence of organization-wide or subcultural consensus. It points to my frequent use of an ambiguity perspective as I focus on patterns of interpretations.

Some clear consistencies and inconsistencies, and a multiplicity of ambiguous interpretations that seem not to coalesce into either clear consistencies or inconsistencies, constitute the patterns of interpretations. On those issues on which there are multiple interpretations, there seems to be widespread recognition that it is an issue and that there are various views. Some people who do not hold
the "either/or" belief, for example, nevertheless recognize that others do and some who speak of participation as a myth recognize it as a central organizational value for some colleagues. In some of the comments presented in preceding chapters, an individual acknowledges that something that is not of personal concern is of concern to others. One example is concern with attaining academic credentials, another is concern with no longer knowing everyone.

As suggested above (p. 43), in the fragmentation or ambiguity perspective, the meaning of culture itself is ambiguous. In the absence of shared interpretations that pertain to a particular issue, for example, there may be at least recognition that it is an issue, at least for some, in the context. This is the idea of "the common frame of reference or a shared recognition of relevant issues" (Meyerson, 1991, p. 154).

I have described the meanings systems at Multisite as a kaleidoscope of multiple and shifting and sometimes contested meanings. Three patterns of interpretations -- consensus, dissensus, and confusion -- seem to characterize those meanings now. Those patterns of meanings constitute a picture of an organizational culture as understood in terms of multiple perspectives (i.e., the integrative, differentiative and fragmentation perspectives) and especially, in terms of the fragmentation perspective.
Exploring the Picture of Meaning Systems

I explore the cultural portrait in four sub-sections. In the first, I use two schemes to develop a particular perspective. In the three sub-sections that follow, I use that perspective as I develop three points about the cultural portrait. These points concern (i) changes in institutional mission, (ii) changes in the context in which organizational members create meaning, and (iii) the idea that institutional mission is a cultural symbol. These points are not unrelated; however, each is an exploration separate from the others. The development of thought from point to point is not linear.

Two Schemes

In this section, I first consider Trice’s (1985) description of organizational culture and second, Dimen-Schein’s (1977) “pyramid” of categories of cultural data. Trice (1985, p. 224) observes that organizational culture often is described in terms of the holistic notion that results when ideologies (values and beliefs) and cultural forms (practices whereby values are expressed) are combined.
I consider the values and beliefs that Trice labels ideology to be equivalent to (or nearly equivalent to) the beliefs and values that underlie and constitute the institutional mission. Using Trice's terms, then, the picture of cultural meanings in the past at Multisite consists of (a) an ideology, equivalent to the historic community college mission, with its associated values, and (b) the cultural forms or practices that are expressions of the traditional themes of family and participation. These components, seen either as ideology and cultural forms or as the three traditional themes, seem to have comprised an integrated and mutually supportive set of values and practices.

In the past, the mission seems to have been taken for granted. I am suggesting that it was the backbone of an integrated meaning system. In the present, that taken for granted quality is missing. It is unclear whether the traditional mission obtains, has been extended, or has been replaced. There are multiple interpretations concerning institutional mission and different understandings about social practices. I am suggesting that the absence of clarity on mission amounts to a fragmented ideology, and hence, the fragmented meaning systems, and underlies the lack of integration in the system of beliefs in the present.
I add to this perspective on institutional mission as follows. I look at culture in the broader sense, as a cultural anthropologist might look at it. Dimen-Schein (1977) says that there are three categories of data a cultural anthropologist is likely to collect. The first includes ways of making a living; it is the techno-economic-environmental base. The second category is data that concern social organization, including social life and power structures; the third, ideology, the systems of ideas and beliefs. The direction of causality and explanation primarily goes over the long run from first to third, from bottom line material facts of life up to the mental, but there is some degree of influence in both directions and mutual influence among all categories (Dimen-Schein, 1977, p. xiv).

As I consider both Trice's scheme and Dimen-Schein's, I wonder about the distinction between ideology (mission) in a particular institution and in the broader societal context. In the broader sense of culture, a culture's ideology (values and beliefs) is, according to Dimen-Schein (1977), largely an outcome of its social practices. I suggest that the direction of explanation -- from social practices to ideology -- is reversed when the organizational culture of a public institution (rather than culture in the anthropological sense) is the focus. The mission is determined before the organization is established. I suggest that the
institution begins with a mission (ideology in Trice’s term) and that mission is the base from which the social practices develop.

Multisite, for example, was established within, and defined by, a particular socio-political context. That context was characterized by a variety of competing values; the institution was founded on a particular set of values that was especially influential at that time. One informant says it was founded on 1960s values, such as nurturing and caring. As noted above, the community college mission is rooted firmly in Gemeinschaft values. The traditional community college mission reflects the ideology of decision makers of a particular time. The ideology that underlies the university college structure reflects the ideology of decision makers of a different time in a different socio-political context.

I am suggesting that an institution’s mission is, for all practical purposes, equivalent to its ideology and that in public institutions like Multisite, the mission largely is determined by policy makers external to the institution. I also am suggesting that mission is highly salient in the organizational context now; it is the subject of multiple and sometimes contested interpretations and this ambiguity underlies the fragmented nature of the meaning systems there now. This is the perspective on institutional mission (and on culture as ideology and practice) that underlies the following discussion.
A Changing Mission

The addition of degree programs is seen by some people at Multisite to signal a significant change in mission and to explain the apparent fragmentation in meanings. In this section, however, I develop the idea that the institutional mission at Multisite has been changing over time for some time. I suggest that mission has been problematic all along, in the sense of being open to debate, of never being settled. Over time, the mission has changed incrementally and in fragmented ways. One example is the introduction of more selective admissions procedures in some units but not across the institution. It has also changed dramatically in terms of the experience of some units; the shift in Continuing Education to becoming cost recovery in the mid 1980s is an important example. What seems to be different now is that some members seem to associate the lack of clarity about values and beliefs with the organizational level now.

On the one hand, this idea, that the values and beliefs associated with the institutional mission have been changing over time, is not remarkable. It is consistent with some of what people at Multisite say about changes in how things are done, for example. It also is consistent with the observation (p. 19) that the
economic downturn of the early 1980s resulted in reduced funding and a steady narrowing of access (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986).

On the other hand, the nearly imperceptible nature of some changes means that important factors can be under-emphasized. I suggest that changes in the broader cultural context have shaped the organizational beliefs and values over time and continue to do so. The competition for funding became more intensive in the decades since the colleges were founded; the demands made of post-secondary institutions increased. Cultural beliefs evolved; there were shifts in which values were emphasized. A shift from communal to non-communal values seems to characterize the external context as well as the institutional context.

What I have said so far is consistent with the idea that changes occur in the institutional ideology as a result of external influences. It seems reasonable to suggest that this is the case to a great extent but not the whole picture. It seems likely that some negotiation between institutional decision makers and policy makers external to the institution occurs when core values are modified and reinterpreted, for example. One example may be the difficulty colleges had putting certain founding ideals into practice. The ideal of "open admissions" to all programs was identified as unworkable, at least in some program areas, in the early experience of some institutions. Many institutions moved to establish
selection criteria for specific programs; the result is that what is meant by open admissions is more limited than it was. It has come to mean that, regardless of educational level, an individual will be admitted to the institution but may be required to complete remedial or preparatory work before being admitted to the program of choice.

A final point, related to changing mission, concerns how to understand the reports of the early years. In some ways, what is said about the good old days sometimes sounds too good to be true, as if it might be, maybe must be, exaggerated. Indeed, some faculty suggest that what is said about that period is not accurate; the word myth recurs in these comments. Cindy, for example, says that participation is a myth that only the "old timers" believe. However, the faculty who suggest the idyllic past is a myth are people who came after the early years. No founding members challenge the picture of a setting with participatory process and communal values.

It seems reasonable to suggest that the idyllic image of the early years, in fact, may be a reasonable report of the experience of influential players in the early years. It also may be an "honest" report of the experience of people who were not influential, in that it reports the perceptions they now hold now about that experience. Some decision making processes may not have been open to all,
for example, but many people may have enjoyed participating in certain procedural decisions and in the social relations associated with organizational activities. Some people may not have cared, or even realized, that they were not a part of the critical institutional decision making process. (Hence, a participatory process in the past is “real” to these people although, “objectively,” they may have had little or no involvement in making critical institutional decisions. There is much they value about that past and it is the standard by which they compare the present.)

As well, it seems reasonable to suggest that as the 1980s unfolded, the values that underlie traditional practice at Multisite are already in decline. Many founding members may not have realized this. A mission evolves organically over time and people tend to pay little attention to how it changes (Tierney, 1989, p. 46). People who joined in that period would come in and hear about “how we do things” and watch how things are done. They would see the discrepancy between premise and practice and conclude that the premises are myths. They might tend to assume that they had never been “true.”

I am suggesting that the values that underlie social practices as well as those associated with the traditional mission at Multisite have been changing over time. On this topic, one inference I make is that the stories I hear of the early years may
be more or less accurate reports. Another inference is that changes in the values in the broader societal context, including a shift to non-communal values and increased competitiveness, strongly influence changes within the institution.

Creating Meaning

The idea that mission (as core institutional values and beliefs) is determined, for the most part, by policy makers external to the institution implies another point. If organizational members join a social unit in which they have, by and large, little opportunity to determine the core values, then only social practices are left to negotiate. How much of a role organizational participants have in creating the social practices that express those values tends to be a decision of hierarchical decision makers. Hence, organizational participants are constrained to a significant extent in terms of how much leeway they have as they create organizational “reality.”

Although meaning construction always is constrained in organization, I suggest that the subjective experience of constraints seems to have changed dramatically at Multisite. In the early years, the institutional ideology was a given, in the sense of being imposed from outside and also in the sense that it became part of the background, taken for granted. Within the parameters of that
designated mission, founding members at Multisite seem to have created an integrated set of social practices and associated beliefs that guided how they did their work and how they were with one another. It seems that participation and family were central, were “figure,” with respect to how the institution saw itself as distinctive. The mission was the “background” that was a powerful influence in shaping those practices. It is unlikely that people thought of the institutional mission as an ideology imposed by “outsiders.”

In the present, many people at Multisite see the addition of degree programs as a response to external demands and as a means for the institution to remain competitive. Many people seem to believe that external decision makers are influential in what is happening internally, especially in terms of the allocation of resources. The bringing on of degree programs has made the matter of mission problematic. Mission frequently is “figure” rather than background as people monitor what is happening now. Mission is seen to be a given in terms of the influence of decision makers now; it is no longer a given in the sense of being taken for granted. Just what constitutes the institutional ideology is open to question now. Some people are uncertain if there is a mission that makes sense, that can be seen as cohesive.
The non-negotiable nature of ideology, which largely is determined externally by hierarchical decision makers, is only one factor that constrains members' reality construction. Another factor is that the role organizational members are permitted to take in creating social practices is determined internally, by another set of hierarchical decision makers. Some faculty associate the perceived shift from participation to consultation as a deliberate strategy. That is, some faculty seem aware that both of these factors act as constraints on how things are done within the institution now.

Creating meaning is based on beliefs and values. There are a great number of beliefs being expressed at Multisite now; the relations among them may include mutual support, clear contradiction, or ambiguous connection. There seems to be more attention to core values, many of which once were taken for granted and some of which now are contested. This seems a sharp contrast to meaning systems in the past, in which integration and mutual support were typical. It seems reasonable to suggest that making sense of what is happening is a more complex process in this setting now and a process likely to produce a greater variety of interpretations now.
Mission as a Cultural Symbol

The term cultural symbol sometimes is used to mean a symbol that allows cultural members to cope with contradictory forces that threaten the integration of a society (Barley & Knight, 1992, p. 12). As I explored the topic of participation, for example, I suggested that participation once served symbolically to mitigate the organizational reality of hierarchical relations and now increasingly fails to sustain the myth of egalitarian relations within the institution. I now am suggesting that the original community college ideology was a cultural symbol in this same sense. (Indeed, this symbolic function of participation seems to derive from the original ideology; that is, participation as a symbol seems secondary to mission as the primary cultural symbol.)

It seems reasonable to suggest that a key, although usually implicit, aspect of the original community college ideology was the valuing of egalitarianism as it pertains to societal roles as well as to persons. I suggest that comprehensiveness denotes a variety of programs and connotes that all those programs are equally valuable. I hear this idea when Jane uses the word integrated as she searches for the word comprehensive (p. 311) and when Celia says that if the vocational units are “out of sight,” if some programs are segregated, the institution would not be comprehensive and might as well be separate institutions in that case (p. 352).
This is what Dennison (1992, p. 111) labels the idea of equality of status among all programs. This belief is consistent with the democratic ideals that underlie the traditional college ideology and it implies that all the occupations for which students are being prepared are of equal esteem in society.

I am suggesting two points, the second tentatively. First, that the original community college mission was a symbol of "equity of esteem." It sustained the myth of egalitarianism in the broader society. Second, that the mission of a university college seems not to sustain the myth of a democratic valuing of all persons and of all occupational roles in society.

Two sets of interpretations seem influential in this tentatively identified symbolic failure. One set includes interpretations of changes that have occurred over time, both within the institution and in the broader context. I suggest, above, for example, that the values of respect and openness originally were defined in ways that supported democratic process at Multisite and now sometimes seem to be used to support hierarchical process. Also, an increased emphasis on competitiveness in the broader context seems to be paralleled internally. Another set of interpretations arise as people consider what it means to add degree programs. Many of these interpretations focus on values and beliefs associated with an academic orientation. Some of these interpretations entail a sense of
hierarchy as concerns the credentials of individuals, for example, and the relative status of programs. It seems, first, that the traditional values that support mission as a cultural symbol have been eroding over time, and second, that there are emergent values associated with adding degree programs that strongly challenge this cultural symbol. Much of the time, the interpretations that concern the slow erosion of values seem to be “background” and those that concern academic values often are “figure.”

I am suggesting that the traditional community college mission was a cultural symbol that reiterated and sustained the myth of egalitarianism in the broader society. The comprehensive curriculum symbolized that all programs and hence all occupations are held in equal esteem. The institutional mission no longer carries this symbolic message, for at least two reasons. One reason is that the changes in values that have been happening over time are inconsistent with the myth of egalitarianism. Another is that the addition of degree programs has made non-egalitarian values especially salient in the organizational setting now. It is unclear what symbolic message, if any, the university college mission carries.
An Overview on Meaning Systems

I describe the meaning systems at Multisite as many faculty members do: by contrasting the present to the past. When people speak of the past, they often speak of being family and of being participatory and they speak as if clarity on institutional values and purpose is taken for granted. I hear premises that guide how things are done in these comments. I call these premises and their associated values the traditional cultural themes of mission, participation, and family, respectively. The traditional themes entail mutually supportive beliefs and values and seem to have comprised an integrated system of meanings.

In the present, the meaning systems entail, on the one hand, a set of traditional premises that are less often expressed and on the other hand, emergent premises that are more often expressed. There are dichotomous sets of beliefs that concern social practices and multiple interpretations that concern those beliefs. The sets of beliefs that concern mission are more complex. They include emergent beliefs that may support, contradict, or be ambiguously related to traditional beliefs. The relations among the traditional and emergent beliefs are not clear. It is not the case, however, that there are two clearly incompatible sets of beliefs, the traditional and emergent, in the present. The meaning systems in
the present, which I describe as fragmented, lack the integration that seemed to characterize these systems in the past.

I also describe the meaning systems that constitute the organizational culture at Multisite now as a kaleidoscope of multiple and shifting and sometimes contested meanings. The field of the kaleidoscope shows cultural meanings in a state of flux. The traditional and emergent beliefs are two distinctive configurations that seem to separate, then intermingle, then distance themselves from each other again.

That kaleidoscope is a picture of an organizational culture as understood in the fragmentation perspective, more accurately, as understood in terms of multiple perspectives (i.e., the integrative, differentiative and fragmentation perspectives). The patterns of interpretations include meanings on which there is consensus, dissensus, and confusion. Traditional and emergent themes that concern decision making, social relations, and institutional mission are a part of the common frame, in which there is shared recognition of beliefs that are salient in the context. They are not the subject of consensually held interpretations on how to understand what is happening or how it is valued, however. The picture of the culture was once of shared meanings; it is less specific than that now. It is more a picture of the culture as a shared recognition of salient meanings.
I explore the meaning systems at Multisite by means of a perspective I develop in two stages or steps. I arrive at the first step as I consider Trice’s (1985) description of organizational culture; the second, Dimen-Schein’s (1977) categories of cultural data. My cultural portrait can be seen to describe organizational culture as a holistic notion in which ideology (values and beliefs) and cultural forms (social practices) are combined (Trice, 1985). The beliefs and values I label the theme of mission seem equivalent to what he labels ideology; my themes of family and participation, cultural forms that express those values. Thinking of mission in this way suggests to me the following step. The historic mission expressed a cohesive and consensually-held ideology that was the core of an integrated system of meanings. A fragmented sense of mission (ideology) underlies the lack of integration among the themes and values in the present.

Dimen-Schein (1977), writing of culture in the societal sense, describes ideology primarily as a product of social organization. This suggests to me a way in which the organizational culture in a public institution is different from culture in the anthropological sense. The core ideas and values (i.e., the ideology or mission) of an institution are not a product of internal social groups; they are determined by policymakers and precede establishment of the institution. This is
the second step: institutional mission reflects the values and beliefs of external decision makers; by and large, it is not determined by organizational members.

I use this perspective to explore changes in mission, in reality construction, and in what mission symbolizes. I suggest three points. First, the institutional mission has been changing over time as a result of changing values in the broader context, more specifically, as the values of external decision makers change. Second, people are more constrained in the extent to which they can create and negotiate how they do things and they are more aware of those constraints. They are more likely than in the past to see what they do as a response to the values and beliefs of external decision makers. Meanings that were taken for granted in the past are salient now; they often are multiple and sometimes are contested. It seems likely that reality construction (or sensemaking) will produce more diverse views of the situation now, including a variety of incompatible and ambiguous interpretations.

Third, the symbolic significance of the traditional institutional ideology is that it signifies egalitarian values, including the democratization of opportunity and the equal valuing of all vocations. The symbolic significance of the emergent institutional ideology is not clear; it is the subject of multiple and sometimes contested meanings. I have suggested that what underlies the present
fragmentation in the belief systems is ambiguity about mission. I now suggest that what (or some of what) underlies the ambiguity about mission is ambiguity about the extent to which equity of status, the idea that all post-secondary programs warrant the same level of respect, remains an institutional value now.

This lack of consensus on mission occurs within an institutional context nested within the post-secondary sector and broader societal contexts. At all levels, there are perceptions of limited resources and increased competition for resources. There are perceptions of less emphasis on communal values in all these contexts; there may also be perceptions of decision making increasingly being more hierarchical.

I suggest that the changes in cultural meanings that are occurring and have occurred at Multisite are in response to what is happening and has been happening in external contexts over time. The decision to add degree programs is a central factor in, and a primary symbol of, these changes. However, this major decision was preceded by a sequence of less dramatic decisions that precipitated a variety of changes over time. This is consistent with the idea that changes in social structure and values ordinarily do not occur as a result of internal stresses; rather, they occur when external factors precipitate crises or breakdown of routine (Nisbet and Perrin, 1970, p. 44).
CHAPTER 10

INTERPRETING THE TRANSITION: MULTIPLE MEANINGS

The focus of the last chapter was the contextually-based systems of meanings, the organizational culture, at Multisite. The focus of this chapter is how faculty members there interpret the transition. In the first section of this chapter, I present their interpretations, organized by means of the cultural meanings. In the second and third sections, I attempt to understand their interpretations and the differences among the interpretations. In the second section, I consider some specific comments that seem to contradict other comments. In the third, I consider more generally how to understand differences in interpretations and their effects. In the final section, I attempt to answer the research question, How do faculty members at Multisite make sense of (i.e., interpret and come to understand) the transition to becoming a university college?
(As I refer to interview data, I sometimes refer to accounts rather than to persons to underline that I do not claim to know the individual’s thoughts or feelings. I only know what they chose to tell me on a particular occasion. As I write of the perspectives of individuals, it is with awareness of this limitation; I am in fact writing of the perspective expressed in the interview account.)

**Multiple Perspectives: Interpreting the Transition**

In this section, I describe how faculty interpret the transition. I come to categorize their interpretations as follows. In some of the interviews, what emerges is an emphasis on what I have labelled Multisite’s traditional values and themes. In other accounts, what emerges is an emphasis on what I have labelled Multisite’s emergent values and themes. In all of these accounts, I hear a relation between what the individual says about these cultural values and about the transition. I categorize these accounts as showing either a traditional cultural perspective or an emergent cultural perspective, respectively. I use cultural perspective here as I did above (p. 75), as equivalent to Geertz’ religious perspective, in that cultural values are seen as non-hypothetical truths and cultural symbols are seen to connote meanings beyond their inherent meaning.
In some accounts, however, neither traditional nor emergent cultural themes seem of great importance in how the transition is interpreted. Some people seem to use a common-sense or pragmatic perspective; their view seems practical and self-interested. They seem to take a matter of fact view of the world, in which they see various dimensions of everyday life as just what they seem to be (Geertz, 1973) rather than as symbolizing some wider set of meanings.

In this section, I present more of some accounts than others. There are a number of reasons for this, including the following. I want to explore some of them more fully, further into this chapter. Some accounts offer succinct indications of the informant’s overview; others require the broader context of the whole interview. For purposes of brevity, I prefer the former. Some of what I say about one individual’s point of view is true of more than one person, so, again for purposes of brevity, I group some shared interpretations.

Traditional Cultural Perspectives: We’re Proud People Here

Among the accounts that emphasize traditional cultural values, I find three interpretations. One is that the most important traditional values remain strong. Another is that it is uncertain whether the traditional values will be retained. A third is that traditional values are in decline.
The culture is strong. Some faculty say that Multisite's traditional values remain strong. Some people say faculty maintain a strong role in decision making and this means community college ideals will be maintained. Keith, for example, says he was initially against the transition; his support was "fear driven" (p. 199); one fear was that comprehensiveness would be lost. He is no longer concerned, he says, because faculty run the college.

Fear of losing comprehensiveness has not been realized, because we're hiring new people with proven teaching ability. (S: Connection is?..) ... A person who is a teacher benefits comprehensiveness, believes in it. ... I'm no longer concerned with losing comprehensiveness because faculty run this college. We always have. Administrators don't run this place. We do. ... The whole institution is moving to more control by the committee of educators. [We discuss pending legislation that requires that the majority of Advisory Council must be teaching faculty and also that there be more faculty on the College Board.] The whole institution is moving to empowerment of teachers. ... Here, faculty are managers. ... The selection of new faculty emphasizes proven teaching ability. ... This is why the fear of loss of comprehensiveness has not been realized. (Keith)

Consistent with what Keith says, Luke describes the participatory way as an "insurance policy" that means comprehensiveness will not be lost.

[In an earlier period] I would have said yeah, I'm afraid, but, the culture is so strong on it, there is such a commitment to the community college ideals. ... [There is] such strong support for maintaining the comprehensiveness. ... When you think the institution is governed by faculty and staff, that's an insurance policy. ... A lot would have to go wrong before we'd lose it. ... [There was the example of] someone wanting to change our title to college professor but most don't want it, so it didn't happen. ... Comprehensive will not be lost because of our participatory way of doing things. ... For example, there are secretaries on all hiring committees. ... Our orientation to general interest vocationalism holds in check any danger of a move to a university. (Luke)
The institution remains participatory, they believe, with decisions made by teaching faculty (in Keith’s account) or by faculty and staff (in Luke’s account). In both these accounts the continuation of participation as decision making is linked with the retention of comprehensiveness.

Rita also says she believes the most important traditional values will be retained. She emphasizes different values from Luke and Keith, however. Rita speaks of the early years and of the sense of specialness; she describes it as magical, as like a soul (p. 225). She speaks of social relations, of changes in relations, of her personal concerns and of how entrenched the core values are.

It was there in the early days. It was something like we’re special and we can weather a lot of things. ... I guess that’s what’s scary, it’s like being in love .. that when it’s going well, it’s good but there is always a thing in the back of your mind saying, this could change. ... But [at a recent meeting, I saw that] it was still all there, that good feeling of like, you are sitting next to me and you might be thinking this is hogwash ... respect for differences. Somehow that feeling of respect is there. ... There is a sense of loyalty, certainly. ... My overall feeling, always, that this is just a great place to work and be. ... I guess it’s an atmosphere of respect. ... Probably I have to soften my Pollyanna by saying there .. one of the things that I see as a repercussion, that there might be more distancing between faculty and staff. ... I hope that feeling of cohesion that has been there through thick and thin continues. I’m not scared of it going. I don’t think it can, totally .. it’s too important .. and it’s too entrenched. I think you’d have to burn all the buildings down and send everybody to Inuvik; I’m maybe a little nervous but I’m not real scared of that happening. (Rita)

I categorize these three accounts and only these three under this heading.

They have in common an emphasis on traditional values, although not necessarily
on the same traditional values, and the belief that those values remain strong. They also have in common the belief that the transition is seen not to compromise what is most important traditionally. However, each account does include comments that indicate the present situation is less than idyllic. Luke, for example, refers to a sense of loss that is disturbing, the loss of the sense of all being friends (p. 278). Rita says she finds the concern with credentials a little disconcerting (p. 269) and with the possibility of distancing between faculty and staff. Keith says, "Now biggest issue is not comprehensiveness; it is dealing with government ... getting enough money. We've had fear of funding for 15 years." Yet, these faculty members seem to interpret this transition period positively. They look at the field in the kaleidoscope, focus on traditional values, and overall, like what they see.

**It remains to be seen.** Some faculty who seem to value traditional values are uncertain whether those values will be retained. In these accounts, there is a variety of interpretations of what might be happening but these do not coalesce into an interpretation of whether or not core values will continue to be expressed. Jane, for example, speaks of uncertainty in a number of ways. She talks about going into meetings and not having any sense of outcomes, for example, and of intentions to retain values but uncertainty whether they will be retained. Jane also
says she is uncertain how much of what is happening now is related to the university college or to other factors.

I don’t know whether it changes the ambiance but it has the potential to change the whole ambiance because you used to be able to think, if you went to a meeting about something, you would have a pretty good idea of what the general opinion would be whereas now you have no idea at all. ... Because all these new people are here ... it’s a whole new unknown ballgame. ... We’re trying not to change them [values], in all the documents .. the college tried to make statements about not giving up any of those values of the community college, the idea of integrated .. what is the word, comprehensive. A lot of thought about that; it was certainly stated. I guess it remains to be seen whether we can carry through with that. ... But from my point of view, it’s a period of much change, not necessarily good or bad, but a lot of change, a lot of hard work, but again it’s very hard for me to sort out whether it’s all due to the university college. ... In general, I think it has been a fairly positive experience. ... I will be fascinated to read your dissertation. I’d like to see what your conclusions as an observer are. (Jane)

Russ, like Keith and Luke, takes comprehensiveness as a critical ideal.

Unlike them, he is uncertain if it will be retained.

[With the coming of the university college] We were concerned we were going to lose the comprehensive college for the community. Our biggest concern was the vocational programs, the trades and all [the non-academic programs] have got to expand. ... We’re worried about the academic still growing. The question is, are we going to get our share as a comprehensive community college? I feel better because of [faculty] representation on the Board but I’m still concerned. (Russ)

Ann and her colleagues, like Russ, are concerned with the well-being of their department as well as with retaining comprehensiveness for the community.

I think before this idea of the university college came up ... there was a lot of discussion about being sure to maintain what we already have and not lose any of the comprehensiveness of our programming. ... But as we move closer to it I’m getting the sense that there is going to be a fight for dollars ... so the question for me is how secure are some areas such as us going to be in the expansion. (Ann)
Ann says that, in the status-gaining period, they were assured that comprehensiveness would remain highly valued but she wonders now if it remains as highly valued as it was. If not, the transition poses a threat to their department’s survival.

Pete makes a series of “on the one hand, on the other hand” comments. He says he feels a sense of loss with not knowing people. He also says things are not as bad as they might be.

You almost have to have release time to keep up with the issues. ... I’ve just resigned [from that committee] because I couldn’t keep up. ... Seems to me good people have been hired. ... My worst nightmares have not been realized. (Pete)

Celia suggests that she is reserving judgment.

Well, it’s fairly early times. It could still be the beginning of an exciting phase for the college and us poor old souls so it depends a lot on how things work out. I think we’ve come through the first phase better than we feared, perhaps not with everything as firmly set up as we had hoped. (Celia)

Eva speaks of isolation and lack of information. Some of her comments suggest inconsistencies of various sorts. She says, for example, that units in the organization are working in isolation from one another more now; yet the institution now is less isolated from other institutions than it was in the past. The
institution espouses the goal of access; it advertises widely when there are few spaces available and turns people away.

So it was almost a schizophrenic process because you cherished those things which gave this thing character and there was a fear of losing that and at the same time the potential for growth was exciting. ... I guess I believe growth for its own sake isn’t valuable. I think an institution grows, it has to be a fairly substantiated and validated kind of growth. ... I think that one of the areas that probably is lacking is knowledge or information ... and in program planning, sometimes it seems to me that each area or division is actually working in isolation and so I think we can do a bit more in communicating between departments and between divisions. ... [when a college becomes an university college] I think you have an increase in seeing yourself in relation to other institutions instead of just an isolated entity so I think that’s a real positive change ... you start learning about transferability. ... There’s one thing that I feel is really, really critical ... we started out saying we wanted a university college for access as one of the goals ... then we should not be advertising incredibly and then turning people away. ... Part time students already don’t get financial aid, they have most of the expenses full time do and almost all of them are women so I really worry that that is going to become a problem. (Eva)

Eva refers to “growth for it’s own sake,” a phrase I notice in some other accounts. Although I think I know what she means, there is something about it that tugs at me, something I want to understand better. It has the same form of comment as “education for its own sake,” a phrase Bob uses (p. 314).

What emerges most strongly in this category of accounts is a lack of clarity on how to interpret what is happening with respect to retention or loss of traditional values. It seems as if these faculty members have postponed arriving at an understanding of what is happening until they see how things unfold.
I group five individuals (Jane, Russ, Eva, Pete, Celia) and the group of four in this category. They look at the field in the kaleidoscope, they try to focus on traditional values, and they see elements and configurations that keep shifting. They do not see the elements coalesce into a pattern, familiar or otherwise, that remains stable.

**We have lost something.** Some faculty who stress the importance of one or more of the values speak as if that value is lost or nearly so. A number of faculty speak of the decline in participation, for example. Leah associates the loss of participation with the degree process.

I .. frankly am quite discouraged about it. In some ways it [participation] works very well, but ... it's shifted in some ways from participation to consultation and I think part of that has come about in the shift to the university college where a lot of decisions have been made by management that once would have been made by faculty. (S: Why is that happening with the university college?) .. To some extent, it's speed, to some extent, it's ignorance. .. I mean, now we're told that certain degrees will be launched because they were passed by the Access Committee. The Access Committee, at the time, had no sense that it was approving degrees, that it was some kind of academic approval, some kind of senate. It's bizarre. .. None of the normal, acceptable academic approval mechanisms existed in this place. They had to be .. kind of fabricated on the spot and any flimsy excuse for a process will do. My sense is that if .. a dean has made a decision that he thinks a degree is a good idea, the place where that gets talked about is in the management group, not in any process we have. ... The Advisory Council, for example, doesn't see it until it's way too late. ... The ability to actually make a difference in that decision is gone. ... (S: Some loss with that.) Enormous loss. (Leah)

Cathy also says she associates the loss of participation with the transition.

What I foresee, I guess I see that people will over time feel less that the institution is democratic, less that they have input, more and more they'll feel that decisions are being made that they don't have a part in. ... Personally, I don't want to move up into
management and yet ... if you don’t you’re going to have to accept the fact that decisions will be made with which you disagree. ... Some of the democracy will be lost. ... I feel that quite strongly. ... I don’t think a large institution has to be undemocratic but if you have a large institution where you don’t have enough managers to get around to talk to people, where people have to be spending so many hours in the classroom where they don’t have time to discuss these things, that sort of thing. ... (S: Does that feel kind of sad or...) Yes, I think it does. ... (S: Would it be correct to say that one of the meanings you associate with the transition is this loss of the participatory process?) Yes, I think so. (Cathy)

Cathy also says, as Leah does, that neither general expansion nor becoming a university college has to result in the loss of democratic process but that in this context that association obtains.

Susan speaks of feeling betrayed by the processes and decisions of the transition period and of alienating herself. She says work becomes a job and not something you enjoy.

I personally do not like the direction we’ve taken. I was supportive of it at first and the more we move along the road to .. being a university college the less I like it. ... Some of those concerns, when we initially got the status, were aired then. I was on the Learning Environment Committee, in which we looked at how we could ensure that we retained our focus on excellence in teaching and learning and we made a series of recommendations, most of which have been totally ignored, dealing with everything from hiring to classroom management. At that time, I was concerned but I felt through this committee and other things the college was doing they were allaying my fear ... saying don’t worry about it, we are going to keep the teaching focus ... adamant we would not have a two tier system ... because that had torn other colleges apart, but we’re are ending up with a two tier system . .. There are those who can only teach lower level. ...
Something came around recently, to do with scholarly activity. We emphasized over and over when we were setting up, scholarly activity must be available to all faculty. ... It just came out, it emphasizes course work reduction for people teaching upper level courses and .. that’s not what we decided before we became a university college so what I’m feeling is betrayed. ... I feel it’s a frustrating time. I’m very nervous about where the college is going. (Susan)
Barb says the university college was the “final blow” to the participatory process; she says that comprehensiveness will be lost.

We have lost something here, we as a whole. I think a feeling of voice. ... We had a lot of pride and I don’t mean being proud or ego, but pride in our jobs, pride of the accomplishment. We’re proud people here. ... People don’t feel that they’ve been empowered, they feel that their power has been take away. It happened over years, and it wasn’t necessarily the university college. I think the university college was the final blow. (S: Okay.) And it had a lot to do with the same ideas that Bill [second president] left for, was that, man, we have worked our butts off all these years with all these cutbacks, with shortage of staff, etc. ... and you’re still asking us to do that, you’re asking us to do it more. ... [the transition to a university college] I think it’s an opportunity, a tremendous opportunity .. for the community, for our kids to go to school locally. ... What I would like to see is that the academic part is only one faction, it is equally important as office careers is, or as CE, but it is only one thing. (S: So really valuing that comprehensiveness.) Yeah. (S: Would that be a good statement of your overview?) Yeah, I really believe that. (S: How do you feel about how its working out and how it’s going to work out?) I feel really sad about it. I feel we’re not going to go that way. (S: You see losing the balance, the academic becoming ..) and it will also influence each of those other sections. I have a feeling trades is going to disband here and become totally independent. I mean that’s a possibility with other areas too. ... No, I don’t [see a means to influence it] it’s sad but true, but I honestly think the government will direct that [loss of comprehensiveness] .. although that’s not the mandate. (S: So a sense of loss.) Oh, it’s a real loss, it’s a real loss, .. it’s sad ... and yet management is totally tied. I don’t think they’re able to [do much] .. (S: Because they don’t have the choices, is that what you mean?) Yes. (S: A real sense of powerlessness at different levels?) Yeah. (Barb)

A number of faculty speak of a decline in participation as well as a loss of some aspect of the traditional mission. Adam, for example, says, “I’m not sure whether people are getting a university or are they getting a community college, or are we going to end up in the middle, with being neither?” (p. 308). He says he is concerned with service to the community; he sees a change in mandate and a new
focus on the full time four year student. He says he goes to meetings where he thinks he can have some influence on behalf of his department. He speaks of being “more focused on your own area ... less generally feeling part of what’s going on in those other areas” (p. 235).

Bob, who says degree programs offer “redundant courses,” (p. 314) speaks of alienation, the loss of comprehensiveness, and no longer serving the community.

It gives us more of an alienation. Resources have been drawn from other areas to put in that direction. ... The idea of a comprehensive college was probably one of the best things that ever happened ... It was great for the community. Unless there is a change of attitude in the Ministry, in administration, Trades and Careers will fall by the wayside. It will be strictly academic and the people who suffer will be the community. (Bob)

Cindy also expresses fear the degree programs will take over. In her account, and in a number of other accounts, I hear concern with losing the values I label Gemeinschaft. Cindy says some of the non-degree programs are feeling ignored. She says she misses talking to people, she needs to be stroked; she says she feels less appreciated and less important (p. 274). Andy speaks of changes in interaction, “there’s something that seems not to be there” (p. 252), and of a sense of loss with not knowing people any longer. Gemeinschaft values seem important to Marg, as well. She speaks of not feeling considered, for example, and of a lack
of cohesiveness (p. 274). Marg says she thinks the sense of family, of harmony and cooperation is missing, although, "to a certain point, we still have that but only with those we’ve known from the past." Barb says something similar when she says that the sense of family has, to some extent, localized in departments; Barb also says she sees a sense of territory really being a part of the university college (p. 209).

In this category of accounts, there is an emphasis on traditional values, the belief that at least some of these are lost or in decline, and an association between that decline and the change to a university college. These faculty members look at the field in the kaleidoscope to see if traditional values continue to be expressed and whether traditional symbols remain intact. What they see makes them feel sad, disheartened, discouraged. They see the rich and complex pattern that once was participation, for example, rarely now, although a pale residue sometimes appears. They see symbols like comprehensiveness with bits missing and being crowded to one side; they see some traditional values, like friendliness, expressed by a quick show at the surface but without the depth and complexity of the displays of the past.

Hal’s point of view, in some respects, seems to belong in this category. In terms of traditional values, he speaks of the importance of comprehensiveness and
fear it may not be retained (p. 301, 308). He speaks of no longer knowing everyone and says, “It changes the nature of the place. There’s some sadness in that. As a place to work, part of its charm before and part of what gave us the underlying energy was the fact that everybody knew everybody” (p. 262).

However, Hal’s perspective also has points in common with the category I present next: those who emphasize emergent values. He says the great advantage is to teach third and fourth year, “which is tremendous.” Teaching at that level “requires some deep and thoughtful and insightful contact with your discipline and I think that naturally breeds a desire to be with people who can share those ideas. He wonders if “the two worlds” are compatible.

There are some of us who really enjoy the academic environment ... there are two different worlds in some respects. I guess I personally am caught between those two things. It seems to me that comprehensive model is worth protecting ... especially its community focus. ... On the other hand, I am kind of intrigued by the possibility of a separate identity for a university degree granting side. Maybe split them in half, maybe in terms of a practical solution, maybe the university college transition really means you’ve got to get involved with the discipline and let’s produce an [academic] institution and on the other hand, let’s create a regional institution that does everything else. Maybe, maybe not. I see that as a fundamental tension in terms of what I do. There’s no way I’m going to resolve that. If I was in my 20s again, starting back out, I probably would try to deal with it, wrestle with it. But it seems to me, we’re still doing a pretty good job, despite the chaos. (Hal)
Hal seems caught between the two categories of cultural perspectives. He is not only uncertain which set of values will hold sway; he seems uncertain what outcome he prefers and what outcomes are feasible.

**Emergent Cultural Perspectives: The Stuff of Academe**

In the accounts that emphasize emergent cultural values, adding degree programs is seen positively. These six informants (Alan, Byron, Chuck, Matt, Rob, Walt) all seemed to have welcomed this change from the beginning. Some faculty say the change just seemed organic.

I really do feel it’s a wonderful thing for all of us that we have this opportunity. It just seems organic. You develop an institution and it evolves into something else and you’re able to change and grow and it seems ideal in some ways, and we’re very fortunate in terms of salaries and benefits and the community around, so it’s all very positive. (Byron)

Some faculty speak positively of change in general, a comment consistent with a Gesellschaft perspective. Chuck and Walt both recognize that their own comfort with change is not typical of all their colleagues, however.

Clearly, what I think was motivating them was the place is going to change and [they asked themselves] what does that hold in store for me? I don’t know [some of them thought]. Some thought they knew and didn’t like it. For others, [they were] just plain uncertain. For me, it’s probably a good thing something happened. After 15 year, the place was getting in a bit of a rut, as we all do, and I like nothing better than change. For me personally, what was motivating me was some of these precepts I’d had for years. This was a logical, natural thing that ought to happen from just about every point of view. It was not news for me, so that was my perspective. (Chuck)
I don’t think there’s any question there was a level of comfort on the faculty side. A lot of people who were here originally were very comfortable with what they were doing, understood that they were doing a good job. There’s no question there is a lot of uneasiness but that’s more than balanced by the excitement of doing something else and I’m pushing a little on that side. Let’s move ahead; we want to keep up with this. (Walt)

Alan says he was excited about giving the place some academic flavour. He also was excited about the variety and relief of having other courses to teach.

I was terribly excited about it. One of the difficulties I had with the so-called two year institution was it really was not a 2 year institution. Our second year courses were under-enrolled. ... and the other thing, I got locked into teaching two courses. I taught that first year course for 15 years and thought I would go absolutely mad if I thought I had to teach it a 16th. There was no relief. Third and fourth year will give us some variety and some relief from the same old course year after year. I guess that was my main focus. ...

Personally, I don’t consider myself a college instructor or a teacher, I consider myself an academic. I mean I’m a person who seeks knowledge. (Alan)

Matt says he sees himself as a member of his discipline; what he does at the college is just part of what he does. Since the institution gained university college status, it is easier for him to do research.

So we’ve (the department) doubled in the last two years so that was obviously the university college. So it’s much more interesting, more colleagues to talk to ... more in the sense of shared interests, so some of us have decided to read and discuss journal articles, things like that, so hoping to get more of an interactive process going. Research will be easier in a number of ways. We have this scholarly activity definition so at least in a formal way, it is acknowledged as a part of the job ... it hasn’t been hammered out yet. The transition helps to make this more formally recognized. I do have a reduced teaching load. ... There’s more convergence between some of the teaching and some of the research and being able to teach in areas that I’m interested in. (Matt)
Rob speaks of the integrity of the offerings remaining intact, of comprehensiveness not being lost and, at the same time, of a setting more exciting for academics. He suggests the institution will divide into academic and non-academic institutions in the future.

Certainly there was a lot more emphasis on the academic angle of things. ... The academic component became more excited, we’d been going on for years before that, far more excited, interested in digging back into the stuff of academe. ... Truly exciting to have that happen. Our library is exploding, makes us far more visible and I think credible intellectually and academically, so that’s really good to see. The new folks that are coming in ... bring a lot of energy and vitality and a lot of very interesting IQs. It’s caused me to reeducate myself and to speak with nothing but positively about that, it’s exciting. ... The primary thing we’re looking for is good teachers. We don’t have time here for research. ... [There were various issues] I wasn’t involved in other than at a meeting level. That [meetings that deal with issues of curriculum and liaison with university] is all South Campus, and rather deliberately I don’t do that any more, I’m here to instruct, and that takes all my happily spent time. The big word is exciting, getting back to do some of those things we were trained to do. (S: Ok, that theme you mentioned earlier.) Yeah, he says, and reaches out and touches something. [Rob touches a set of texts as he says this.] ... I think in the next 20 years, this is my own prognosis, not the institution’s, you’ll see South grow into a fully rounded academic institution and see North maybe more a poly tech. (Rob)

Walt speaks of the mandate as degree and diploma programs (p. 306). He does not see Trades programs remaining with the institution (p. 211). He says the transition is rejuvenating but he is thinks the institution needs to pay more attention to outside opportunities.

I think we will probably re-group towards a more traditional thing with the department being more powerful. We’re extremely flat and we’re hurting in terms of things like looking outside at trends. We do a lot of inward looking; I wonder if we’re missing opportunities to get grants and things like that. ... I think the transition is going
reasonably well. It’s certainly exciting, it takes a high level of energy, we’re looking for that, and also we’ve got an aging faculty, we’re really lucky, this is our rejuvenation.

I hear nothing in these accounts that suggests any sense of loss with the change in social relations, a change I have described as a decrease in the expression of Gemeinschaft values. Matt, for example, says not knowing people is not an issue for him, because “my social life mostly isn't built around my work.” He likes the increase in size because it means more colleagues with an interest in academic activities. Alan says these are not the “bad old days;” it is just different now. Some informants in this group say the institution will divide, or may divide, into academic and non-academic institutions in the future (e.g., Rob, above). Walt refers to an attitude to higher learning when he suggests a split that excludes Trades. This loss of the whole, of the integrated institution, does not seem troubling. I hear in these accounts a preference for what I have labelled the emergent Gesellschaft values.

People in this group value the traditional community college mission and see adding degrees as consistent with that mission. They see the various facets of that mission being retained, although they do not seem concerned with shifts in emphasis among those facets. If they notice such shifts, they do not seem to be the focus of attention; they are just noted (e.g., Rob, who speaks of
comprehensiveness being retained within a context characterized by more emphasis on the academic side). What seems central in the interpretations in these accounts are the academic values, the various aspects of institutional life associated with academic settings.

There are idiosyncratic ways of expressing this, either as the intoxicating effect of teaching a higher level, or as being an academic, or as an opportunity to make full use of one’s training.

These faculty members interpret the transition and the transition period positively. They look at the field in the kaleidoscope and focus on emergent values. Some monitor support to do research; for others, “academic flavour” is important. They see an opportunity to engage with their work in a way or to an extent that was not there before. There are also qualifying comments on the part of some, that there is a lot of work involved, that it takes a lot of energy. Overall, these people see a change in which certain aspects of their work are emphasized more and they like the change.

**Pragmatic Perspectives: There’s Always Something**

In some accounts, neither traditional nor emergent cultural values are the primary emphasis. In these accounts, there sometimes is comment on one or both
of these sets of cultural values. What characterizes these ten accounts most strongly, however, is a common-sense or pragmatic perspective. This is expressed as a practical and self-interested view, pragmatic in the wish to act upon the world so as to bend it to one's practical purposes, to master it, or, so far as that proves impossible, to adjust to it (Geertz, 1973).

I hear a strongly pragmatic perspective in what Val says.

I don't think its changed for me personally, maybe slightly better lustre for the program. ... I guess I go along with my own little orb or orbit. It hasn't meant a whole lot to me. I haven't liked or disliked it. I haven't had problems with it. It hasn't affected me positively or negatively. It's something that's going on and there's always something that's going on. It may have given our own program a bit more .. substance to the outside world. I'm always interested in change ... things don't stay the same. (Val)

Edith says the consequences of rapid growth may be what is most important now.

There was a little bit of concern that some of the certificate programs and diploma programs might lose resources to degrees .... but I'm not sure its materialized. I think people are constantly on guard, constantly watching what they take away and give to them, but I don't have that fear of the university side of things taking over. ... What's coming into play more now is not so much the 3rd and 4th year but this growth. A lot of stress, people are tired, really stretched. ... We need to focus on one task for a while. ... There are issues we are not dealing with but everyone is so busy. ... Parking, it seems trivial ... and I feel for people, we don't even have a loading zone on North campus. The other place where I see stretched resources are in the staff side of things. I worry for those people, first that they are acknowledged, they are as important. That comes back to a time when we knew one another, that's one of the things we lost, it's the growth issue, we've become so big. (Edith)
Lew’s primary focus is his career. He says his motivation for going through for a Ph.D. “wasn’t just to be an instructor; I wanted to do research.”

I wanted to get into a university college or a small university setting, not into strictly to a college situation, in terms of my career objectives. ... I wanted to do research, I didn’t want to get on the research treadmill, I didn’t want to be at a college where that would be difficult. ... I’ve heard that some people are threatened by the research and Ph.D. aspect of it, to me that’s just some sort of paranoia I’m picking up. ... I’m not sure how some of the other things fit in because this is all new to me, being a community based community college. I’ve been in a university setting for so long, but I can see how that has such an important benefits right away for the community, perhaps what some people are doing at the big universities, well, what’s the value of that. (Lew)

Shawn, like most new faculty, is putting most of his attention on his teaching.

This is actually my first semester. I like teaching. It’s busy; I’m concentrating on teaching, haven’t had a chance to talk to people. ... The job title here is very, to me it’s a little bit weird. I’m used to the job title of university professor but ... they like to use instructor, even though they have a university program they’re still called instructor. I don’t mind that. ... Maybe they should shift their focus a little bit from teaching to research and also try to get some research grants. ... In the interview, I think, first of all, the interviewers appreciated my research background. ... Scholarly activity, that’s another interesting .. name, term; I think it is different from research in universities. Here maybe it means you should develop some innovative teaching techniques. I do feel that doing some research does not conflict with good teaching. ... The library facilities are quite limited. ... Many teachers who don’t have a doctorate still do a great job. (Shawn)

Mary says they (her department) lack a strong sense of the whole institution; their community is the discipline, the professional community. She also says she has an academic side but does not consider herself an academic. The
region needed degrees, she says, and it was expedient to have them at Multisite.

Her priority is the programs in her unit.

Doing our own thing, not a lot of interaction ... good place to be, friendly, cooperative...
.... Our huge priority is degree development. I feel quite comfortable with change. ... We pretty much talked through the issues. .... With growing size, it's more difficult to maintain closeness, that spirit of community, delegation changes what is said. ... The area was underserved, so rather than building a free standing university it was expedient to add, so trying to provide the best of both worlds. The other thing is we are so immersed in the details of our program development ... a huge undertaking. ... Being an adult educator is secondary role, the discipline, the profession is the primary role. ... I think it's wonderful for the residents of the area. Pure logistics and the geography just made it so sensible. ... It [getting degrees] was an immediate and reasonable process, quite acceptable from the community, generally. People felt quite positive; the concerns were quite nitty gritty kinds of things, like how will this affect me and my job and my work. It's human nature to relate to own situation. (Mary)

Lynn, like Mary, speaks of traditional values like serving the community and a focus on teaching. She speaks of the importance of keeping an “open door” policy and of preparing people for jobs. She regrets no longer knowing people. Overall, she sees the transition positively; it provides her with more professional opportunities.

I do have a vested interest. I’m doing a doctorate. That’s mainly for my own interest because I do find the down side is we don’t do much research. ... But maybe there’s an opportunity to teach [other courses] and maybe in other departments, I’m not dismissing that at all. ... For me, personally, it’s a good thing. It means I can expand my horizons if I choose to. ... We have been fairly cohesive, whether we lose that as we get bigger, I hope we won’t but I think maybe we will. ... I think we definitely need the university college. ... It's kind of exciting, there are all these new faces around, and you hope that one day you're going to get to know these people. It’s exciting for the students. (Lynn)
Dan speaks of less a feeling of family, of the open door closing a little, the place colder, more academic. He sees the budget “which just drives everything” as a key factor in how he spends his days.

I don’t feel threatened because we just can’t keep up to the demand. ... My own feeling is it’s nice to see the excitement, for people in 3rd and 4th year courses. We get new labs. There’s an excitement; you get tired of teaching first and second year and now they’re into something new so that’s a real positive side. I don’t see too many negatives. Really nice to see as a resident and as a parent, the degrees in the area. ... The overwhelming one issue is trying to meet the needs, the budget, which just drives everything and trying to stay current and build for the future. (S: And that would be your overview?) Yes, and no major negative. .. I guess it’s no big deal. We’re having trouble changing the wording, now we have to say university college and I guess, I actually have a little difficulty with that because I’m so accustomed to community. (Dan)

What is most important to Jim is teaching success and he associates that with being happy, with being in a setting that is comfortable socially. He likes the openness and maturity with which people deal with conflict. He wants the place to retain its good relations.

My overall objective is to have teaching success, student success, within the classroom and I’m happy. ... Everybody said, you’re going to like it here, it’s really friendly and I’d have to say it is. It is 100% different, 100% more enjoyable and I work a lot harder because I’m happy. It has its effect. The only thing that I hope doesn’t occur in this transition is that we lose it. So far, I haven’t seen anything to suggest we will. (S: How would you lose it?) A big split down the middle, because one group says we should be like the other universities and the other group says no, we should be different. (S: And do you hear that?) Yeah, yeah, like, should we be called professors? Just call me teacher or call me catalyst. I think it would be very dangerous for a split to occur, that worries me, I just don’t think it would be healthy. ... Because I’m new, I don’t want to upset the applecart. ... Other people who are new have the same philosophy and that I think that makes other people who’ve been around for a while realize we’re not here to threaten or change .. what is good here. (S: So a sense of respect for what’s in place?) exactly, exactly. ... It’s actually interesting, exciting and challenging. Everything is so new and
there is the ability to influence or have input into the development of the degree and the program. ... And there is a willingness to find the compromise, the right fit. (Jim)

John’s focus seems to be funding for his area, especially in comparison to areas that offer degrees.

The onset of being a university college was not different from just general growth, qualitative growth rather than merely quantitative, going in some new directions, but simply put, we who are not in the academic programs watch them growing and we are not growing and the meaning basically is a heavier workload without the resources to it. ... So I’m fairly bitter about it. I mean, I’m glad for the population in town here that they can get degrees at this place but I’m exhausted at work and I’m not finding the rewards I once felt and I’m not feeling supported by the management of the college. It’s hard to get excited about the university college. ... I think it’s a crime that the management group has to be as small and as lean as it is because they simply can’t give adequate attention to everything that needs attention. The loss of the associate deans I think is devastating, so there’s problems there. ... It feels really awkward to watch the imbalance [in funding]. ... Excellence is breaking. I feel a certain pride in how well it continues to function, how well faculty and staff get along, but I don’t feel we do serve the community all that well. I’m just so very aware of the large number of students we turn away. The advent of the university college really has not meant any new resources other than at the 3rd and 4th year level; the number of seats for 1st and 2nd year really hasn’t grown; the support services really hasn’t grown. Now we give degrees, I suppose it’s good in the long round that we go in that direction but there is an awful lot of debris along the road, I think. It’s hard to separate the university college from a time of constraint in government spending. ... I keep hearing we wouldn’t have anybody added if we weren’t a university college, because that’s the only place new funding comes in but seems like it’s coming in a very inequitable way. (John)

The faculty members I put in the pragmatic category have what seems to me a matter of fact view of the world, which I equate with what Geertz describes as “a simple acceptance of the world, its objects, and its processes as being just what they seem to be” (1973, p. 111). When they look at the field in the kaleidoscope,
they observe the values being expressed and the shifting and multiple meanings of their colleagues and interpret what they see in terms of how it affects them, their daily work, the prospects for their program, or their career objectives.

The "simple acceptance" of the world of this perspective is in contrast to the cultural perspective, in which symbolic importance is ascribed to various beliefs and processes in that world. This is also in contrast to the scientific perspective, which rejects the "givenness," the naive realism, of the pragmatic perspective in favour of deliberate doubt and systematic inquiry (Geertz, 1973, p. 111). The pragmatic perspective also occurs in other accounts, including some that take one of the cultural perspectives as its central perspective.

**Multiple Perspectives: Every Time You Open A Door**

Many accounts suggest that the individual speaking makes use of more than one perspective, much as I suggested many people slide among perspectives as they speak of participation. Hal, for example, describes himself as torn between two worlds; in my terms, he has two perspectives, both the traditional and emergent cultural perspectives. Cathy says she associates the transition with a decline in participation; she also says she enjoys the "challenge of teaching upper level courses, with more motivated students." Mary speaks of identifying with her
discipline as the community rather than with the institution. A pragmatic view surfaces in many accounts, often in reference to how the individual’s program is affected. In some of the accounts, a scientific perspective surfaces occasionally. I hear multiple perspectives with a recurring scientific perspective in what Wendy and Jay say, for example.

Wendy speaks positively of the early years. She says she knows some people feel comprehensiveness is threatened by the university college but she does not share that belief; she identifies what she considers to be factors that actually do threaten it. She speaks of why some participatory processes and structures are ineffective now in an apparently matter of fact way. She describes the beginning of her support for the university college. “I went to the meeting when Mountain U presented their plan ... I was absolutely outraged ... darned if I was going to see that inflicted on the community because it suited the aspirations of certain departments there.”

Jay values the positive relations; he says the ideals remain intact. He also says, “I’m amused at everybody’s angst over these colleges becoming universities.” His emphasis is on retaining balance.

And as we go 4 years, I think that one of the big concerns people had here, for example, are we going to keep trades? ... We have different gifts so is that balance going to be lost? There’s is that word again, balance, wisdom usually is in balance. [Jay makes his “amused at angst” comment.] ... (S: I’m getting the sense the transition isn’t a big deal to
you, not a threat, any sense of loss?) Every time you open a door, you shut a door. ... There is this myth that progress is positive ... anything that’s different must be better if it’s new. It could be worse. ... What you want to do is balance that growth. ... When they say we’re going to do this or that, I immediately dig in my heels and say ok, let’s slow down and look at it. Is this better than what we have now? How? ... Just being a university college isn’t better; if it’s a good university college, then that’s better. If it’s more access to a worse kind of education, that’s not better. ... I don’t believe in perfectibility; the best you can do is reach that balance. At some point, better gets worse, bigger gets worse, what looks better becomes more imperfect. On balance, it’s going pretty well as everything at this college has over the years. Marvelous place. The concern that I would have is not in the transition, because in transition, you tend to have balance ... the problem is when we think or when we have achieved a new position. ... So it’s going as well as can be expected but we don’t know what the outcome is ... you cannot predict or control ... that’s what makes it wonderful and also imperfect and a mystery. ... I don’t think anybody knows what education is going to look like in this province in 20 years and ... therefore we have to be open and flexible. (Jay)

Finally, there is one more perspective that seems occasionally to surface in the accounts. It is never declared or implied as the speaker’s perspective however; it occurs as a perspective ascribed to others. When Eva says, “I guess I believe growth for its own sake isn’t valuable,” I wonder if she implies that there are people who do value growth for its own sake. A similar idea may be implied in Jay’s comment about the myth that change is progress. Initially, Eva’s comment puzzled me as did Bob’s comment, “The idea of education for education’s sake, well, that’s nice but that’s a hobby.” I have come to hear in these comments the ascription of an aesthetic perspective to other people.

The aesthetic perspective, like the scientific perspective, entails a suspension of naive realism and practical interest but a different sort of
suspension. Instead of questioning everyday experience, an aesthetic perspective means one merely ignores that experience in favour of an eager dwelling upon appearances. It means an engrossment in surfaces, an absorption in things “in themselves” (Geertz, 1973, p. 111). Two different faculty members make uncomplimentary comments that suggest senior administrators have an aesthetic perspective.

The first thing I think of [about becoming a university college] is what I perceive as a management style which enjoys starting new things and announcing to the world that they've started new things but don't see them through. They don't have a sense of follow through, they don't understand what's happening, where the rubber meets the road, and at the front line, they don't know how the complexity of information is confusing to students and awkward to present.

God, if we don't have something new going on, if we're not just running a little bit faster than we can keep up with ourselves, then we ain't doing our job. It's getting real tiresome, burnt a lot of people out. ... The attention span [of senior management team] doesn't seem to be very long. ... I'm real suspicious that a whole bunch of things are being done superficially because they can be done. The strategic plan, the kind of gobbledy gook in there, is symptomatic. ... I guess it's one way to build a career, look at my CV, look at all the wonderful things I did. All these things have great titles, how well they were done, how well they turned out, that doesn't show.

**Overview on Perspectives**

To this point, I have organized faculty interpretations according to the sensemaking perspectives I have identified, following Geertz (1973). This categorization is summarized in Table 2, for faculty in programs that do not offer degrees, and in Table 3, for faculty in programs that do or will offer degrees. In fact, Table 2 includes faculty who are (i) in instructional programs that will not
offer degrees, (ii) continuing education directors, and (iii) non-teaching faculty. I have not shown the last two groups as separate from the first for reasons of confidentiality. However, I offer the following information without assigning it to particular pseudonyms. Among continuing education directors and non-teaching faculty, all the perspectives except the emergent cultural perspective are represented.

Not surprisingly, the six faculty members I place in the category of emergent cultural perspective are in programs that offer degrees. However, the other twelve persons in programs that offer degrees show a variety of perspectives. (Although I suggest both Cathy and Mary have some values consistent with that perspective, I place them in other categories in terms of strongest perspective. Thus, all those in the emergent perspective category are male. I have no particular interpretation of that.) Also not surprisingly, all three new faculty members seem to have a pragmatic perspective. However, faculty of longer service and faculty in degrees and non-degree programs also are identified as primarily pragmatic in perspective.

I have noted above that those with an emergent cultural perspective focus on traditional values associated with mission, especially on the facets of mission that underlie their work and that they seem to show little concern with the status of
Table 2

**Sensemaking Perspective: Faculty in Non-degree Programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Sensemaking Perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andy</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Traditional Cultural: Values in Decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Traditional Cultural: Values in Decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barb</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Traditional Cultural: Values in Decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Traditional Cultural: Values in Decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Traditional Cultural: Values in Decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Pragmatic Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Traditional Cultural: Values Uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jay</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Multiple [Scientific/Cultural/Pragmatic]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Pragmatic Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keith</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Traditional Cultural: Values Retained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leah</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Traditional Cultural: Values in Decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Pragmatic Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marg</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Traditional Cultural: Values in Decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Traditional Cultural: Values Retained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russ</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Traditional Cultural: Values Uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Pragmatic Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group of 4</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>Traditional Cultural: Values Uncertain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Length of Service: Early started in 1970s, Medium in 1980s, New in 1990s*
### Table 3

**Sensemaking Perspective: Faculty in Degree Programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>[Length of Service]</th>
<th>Sensemaking Perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hal</td>
<td>[Early]</td>
<td>Traditional: Values in Decline/ Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>[Early]</td>
<td>Emergent Cultural Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron</td>
<td>[Medium]</td>
<td>Emergent Cultural Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>[Medium]</td>
<td>Traditional Cultural: Values in Decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celia</td>
<td>[Early]</td>
<td>Traditional Cultural: Values Uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuck</td>
<td>[Early]</td>
<td>Emergent Cultural Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith</td>
<td>[Medium]</td>
<td>Pragmatic Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eva</td>
<td>[Early]</td>
<td>Traditional Cultural: Values Uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>[New]</td>
<td>Pragmatic Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lew</td>
<td>[New]</td>
<td>Pragmatic Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>[Medium]</td>
<td>Pragmatic Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>[Early]</td>
<td>Emergent Cultural Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pete</td>
<td>[Early]</td>
<td>Traditional Cultural: Values Uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob</td>
<td>[Early]</td>
<td>Emergent Cultural Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawn</td>
<td>[New]</td>
<td>Pragmatic Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>[Medium]</td>
<td>Traditional Cultural: Values in Decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walt</td>
<td>[Medium]</td>
<td>Emergent Cultural Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>[Early]</td>
<td>Multiple [Scientific/Cultural/Pragmatic]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Length of Service: Early started in 1970s, Medium in 1980s, New in 1990s*
traditional values associated with participation and family. This is in contrast to those with a traditional cultural perspective, who seem to want to focus on a holistic set of tradition values, including mission, participation, and family. In Trice’s (1985) terms, those with either category of cultural perspective value the institutional ideology; those with a traditional cultural perspective value the traditional social practices as well.

Other than as noted above, I find no pattern between any identified characteristic of the informants and the perspective by which I categorize the interview account. All perspectives (excluding the emergent cultural perspective, as noted above) occur across program areas, for example, and a person with either long or medium length of service may have any of the perspectives I identify. In most cases, whether an informant has a doctoral degree does not show in the data I present. However, this is one of the characteristics for which I have checked to see if it is associated with particular patterns. I found none. Faculty members with doctorates may have any of the perspectives I identify; the same is true of those without that degree.

In this section of the chapter, I have described what people say about what is happening and I organized this in terms of the perspectives I use. I think this
provides some information about how faculty make sense of the transition; it also leaves a lot of unanswered questions about faculty sensemaking. I find it puzzling, for example, that Keith and Luke see the participatory process as the means to retain comprehensiveness whereas Barb and Leah see the participatory process as a thing of the past. In the section that follows this one, I consider these apparently contradictory interpretations as well as another apparent contradiction. Another question is how to understand differences in interpretations when the individuals use the same perspective. Val and John, for example, both use a pragmatic perspective and yet they come up with quite different interpretations. In the third section of this chapter, I consider this question.

Multiple Meanings: Two Apparent Contradictions

In this subsection, I attempt to understand two apparent contradictions that surface when I explore what faculty say about the transition. The first concerns differences in how the participatory process is seen in the accounts of different individuals. The second concerns an apparent contradiction within the account of one individual; the topic is the relation between the perceived loss of the participatory process and the transition. I explore this second contradiction
because it underscores an important point: the term transition refers both to everyday experience and to an abstraction that concerns organizational structure. I also present it because it illustrates an essential analytic process: inconsistencies within an account require exploration and explanation (as noted, p. 82).

**Participation: Differences in Denotations**

On the one hand, some faculty say participation is strong. Luke and Keith, for example, see the participatory approach to decision making as the means to resolve satisfactorily their central issue: retaining comprehensiveness. Luke says comprehensiveness will not be lost because of the participatory way of doing things; Keith says administrators do not run the place, faculty do. On the other hand, some faculty say participation is lost or in sharp decline. Barb says people have lost a feeling of voice; they feel their power has been taken away. Cathy says that, more and more, the democratic process will be lost. Leah says there is a shift from participation to consultation. (I note that Luke and Keith share the same central value, comprehensiveness, as well as the same interpretation of participation whereas Barb, Leah and Susan have similar interpretations of participation and differ among themselves on how much emphasis is placed on which values.)
One way to understand these differences in interpretation is as follows. I consider above that participation has various connotations (e.g., the distinctive style) that have become conflated with its denotative meaning (i.e., involvement in decision making) in the minds of some faculty members. In the discussion here, I suggest that the denotation of decision making, which itself is just one facet of participation, can be considered as multifaceted rather than monolithic.

Governance in institutions of higher education is sometimes seen as consisting of two dimensions: institutional governance and academic governance. Institutional governance refers to the power exercised in managing an institution. It is usually seen as the responsibility of a governing body, traditionally a Board. Academic governance refers to the power of a decision making body within the institution over matters of instruction and education. Traditionally, universities have two governing agencies (i.e., a Board and a Senate) which divide authority for institutional and educational issues. This is bicameral governance. Legally [at the time the study was conducted], colleges have all authority vested in the Board (although it may chose to take advice on some or all academic matters). This is unicameral governance.
What people say about the past suggests that, historically, Multisite has had a high level of employee involvement in all decisions, institutional and academic.

I ask a founding member how the Advisory Council has operated over the years.

(S: Has it operated historically as a decision making body?) Yes and no, by name and legal mandate, it’s an advisory body. That is proposed to change so that it would be a decision making body, sort of a watered down senate structure, but it has not been crossed by the board, except for once, 8 years ago, or something like that [on a technicality].

In a technical [legal] sense, Multisite’s historic pattern of governance falls within the meaning of unicameral governance. The institution is a particular case, however, in which the Board has chosen to take advice on all matters. In a practical sense, what people say suggests that Multisite has enjoyed a level of employee involvement in institutional and academic decision making that is unique in the college sector.

Barb, Leah, and Cathy seem to be concerned with faculty power pertaining specifically to institutional decision-making. They see it moving over time to higher levels in hierarchical structure. Leah says, for example, that faculty set the direction for the institution in the early days but no longer do so. Cathy speaks of decisions that now require one to be a member of the management group. Barb
takes the shift in power to another level; she says “the government will direct that
[making some programs independent] ... management is totally tied.”

In contrast, Luke and Keith can be seen to be concerned with academic
decision-making rather than with institutional decision-making. Keith’s reference
to a move to a committee of educators, for example, refers to legislation pending
[at the time of the interviews] that concerns academic, not institutional, decision
making. Arguably, one might suggest that the mix of programs an institution
retains is a matter of institutional, not academic, decision-making. However, that
argument is mine; it is absent from the accounts of Luke and Keith. Keith’s
concern is with a focus on teachers and teaching and with hiring those who are
teachers; he assumes these teachers are committed to comprehensiveness and have
the power to retain comprehensiveness. Similarly, Luke seems to share Keith’s
assumption that those committed to comprehensiveness will be able to retain it.
(It may be that Luke and Keith seem not to address institutional decision making
as distinct from academic decision making because the two historically have not
been dealt with separately at Multisite.)
The Transition: Interpreting the Experience

Leah says the faculty role in institutional decision-making has been declining steadily; she associates this with the transition. She speaks, above, of a difference in who has the right to make a final decision coming with the shift to the university college, for example, and of the degree process meaning the general direction of the institution no longer having much to do with faculty any more.

Her account is less tidy than that, however, with an apparent contradiction that occurs later in the interview.

And a lot of people are throwing in the towel ... and not be involved in this anymore. (S: Is that related to the transition to the university college ...?) I'm not sure it's even related because .. I'm not convinced that it is. It's accelerated a process that was already there. Umm, a lot of things have happened in those, what, 15 years. The government has taken direct control over programming that we once were able to determine locally .. as management has changed, the tendency among them has been to centralization and managerial control. (Leah)

Early in the interview, Leah says a shift from participation to consultation is a result of the transition. Later in the interview, however, she also says that the loss of participation is not because of the transition; it is because managerial control has increased. One way to understand this apparent contradiction is with the distinction between the experience of this transition and the abstract idea of a transition.
The earlier comment (that the loss of influence came with the university college and the degree process) indicates that, in this particular context, the degree process has resulted in [is associated with] a loss of faculty influence. The later comment, that those factors may not be related, can be seen to acknowledge that, in the abstract, offering degrees need not result in a loss of faculty influence. It may be that the abstraction arises as Leah works with related ideas during the interview. The interpretation of increased managerial control emerges as a given, taken for granted, consistent with my suggestion that what I have labelled an emergent hierarchical theme is gaining strength.

Other faculty make the same distinction: the actual events and processes they experience with this particular transition are different from the abstract idea of a college adding degree programs. Jane says that it is difficult to know what is and is not related to the transition. John says, “It’s hard to separate the university college from a time of constraint in government spending.” Cathy says, “I don’t think a large institution has to be undemocratic.” She makes the same association that Leah does, that neither general expansion nor becoming a university college has to result in the loss of democratic process but that in this context that association obtains. People seem to make those intellectual distinctions as asides, however. Not surprisingly, they interpret the transition on the basis of their
experience, not on the basis of the abstraction. They interpret this particular organizational change in context, without attempting to separate the change from the context. For all practical purposes, the transition that people interpret is not an abstract structural change; it is an intrinsic part of what is happening at Multisite now.

**Multiple Meanings: Organizational Sensemaking**

In this section, I consider differences in how faculty make sense of what is happening and how their interpretations are associated with attitudes, organizational behaviour, and the linkages between individuals and the organization.

**Sensemaking Perspectives and Sensemaking**

In this section, I consider differences in interpretations as these pertain, first, to the pragmatic perspective and second, to cultural perspectives. Then, I summarize my understanding of sensemaking.

**Pragmatic perspectives and issues.** I end the first section of this chapter with a number of questions, including how to understand differences in
interpretations within the same perspective. Among the accounts I label pragmatic, for example, Lynn says, "For me, personally, it's a good thing." Val says, "it hasn't affected me positively or negatively" and Dan says, "I don't see too many negatives." John says, "the meaning is basically a heavier workload without the resources to do it ... So I'm fairly bitter about it."

I make sense of that continuum of interpretations, as follows. A pragmatic perspective means that one simply accepts the world as just what it seems to be; one intends to bend that 'reality' to one's practical purposes or, to the extent that proves impossible, to adjust to it (Geertz, 1973, p. 111). Two aspects of this perspective seem salient here. One aspect is what it is that one accepts as the way the world seems to be and the other is how one responds to that view. Val accepts what seems to her to be the case: the transition has little effect on her program or her daily work. She responds in large measure by ignoring it. In her view of the world, the transition is a non-issue and so she is indifferent to it.

In Lynn's view of the world, the transition means that she can expand her horizons; there will be more professional opportunities for her in this organizational context if she attains a doctorate. In John's view, the only areas that are funded appropriately are the degree programs. He feels exhausted and
unappreciated. The world seems unfair and it seems as if there is little he can do about it.

One or more of a number of related issues surface in pragmatic perspectives. These are the effect of what is happening on one’s institutional unit, on one’s workday, and on one’s professional prospects. I am suggesting these individuals have different interpretations from one another, first, because they differ in which of these issues is of central concern and second, because they are situated in different units of the institution. This gives them different vantage points on what is happening and differences in experience that are, to some degree at least, objective differences. However, their interpretations differ for idiosyncratic reasons as well. They not only choose what issue is most important but how to interpret the resolution of that issue.

Using a pragmatic perspective means looking at events in terms of what is “real” in a common sense sort of a way and monitoring what is happening as it seems likely to influence one’s own interests. Using a cultural perspective means commitment to what is “really real,” that is, to ideals and values that are accepted as the way it is, or the way it ought to be, and are often represented by connotatively rich symbols. One monitors what is happening for what is revealed about the expression of ideals and values. Symbols seen within a cultural
perspective are like issues seen with a pragmatic perspective in this way: what one chooses to focus on is influenced by one’s situation, one’s vantage point, in the institution. In both pragmatic and cultural perspectives, vantage point is important. Symbols are likely to be more complex than issues, however.

**Cultural perspectives and symbols.** Symbols by their nature communicate more than inherent meaning; they are connotatively complex and layered with multiple meanings and carry strong emotional overtones. They represent the wider realities of the “really real,” as expressed by beliefs which the cultural perspective (in Geertz’ term, the religious perspective) takes to be nonhypothetical truths. A cultural perspective is defined in terms of the symbolic representations of its beliefs.

In what follows, I use a particular symbol, the Ph.D. credential, to illustrate two points. One point is the importance of what I am calling vantage point; the other is the multiple meanings symbols communicate. Vantage points entail more than one’s location in the organization; they include one’s perceptions of departmental rules and their application and they vary with respect to one’s personal circumstances. Rob, for example, says that he is comfortable with the emphasis on this credential, “Because we're selling credibility as well as education.” He is also comfortable that, in hiring, “we're saying Ph D. preferred.”
The issue of qualifications is not of concern, in a personal sense, he says. "I don't have a doctorate. ... I don't feel that's an issue because I've been here for so long, they're not going to get me out."

However, Susan sees that emphasis on the Ph.D. as indicating a shift away from a focus on teaching, at least as teaching traditionally is understood in colleges. She says her department says new people must have the Ph.D..

Because there are many Ph.Ds. available, they can say preferred, act as if preferred means required and still get good teachers. Susan says the question of credentials is in some ways a woman's issue. She also says she feels threatened personally.

There are some damn fine people with Masters degrees who are excellent teachers who have great interaction in the classroom who are well versed in discipline who are being denied the right to be hired, let alone to teach upper levels because they don't have the Ph.D. ... It's required, initially justified on the basis that Mountain U has to rubber-stamp our decisions. I raised the question, if we have an excellent contract instructor, she has a Masters, and we weren't able to hire her the last time around, I said, once we're autonomous, then we'll be able to offer her [the position], and the reaction of the chair was, oh, no, I think we'll still hold to the Ph.D. ... In most departments, it has become required. In some, it is preferred but preferred is [means] required. If they get 80 applications, they are not going to bother looking at the Masters ones ... so it's clear it's become a requirement. I also see it as more of a woman's issue. Many of the people who have 10 or 12 years teaching experience with a Masters and no Ph.D. are women who either entered schooling later or didn't have the financial resources to carry on, what with raising a family. They can't take time to go back, so possibly this is increasing the inequities. ... It seems to me the Ph.D. has taken priority over teaching. We want Ph.D.s who are excellent teachers but they must have the Ph.D. I see that. I guess I feel personally threatened. I have no interest in doing a Ph.D. If I do another degree, I want another Masters in a related but different field. To me, the Ph.D. is theory and research and I don't like theory and research. (Susan)
Two faculty members, both male, both with Ph.Ds., speak of the opportunities their colleagues have to upgrade their credentials. Their comments do not reflect the difficulties that Susan suggests are likely to be involved.

So there are people who are happy with that [teaching lower levels] and want to stay with that, and then there is the thought that if you'd like to do the higher level courses, get ready for them. They can do them so there hasn't been such a threat as we had thought. One group of people that I think will be somewhat stopped and will just stay there 'til retirement is that group that doesn't want to enhance their qualifications. They will have to come to grips with being happy with what they're doing in lower level courses. For our department, that's not a problem. Everybody is moving on and preparing for additional work and also helping out with first and second years. (Walt)

I won't want to see us demand it, require it, not as a rule, but a Ph.D. does mean something. There are lots of jokes about it but you know what you're going through to do this. In terms of research, certainly it doesn't mean that someone with a Masters doesn't know how to do that but if you have a Ph.D., [it's for sure] you know it. You may not be interested, there are people who've been around here for a long time with Ph.D.s who have absolutely no interest in research. ... I would be careful not to say, look, we're not looking at any CVs that don't have a Ph.D. It's important but it's not the only thing. I'm sure we don't all feel the same way about that around here. I do see it as a credibility issue for the institution as a whole. We can afford a certain amount of people without Ph.Ds., but probably not a whole lot. Simply because we have to have a sense not only of internal validity, we know who we are, but also a sense of external validity. We have to look good, unfortunately, it's a real world, people look at those things. ... I think we've done it as well as possible in terms of being sensitive to people who don't have a Ph.D. although I'm aware that some people without it can still end up feeling somehow like, defensive about it or whatever. We also have an education leave policy that allows people to go off and do their course work. People can make use of that and I'm sure receive support if they want to and if they don't want to, we generally speaking accept peoples' competence level, based on what they do here. (Matt)

For Susan, the Ph.D. is a symbol that has come to be of central importance. At one level, she associates it with a sense of personal threat; at another but related level, with the institution turning away from teaching as a top priority. For Rob, it
is not even an issue personally; for the institution, it is a symbol of credibility to the outside world. Perhaps among the members of some selection committees, it is a clear-cut criterion. To Walt and Matt, whether or not one attempts to attain it in the present circumstances seems to tease out those who are interested in “moving on,” in enhancing their competence level, from those who are not.

The emphasis on the Ph.D. is linked to a related symbol in some accounts. It is seen to signal a move to a two-tier system, that is, a system in which those who teach upper levels are a different group from those who do not. That two-tier system, which surfaces in one of Celia’s scenarios of the future, symbolizes a loss of core college values. She associates an emphasis on the Ph.D. with “barriers [that] firm up once you get labels.” Celia is uncertain what will happen in that regard. Susan seems to believe it will happen and has already been happening, at least to some extent.

Considering cultural perspectives entails attention to symbols, to differences in how much any one symbol is emphasized, and to different interpretations of what is apparently the same symbol. A symbol that recurs in many of the accounts is comprehensiveness, for example. I comment above that there are a number of approaches to monitoring whether comprehensiveness remains. One is to consider comprehensiveness in terms of the retention of particular courses, such
as general interest courses; another, in terms of historic proportions among programs; still another, as just the presence of a variety of programs. People differ not only in how comprehensiveness is understood and in what is taken as an indicator but also in what information they have.

Vantage point is both an important matter and a complex one in interpreting comprehensiveness. Vantage point seems to mean that persons in non-degree programs monitor what is happening to comprehensiveness closely. It does not predict what they will report however. Some non-academic instructors think comprehensiveness will be retained; others, that it will be lost; still others are uncertain if it will be retained. Some faculty members have an interpretation different from members of their own department.

Elements of sensemaking. At this point, I re-consider briefly the idea of organizational sensemaking, both in terms of how I understood it when I began the study and how I come to view it as I continue with my own interpretation of what people say. I began with the idea that sensemaking is the social process by which individuals interpret what is happening around them and a process in which the culture of the organization is influential.

My view now is considerably more detailed and somewhat different from the view with which I began. One point of difference is I now think of the culture
of the organization, or specific values thereof, as a factor that may be central in the individual's sensemaking, that may seem not at all significant, or that may have any degree of influence between those two extremes.

In terms of details, I have come to describe sensemaking in terms of three elements. These are (i) the perspective the sensemaker uses, (ii) a particular issue or symbol that is of importance to the sensemaker, and (iii) the interpretation of that issue or symbol by the sensemaker. I have suggested that the interpretation is influenced by a variety of factors, such as the particular vantage point of the sensemaker in the context and by the particular connotation of meaning that is most important to the sensemaker. I also have suggested that there is a great deal that seems idiosyncratic. Vantage point, for example, may predict what is likely to be of concern but not how it will be interpreted.

My description of sensemaking is consistent with (although different from) Weick's (1995) comments on sensemaking in organizations. In his view, the substance of sensemaking starts with three elements: a frame, a cue, and a connection (1995, p. 110). The concept of frame is shorthand for the structure of context (p. 51). Cues, or extracted characters, are "simple, familiar structures that are seeds from which people develop a larger sense of what may be occurring" (p. 50). What a cue will become depends on context. Context affects what is
extracted and how it is interpreted once it is extracted (p. 51). People in organizations are in different locations and are familiar with different domains, which means they have different interpretations of common events (Weick, 1995, p. 53, citing Starbuck & Milliken, 1988).

Weick also suggests frames and cues tend to arise in different points in time. “Frames tend to be past moments of socialization and cues tend to be present moments of experience. If a person can construct a relation between these two moments, meaning is created” (Weick, 1995, p. 111).

As noted above, faculty with medium or longer term service at Multisite tend to compare what is happening now with what happened there in the past. Faculty with short term service at Multisite tend to compare what is happening now with what happened in institutions in which they most recently worked. It seems reasonable to suggest that traditional cultural perspectives are frames that originate in socialization to the organization; they may be the primary frame for some faculty members of long or medium term. Also, emergent cultural perspectives may be frames consistent with those attained in the previous training of some faculty; they may have been reinforced over time and more especially, reinforced with the addition of degree programs. Past socialization to a discipline or a profession, for example, would provide cues (in Weick’s terms) or symbols
(in mine) that recur now at Multisite and hence dispose the individual to reclaiming such a frame, or emphasizing it more.

Sensemaking, Attitudes, and Action

In an interpretive approach, the assumption is that organizational sensemaking influences organizational activity. In this section, I describe what people say about behaviour and what they say about feelings and attitudes that have implications for how people are acting, or are likely to act, in the organizational context.

Pragmatic perspectives and organizational behaviour. In some of the pragmatic accounts, the link between the individual's interpretation and action, taken or intended, is made explicit. Lew's issue, for example, is support for doing research; he is uncertain how it will be resolved. He likes it at Multisite but may go elsewhere if it turns out there is less support than he hopes.

It [research] might not be as important as it was stated when I was hired on. I got the feeling that it was important and I guess it doesn't seem to be that way, straight away. ... If it sort of didn't go in the direction that I was perhaps lead to believe it might, I might have to reconsider what I want to do and where I want to be. I think the main thing is this ... place as a university college that isn't working as one as yet. ... Fascinating I could get this position and start determining the future of the thing. It's a great place to work so far, really nothing negative to say about it other than little problems that have to be dealt with. (Lew)
Mary’s priority is degree development; she interprets that as positive for the area, for her program, for herself as a professional. Much of her organizational activity involves being “so immersed in the details of our program development ... it’s a huge undertaking.” Dan says he is focussed on the bottom line, and Jay says he will keep asking of any particular change proposed, “Is it better?” Val neither likes it nor dislikes and just goes along in her “own little orb or orbit.” John speaks of how he sees colleagues withdrawing from organizational involvement.

The change in participation is simply coming back each year and being able to identify a few more people who have fizzed out, burnt out. They just don’t care anymore, they care about their students deeply, and they care about their instruction but they’re hardly ever are on any committees or even at meetings. (John)

**Cultural perspectives and organizational behaviour.** I note a consistency among the interpretations of those I suggest primarily use the emergent cultural perspective. Overall, members of this group view the transition positively. Values and understandings associated with academic settings, such as, “giving the place an academic flavour,” “deep and thoughtful contact with the discipline” and “digging back into the stuff of academe,” recur in these accounts and seem to be related to the activities of people in the setting. In all of these accounts, there is an enthusiasm for the development of degree programs and an engagement with the informant’s daily work.
These accounts vary, however, in terms of whether the informant remains engaged with organization-wide activities. Rob says he rather deliberately does not engage in "the politics," for example, and Walt speaks of more focus on the unit. The recurrent theme in these accounts is an emphasis on academic values, although individuals differ in which specific values are emphasized. Matt values the increased support for research, for example, whereas a number of the others do not.

Within the traditional cultural perspectives, I identify three interpretations. One is the belief that traditional values are lost or are likely to be. Among those who express this belief, the connection between that loss and how the informant feels about the setting and acts within it sometimes is made explicit. In terms of loss of values, for example, Adam says he is concerned with service to the community; he sees a change in mandate and a new focus on the full time four year student. In terms of attitude and action, he says he goes to meetings where he thinks he can have some influence on behalf of his department. He speaks of being "more focused on your own area ... less generally feeling part of what's going on in those other areas."

Barb monitors a number of traditional cultural values, including what is happening to comprehensiveness and to faculty influence in decision making. In
her view, these are both in sharp decline. Barb speaks of pride in accomplishment in earlier periods but of no longer “breaking my back.” She speaks of her work as just a “little job” now.

And so finally you end up doing your little job, putting no extra into it. ... I’ve stopped breaking my back and I did it because I loved it. ... (S: That idea came up in that earlier discussion [with about a dozen faculty]) I: Yeah, yeah ... I’d venture to say it’s probably with people who’ve been here awhile and you know how you get beaten down until finally, you just [say], fine, you know, this is the way it is. (Barb)

Leah monitors faculty influence in decision making, sees it as greatly diminished and, speaking of colleagues, says they are “throwing in the towel,” they are participating less in organization-wide processes.

My sense is that if .. a dean has made a decision that he thinks a degree is a good idea, the place where that gets talked about is in the management group, not in any process we have. ... the ability to actually make a difference in that decision is gone. ... (S: Some loss with that.) Enormous loss; I also suspect that in the next 5 -10 years, despite the rotten job market, people will start to find other things to do. ... I think they’ve been tired by this whole process. ... In fact, very few will have the option of just leaving a job, but we will start to see people doing other kinds of things. ... [Some faculty] are well on in their careers, working for outside groups. Some of that’s going on, some people are exhausted by the change. ... (S: Sounds disheartening.) I am disheartened... [later in the interview] And a lot of people are throwing in the towel in some.. not in the sense that they’re leaving the place but in the sense they’re going to teach their course and not be involved in this anymore. (Leah)

Susan monitors the value of the focus on teaching, which she understands as traditional college teaching. She also monitors the participatory process and finds it less than effective in sustaining traditional college values. She says she makes
sure she is a good teacher and shuts the door on the rest of it, ignoring organizational processes. She says, “work becomes a job.”

I have, up until the last 6 months, been speaking out vehemently about it [shift away from teaching]. ... I found the committee work exhausting and I have finally reached the point where I say, I don’t care. I shut the door, I make sure I’m a good teacher and I ignore what’s going on out there. ... So I’m rebelling but in doing that, I’m really feeling I’m alienating myself from what I came here for, which is the collegiality. ... (S: Doesn’t feel very good.) No, it doesn’t; work becomes a job and not something you enjoy. .. So you go in, one of the things I’ve often criticized my colleagues for, I come in, I teach, I hold my office hours, I’m out of here, I’m working at home. .. If I’m here, it’s more likely I will feel stress and anxiety. (Susan)

Hal speaks of traditional values and of no longer knowing everyone. He says, “It changes the nature of the place. There’s some sadness in that.” He says, “I come in and I do my job about as well as I used to do, so I guess it’s become more of a job.”

Cindy and Andy also speak of social relations; they say related values, such as intimacy, listening, and appreciation, are in decline. Cindy says, “there’s a communication problem that’s going to get worse, in my opinion, and the more isolated we feel then the less incentive we have to do well.” Andy also relates a sense of connection with what he puts into his work.

I’d say, I can’t put a date on it but I’d say [it has changed] over a few .. years. I could go to see Bill [the previous president] and I knew I could do that. ... Sometimes I’d get want I wanted; he could give me hell too. ... The point was there was a connection. ... I sure felt listened to and affirmed in the process and that’s what I think that in order to do more for less, you have to have some feeling .. that your participation in fact does influence change in some kind of relatively significant way and also you need to have the feeling
that your service and you, in fact, are known and .... that you can at some point bring yourself into the sphere of influence in some sense. (Andy)

In some of the accounts in this category, the connection between what is happening in the organization and how the informant acts is implied rather than declared. Bob, for example, uses the same word Susan does: alienated. Cathy speaks of sadness that democracy is being lost. She also speaks of the excitement of bringing on new courses. This excitement is tempered, however, because “we don’t have the resources to be innovative.” Overall, members of this group describe the transition in negative terms: disheartened, sad, alienated, isolated.

Another interpretation within the traditional cultural perspectives is that it is uncertain whether traditional cultural values are in sharp decline or are likely to be lost. The ambivalence concerning how to interpret what is happening is reflected in an ambivalence concerning how people are acting or will act within the setting. Jane once had a good idea how meetings would turn out, for example, and now does not. Her phrase, “it remains to be seen,” captures the sense that pervades much of the comment in this category.

Sometimes the uncertainty and ambivalence is implied, as in Eva’s emphasis on isolation and lack of information, with the sense that some people may know something, may be doing something, that the rest of us know nothing
about. More often, the uncertainty is declared. Celia, for example, sees two
different scenarios. One is a positive scenario of exciting challenges; the other is
a negative one in which people emphasize status, thereby causing barriers among
people.

But if we start to get too many people for the upper level courses so that there isn’t an
equitable sharing and if all the scholarly activity tends to always go to the same people
who are floating towards the nothing but upper levels stuff. ... It’s not clear that they
won’t kind of emerge that way in the long run ... so only time will tell with that. ... Then
there’d be people calling people Doctor. There was encouragement to use your title and
stuff. ... I’d be disappointed because those are the little things that fracture the structure
and set up distinctions, and the barriers firm up in time once you get labels. (Celia)

Ann and her colleagues may get in on the action or miss it; if they miss it,
they are “sitting ducks.”

Our department can not sit by and watch all this happen and .. not be a critical part of the
discussion and what role we can play. I think we should be focused on the kinds of
things we can see ourselves doing, the changes we might want to make. ... We can miss it
or we can get right in on the action. (Anita: that’s what I was going to say ..) ... I’m a big
fan of the university college but at the same time I don’t think we should be sitting back
and watching it happen. ... We can be overlooked or bypassed or circumvented if we
aren’t on our toes here because we are one of those old programs that’s been around for a
long time and probably in the eyes of some, it’s suspect. (Anita: Umhum ... We need to
be proactive because if they’re looking for places to cut, we might be sitting ducks.). ... So I really see in all this an element of good if it causes us to start thinking differently
because surely the way we think of ourselves is what we project outside of us. (Ann,
Anita)
Pete says people may "keep their heads down" or remain engaged. He, in fact, has just resigned from an elected role in an organization-wide committee because of the amount of time it required.

Interesting being on the cusp [being in an age group where early retirement is approaching] ... where you can decide to lie low until early retirement. A lot of us originals and early people are in our mid to late 40s; we can retire as early as 55. ... A lot of us are in a position to say, ahh, I'll just keep my head down for the next 5-10 year and get out of this place, or really continue to be a participant. ... Well, it'll probably be a very significant factor in terms of feedback loop as to whether those people who've been around can continue to instill that culture in which case they'll continue to be participants but if they start to drop off, it'll continue to be quite a different place. (Pete)

Concerning action, there is a contrast worth noting in the views I label ambivalent. Pete's view seems to be in this form: if the transition works out, founding members will remain participants; if not, we will withdraw. Ann's view seems to underlie a more proactive approach: if we participate more actively, we can see to it that the transition works out well for us.

The third interpretation within the traditional cultural perspectives is that the traditional cultural values or, at least, the most important ones, continue to be expressed widely and strongly. Among those who express this interpretation, the transition is seen as more than acceptable; it is seen as exciting. Luke says he enjoys the excitement and is involved with a number of special projects. Keith is active in a number of committees; he speaks of issues and priorities with
animation and engagement. Rita seems enthusiastic about new programs. She is upgrading her academic credentials, which she links directly with the transition. "It's certainly spurring me on to keep on getting credentials to keep a job. ... I feel I need it for my own self, so when people from another area, say, question my credentials, I can say I am qualified." These informants remain committed and engaged as organizational members as well as members of their units.

This group (cultural values retained) is like those who hold the emergent cultural perspective in that they have a positive interpretation of the transition. In this group, however, all persons remain engaged as organizational members with broader organizational activities whereas some of those in the emergent category say they are putting all their attention on their teaching. This observation suggests various attitudes, such as job satisfaction and those various attitudes collectively labelled organizational-employee linkages.

Sensemaking, Organizational Linkages and Job Satisfaction

The theoretical idea of organizational linkages offers one way to look at what is revealed about attitudes to the workplace and organizational behaviour at Multisite. The term organizational linkages is a general label for several different phenomena concerning the connection or relation between the individual and the
organization. Two basic categories of linkages are membership status (a connection which includes acts of joining, staying or leaving) and quality of membership. Quality of membership includes linkages often described by such terms as loyalty, attachment, involvement, and commitment (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982).

The term organizational commitment refers to two different but closely related phenomena, sometimes distinguished from one another as attitudinal and behavioural commitment. Attitudinal commitment is defined as the relative strength of individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization. Conceptually, it is characterized by a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization’s goals, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization. Hence, commitment is more than passive loyalty; it involves an active relationship such that individuals are willing to give something of themselves in order to contribute to the organization’s well-being. Behavioural commitment is the process by which an employee’s past behaviour serves to bind him or her to the organization. “A self-reinforcing cycle emerges in which a behavior causes the development of congruent attitudes, which in turn lead to further behaviors, and so forth. As a result, the individual slowly increases both
behavioral and psychological linkages with the organization" (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982, p. 26).

What people say about their attitudes and activity in the early years at Multisite indicates an exceptionally high level of organizational commitment. What people say about the organizational context in that period seems a "text book description" of a setting in which powerful linkages between individuals and the organization will be built and will be maintained. That is, the factors identified in the literature as major influences in generating commitment are factors that emerge as salient in the members' accounts of those years. Participation in decision making is related positively to commitment, for example, as is the employee's degree of social involvement with others in the organization (McShane, 1992; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). "Organizational dependability," the extent to which the employee feels the organization could be counted upon to look after the employee's interests, also is a factor that builds commitment (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982, p. 34). This construct is related to job security and trust, also described as factors that build commitment (McShane, 1992). Another factor is organizational comprehension, the sense of understanding the whole organization that comes when people are regularly informed about activities throughout the organization (McShane, 1992). Still
another is feelings of personal importance to the organization (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982, p. 34). Job scope (a summary construct composed of such job characteristics as task variety, autonomy, challenge, significance and feedback) also is related positively to commitment (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982).

What some people say about the organizational context in the present seems “a textbook description” of a setting in which the linkages between individuals and the organization will have weakened over time. What some people say about their attitudes and activity in this present period is consistent with a significantly reduced level of organizational commitment. However, other people speak of a renewed enthusiasm for their work.

It is useful here to make a distinction between organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Commitment is a more global concept, reflecting a general affective response to the organization as a whole. Job satisfaction is one’s response to one’s job or certain aspects of one’s job. “Hence, commitment emphasizes attachment to the employing organization, including its goals and values, whereas satisfaction emphasizes the specific task environment where an employee performs his or her duties” (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982, p. 28).

I am suggesting that the following patterns emerge at Multisite. Some faculty members take a traditional cultural perspective and say that traditional
values are in decline. They interpret what is happening in this transition period negatively. The attitudes they express about the organization and about how they are behaving as organizational members indicate a decline in organizational commitment. Some faculty members of this view make comments that suggest less job satisfaction, as well. Barb, for example, speaks of doing her little job, of no longer breaking her back. However, others make comments that suggest job satisfaction may not be in decline. Susan, for example, says she makes sure she is a good teacher and closes the door on the rest.

Some faculty members take a traditional cultural perspective and say that traditional values are retained. They interpret what is happening in this transition period positively. The attitudes they express about the organization and about how they are behaving as organizational members indicate they maintain a high level of organizational commitment. Some faculty members of this view suggest continuing job satisfaction, as well. Both Rita and Luke, for example, speak of opportunities to develop more sophisticated programs within their areas.

Some faculty members take a traditional cultural perspective and say they are uncertain whether traditional values will be retained. They seem uncertain how to interpret what is happening in this period. The attitudes they express about the organization and about how they are behaving as organizational
members indicate ambivalence toward involvement. At least some of them are disengaging from organization-wide activities. For example, Pete says he recently has resigned from a committee because he cannot keep up with the paper flow it generates. There also are comments that suggest a decline in job satisfaction. Jane, for example, says "there is never time to do a really good job, at least that's my feeling. ... I'm always feeling I'm putting out bush fires, doing things fast and messily and I find that very stressful."

The traditional values at Multisite -- involvement in decision making, social cohesiveness, respect, and trust -- and the organizational factors that contribute to commitment overlap to a marked degree. With this in mind, it is not surprising that for faculty who take a traditional cultural perspective, how they interpret the expression of traditional values (i.e., as retained, in decline or uncertain) now appears to parallel their level of commitment.

Some faculty members take an emergent cultural perspective. They interpret what is happening in this transition period positively. They speak of one or more academic values as they speak of increased satisfaction with particular aspects of their job. The attitudes they express about the organization and about how they are behaving as organizational members consistently reveal increased job satisfaction and sometimes reveal decreased organizational commitment.
They sometimes juxtapose statements of increased job satisfaction with statements of decreased organizational commitment. Rob, for example, speaks of how exciting and interesting he finds “digging back into the stuff of academe.” He also says he “rather deliberately” does not take part in some of the various committees any more. He says, “I’m here to instruct and that takes all of my happily spent time.”

Some faculty members take a pragmatic perspective. Within this group, there are those who interpret the transition positively (e.g., Mary, Lynn), negatively (e.g., John), and without any particular valence (e.g., Val). Faculty with each of these interpretations speak of being less involved, or not involved, in organization-wide activities. Sometimes they speak of their own decreased involvement; other times, they speak of colleagues’ decreased involvement. Mary, for example, says she is interested in what happens at the organizational level but her priority now is her departmental level activity. Dan, speaking of Strategic Planning, says he was involved in previous years but not in recent years. John speaks of people who “just don’t care anymore, they care about their students deeply, and they care about their instruction deeply, and they care about their instruction but they’re hardly ever on any committees or even at meetings.”
These apparent associations between perspective and job satisfaction and perspective and commitment are summarized in Table 4. I re-visit these associations in the final section of this chapter.

Before concluding this section, I consider two points from the literature. The first is a research result that enhances the credibility of my interpretations; the second offers a broader perspective on the situation at Multisite. The first point concerns the relation between emotion and bias to action. Positive emotion is more likely than negative affect to facilitate many types of behaviour (Fiske and Taylor, 1991). Positive moods are associated with a bias to act rather than not to act. Negative moods are associated with a bias not to act (Fiske and Taylor, 1991, pp. 98-99). That conclusion comes from research that focuses on particular incidents and the behavior, such as giving assistance to a stranger, that follows within a short period (measured in minutes or hours) of time.

It seems to support the pattern I find in the data: an organizational member who interprets an ongoing and significant organizational change negatively will display a bias not to act, not to be actively involved, as a member of the organization. Conversely, a member who interprets the change positively will tend to display a bias to act. More specifically, for some faculty members, the bias to act takes the form of remaining actively involved with the organization.
Table 4

Sensemaking Perspectives, Job Satisfaction and Organizational Linkages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensemaking Perspective</th>
<th>Job Satisfaction</th>
<th>Linkage [commitment]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Cultural Perspective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values in Decline</td>
<td>some: decline</td>
<td>all: decreased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values Uncertain</td>
<td>some: decline</td>
<td>all: ambivalent/decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values Retained</td>
<td>all: retained</td>
<td>all: commitment retained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent Cultural Perspective</td>
<td>all: increased</td>
<td>some: decline in commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic Perspective</td>
<td>some: decline</td>
<td>some: decline in commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>some: increased</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For others, it means activity that is a part of one's job. I suggest that this connection between bias to act and emotion may obtain over an extended period of time. Indeed, the bias to act or not and the presence or absence of positive feeling may be mutually supportive and influential. The feeling may tend to sustain the bias and vice versa.

The second point concerns the impact the broader societal context has on the kinds and depths of bonds between employees and organizations. Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982, p. 8) say the changes in the external environment provide a sort of “ground” for the “figure” of employee-organization linkages. They suggest that changes in society generally do not affect employee connections to organizations directly. Rather, societal changes serve to alter the work environment (more technically, the environment for working, which includes the attitudes and behavioural predispositions that managers and other employees bring with them) which in turn affect individuals’ attachment to organizations (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982, p. 8).

The statement that societal changes cause changes in the work environment harkens back to the more general statement that established ways of social behaviour (i.e., of acting, of thinking) ordinarily undergo fundamental alteration
only in response to factors external to a social organization (Nisbet & Perrin, 1970, p. 44). I suggested, above, that the changes in cultural values, beliefs, and ways of doing things at Multisite have occurred because certain external factors (i.e., changing societal values and demands) have triggered responses by the institution and within the institution. I now suggest that the changes in the employee-organization linkages at Multisite are associated directly with changes in the values and beliefs in the work environment and hence are associated indirectly with changes in the values and beliefs in the external environment.

In summary, I suggest that those for whom emergent values are important experience increased job satisfaction but do not necessarily maintain their previous level of organizational commitment. Those who make sense in terms of traditional values seem to experience organizational commitment as retained, lost, or ambivalently, according to how they experience the expression of traditional values. Some of those who say traditional values are in decline make comments that suggest they experience less job satisfaction. The nature and strength of linkages among those who make sense in terms of pragmatic self-interests vary according to how the individual interprets whatever issue he or she takes as central.
I also suggest that (i) the changes in the values and beliefs in the work environment at Multisite are associated directly with changes in the external environment, and that (ii) changes in the employee-organization linkages and in job satisfaction are associated directly with those changes in values and beliefs in the work environment.

**Multiple Meanings: Answering the Research Question**

In this study, the research question is, How do faculty members at Multisite make sense of (i.e., interpret and come to understand) the transition to becoming a university college? In this section, I attempt to answer that question. I consider organizational culture as a means of sensemaking, faculty members as sensemakers, and finally, I summarize my response to the research question.

**Organizational Culture and Sensemaking**

There are at least two ways to look at the relation between sensemaking and organizational culture. One way is to look at the apparent role cultural values have in how the individual interprets what is happening. Another, at the apparent
relation between components of organizational culture and sensemaking perspectives. I consider each of those in that order.

For some faculty members, organizational culture seems important in how they interpret the transition. Some faculty members seem to interpret what is happening in terms of whether cultural values and ideals are sustained or in decline. That is, the organizational culture functions for them as a interpretive device, as the literature on organizational culture suggests it does (e.g., Bartunek, 1984; Conrad, 1983; Daft & Weick, 1984; Frost, 1987; Gioia, 1986; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Morgan, 1986; Smircich, 1983). Their concern with organizational values goes beyond a pragmatic or self-interested concern; they seem concerned with the wider meanings they take to be symbolized by those values rather than the inherent meaning the value may have to the “objective” observer.

For other members, organizational culture does not seem important in how they interpret the transition. They seem to interpret what is happening in the organization now as it relates to their self interest rather than as it relates to cultural values. Practical concerns such as how it affects them, their daily work, the prospects for their program, and/or their career objectives seem central.
The literature on organizational sensemaking assumes that organizational culture is important in how individuals make sense of what is happening (as outlined, p. 33-36). It does not suggest it is the only influence, however. Ogawa (1991, as cited above, p. 34), for example, says it is not entirely idiosyncratic, which implies it is, or may be, somewhat idiosyncratic. Frost (1987, as cited above, p. 34) writes of three means of deriving meaning, one of which is the interpretive schemes people bring to the organization.

These comments could be read as referring to all individuals; that is, to suggest that culture influences interpretation, at least to some extent, for everyone. On reflection, however, individual differences in degree of engagement with the cultural context seems not surprising. Louis (1983) describes level of cultural membership in local culture as well as in organizational culture.

An individual may be a member of a social system and participate superficially or deeply in the local culture. What determines the level of cultural membership is the individual's self-perception. ... In contrast to participation in the culture of birth, participation in an organizational culture is more temporary or transitory and more a matter of voluntary choice (though not necessarily the product of a conscious rational decision process). Ultimately, one is a participant in a particular culture to the extent that one considers him or herself to be a member. (p. 48-49)

Looking at the relation between sensemaking perspectives and the components of organizational culture (i.e., in Trice's, 1985, terms, ideology and
social practices) suggests the following. Those faculty who take an emergent cultural perspective focus on mission (ideology), especially those aspects of mission that are compatible with academic values. The cultural values that the institutional mission expresses are important to them; the participatory and communal values (i.e., traditional social practices) do not seem to be important, however. Those faculty who take a traditional perspective tend to focus on cultural values as an integrated set of meanings (i.e., mission and traditional social practices). Communal and participatory values as well as facets of mission are important to them.

A significant distinction between communal and non-communal values is a focus on the whole (the whole person, the group as a whole) versus a focus on the part (the role rather than the whole person, the individual rather than the group). The following pattern in my data is consistent with this theoretical distinction. Those with a traditional cultural perspective, a perspective that entails an emphasis on communal values, speak of their attitude to the whole (i.e., organizational commitment) whereas those with an emergent cultural perspective, a perspective that does not entail an emphasis on communal values, speak of their attitude to the part (i.e., job satisfaction).
Faculty Members as Sensemakers

I noted above the limited relations between the characteristics of individual faculty members and their sensemaking perspectives. Those with an emergent cultural perspective are all in programs that offer degrees, for example, and all the new faculty members have a pragmatic perspective. However, faculty members in any program area, with either long or medium service, and with or without doctorates can have any of the interpretations arising from the traditional cultural perspectives. They also can have a pragmatic perspective. At the level of interpretation of symbol or issue within a perspective, the characteristics of individual faculty members appear not to be useful in predicting or explaining the interpretation. Some persons of long service say that faculty members retain a great deal of influence in decision making, for example, and other persons of long service say the traditional participatory process is lost. Some persons of long service make sense in terms of traditional cultural values; others, emergent cultural values; still others, pragmatic issues.

One way to organize what I am saying is in terms of two comments, as follows. First, faculty members make sense in terms of a perspective, a symbol and the connection between them. The perspective any one individual uses, the symbol or issue that is most salient, and the interpretation of the expression of that
symbol or the resolution of that issue seem to be highly subjective and idiosyncratic matters. Second, faculty members seem not to make sense in terms of individual characteristics that can be seen as objective descriptions. These include the particular academic credentials they hold, their affiliation with particular programs or units, and their length of service. (This comment on the latter characteristic is qualified by the observation that those of very short service are pragmatically oriented.)

This second statement -- that those characteristics of individuals that can be labelled objective characteristics do not offer the means to predict or explain interpretations -- seems to surprise some persons with experience in the college sector. One faculty member in the college sector, for example, responded to this finding by saying, "it seems counter-intuitive." Consistent with this comment, some people expect that "old" people will want to cling to the traditional community college ways and that "new" people will want the institution to move to being more like a university. This view is consistent with Dennison’s (1992, 1995) perspective on the concept of a university college.

Dennison (1992, 1995) describes the university college as a unique institutional structure in which two fundamentally different cultures (the cultures of the conventional university and the comprehensive community college) come
together. Making a transition from being a comprehensive community college to becoming a university college can be seen as follows. There is an established institution, the faculty of which value teaching, job training, service to students and community, and maintaining comprehensiveness. Degree programs are added; the new faculty members have doctorates; they value research and scholarship but have little appreciation of traditional college values (Dennison, 1992).

In this perspective, there seem to be two categories of faculty members: (a) “old,” who want college values to continue to dominate, and (b) “new,” who want the emphasis to shift to university values. The old and new are likely to differ not only in length of service but in terms of academic credentials and in whether one’s program offers degrees. Within this perspective, one might look for two distinct interpretations of the transition, with that of the faculty of long tenure distinctly different from that of the new.

At Multisite, “old” and “new” are not entirely irrelevant as categories; however, they are exceedingly untidy ones when attempting to understand the interpretations of individuals. Faculty of long service include those with doctorates who have taught academic disciplines (in first and second year university transfer courses) since the college was first established. Some of them
held faculty positions in traditional universities before joining Multisite. Many of these individuals seem socialized to college values, at least to some extent. New or more recent faculty include those in non-academic programs. Many new people who teach in degree programs have been hired on the basis of excellence in teaching as well as academic credentials. (The present job market for college teachers means that hiring committees often need not choose between one criterion or the other.)

At Multisite, the data suggest an association between being an active member in the early days and feeling a strong preference to maintain what was established then. The association is probabilistic rather than absolute, however. Many, but by no means all, of the founding members seem to have this strong emotional engagement with traditional cultural belief systems, such as participation. Some of those for whom these belief systems seem not to be influential, however, include some faculty who founded the college. Some, but by no means all, of those with an emotional engagement to one or the other traditional cultural belief systems are founding members. Some faculty members of medium term express a sense of great loss with the perceived loss of one or more of the traditional values. A faculty member’s years of service and how the transition is interpreted are not related in any direct or precise ways.
I see the relation between my findings and Dennison's perspective on the university college, as follows. Dennison, looking at institutional types and at the outcomes that are likely at the institutional level, predicts a clash between two different organizational cultures. I look at what individuals within a particular context have to say and find that there is, in some sense, a cultural clash. The picture of emergent values and a fragmented sense of mission that I sketch is consistent with that. However, I also find that individuals cannot be assigned to "sides" in the cultural clash on the basis of objective criteria, such as length of service, academic credentials, or institutional unit.

The addition of degree programs and the addition of faculty to teach in those programs mean that certain academic values and beliefs are more salient than they were. One way to describe this is that values that once were background are more often figure in the context now. Some faculty see this change as a threat; others, as an opportunity; still others, as just a change. Again, I find that individuals cannot be assigned to a particular position with regard to academic values on the basis of objective criteria. There are persons with doctorates, for example, who hope credentials and titles are not emphasized because they are concerned that will set up barriers between academic and non-academic units. There are persons without doctorates who have a new-found
enthusiasm for scholarship; some of these members would like to be affiliated with an institution that was strictly academic.

I suggest that it is not surprising that one is unlikely to pin down exactly why one person has one interpretation rather than another. In general, organizational information and processes are inherently complex and ambiguous. It is not surprising that different members have different interpretations of what is happening. An individual's interpretations are highly subjective and in periods of substantive organizational change, this is especially true. How people act and think changes; existing value and meaning systems change (Bartunek, 1984; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

The Research Question: Interpreting the Transition

How do faculty members at Multisite make sense of (i.e., interpret and come to understand) the transition to becoming a university college? I respond to the research question as follows. Faculty members at Multisite make sense of the transition by making sense of their organizational experience in the transition period. They sometimes make a distinction between the abstract idea of an institution adding degree programs and the events and processes they are experiencing in the setting but it is their experience they interpret, not the abstract
idea of structural change. They monitor what is happening in the organizational context on an on-going basis although this may not be done systematically or even consciously. Although some of what is happening may not be directly related to adding degree programs, it is the whole flow of the events, information and processes of the transition period that people interpret and upon which they base their understanding. To ask how faculty interpret the transition, for all practical purposes, is to ask how they interpret what is happening in the organizational setting now.

Faculty members make sense of their experience by means of a complex and highly subjective process. I describe that process in terms of a framework that is grounded in and emerges from the data. I suggest that each faculty member makes sense by means of these three elements: (i) a sensemaking perspective, (ii) a central symbol or value, and (iii) an interpretation of that symbol or value within the context of the perspective. My framework is consistent with Weick’s (1995, p. 110) description of sensemaking in terms of three elements: a frame, a cue, and a connection.

The sensemaking perspectives which I find useful -- the traditional cultural, emergent cultural, pragmatic, scientific and aesthetic perspectives -- are my modifications of Geertz’ (1973) religious, common sense, scientific and aesthetic
perspectives. In most of the interview accounts, either a pragmatic perspective or one of the cultural perspectives emerges as dominant.

Some faculty members make sense of what is happening on the basis of cultural values (i.e., values important in the organizational culture) that are personally and symbolically significant. The cultural perspectives that emerge in the accounts parallel the meaning systems that I suggest constitute the organizational culture at Multisite. I describe the organizational culture there in terms of both traditional and emergent cultural values and beliefs. I label the two perspectives associated with these two sets of beliefs the traditional cultural perspective and the emergent cultural perspective, respectively.

The two cultural perspectives have in common a symbolic ("religious" as an "article of faith") valuing of the community college mission (or ideology). They differ in that the traditional cultural perspective entails a valuing of an integrated set of values (the belief systems of family and participation as well as mission) whereas the emergent cultural perspective entails primarily a valuing of mission and of various aspects associated with academic settings. Individuals who hold either of these perspectives sometimes differ from others who hold the same perspective in terms of which particular values are emphasized. People who use a traditional cultural perspective, for example, differ in what set of traditional values
they focus on and in how they interpret the expression of those values in the present. People who use an emergent cultural perspective differ in which emergent academic values they stress.

Some faculty members seem not to make sense on the basis of cultural values; they make sense on the basis of the perceived resolution of an issue of pragmatic importance to them. People who use a pragmatic perspective differ in what issue they focus on and in how they interpret the resolution of that issue.

The aesthetic perspective surfaces occasionally, but only as a perspective others are seen to hold or may hold. Some people make use of more than one perspective. A scientific perspective surfaces in some accounts, for example, as does a pragmatic perspective.

Certain symbols (e.g., comprehensiveness) and issues (e.g., the resources available to one’s unit) recur in the accounts. What symbols or issues individuals attend to is related somewhat to their “home” department or unit. Persons in areas that do not give degrees, for example, monitor whether the degree programs are better funded or given other advantages. However, how individuals interpret what is happening can not be predicted on the basis of whether his or her unit offers degrees or on the basis of unit affiliation.
Sensemaking emerges as an inherently subjective process. What perspective one uses and what issue or symbol is central seems largely idiosyncratic. Faculty members do not make sense, in any apparent way, on the basis of such objective criteria as length of service, academic or professional credentials attained, and whether one teaches in a program that offers degrees. One exception to this, as already noted, is that faculty members new to the institution do not use cultural perspectives.

Faculty members at Multisite make sense of the transition, in general terms, as follows. For those who take a pragmatic perspective, the transition is interpreted in terms of how one’s interests are seen to be met. Individuals vary in what issue is central and in how that issue is interpreted. For Lynn, for example, the issue is additional professional opportunities, which she believes are associated with the transition. For her, the transition is interpreted positively. For John, an important issue is support for his unit; he associates the transition with reduced funding and unfair allocation of funds and interprets the transition negatively.

If one takes a cultural perspective, the transition is interpreted in terms of the cultural values that are most important to the individual. For those who take an emergent cultural perspective, the academic values are most important and
these values are seen to be more strongly expressed in this period than in the past. Hence, the transition is interpreted as a positive change. For those with a traditional cultural perspective who think traditional values continue to be expressed, the transition also is interpreted positively.

If it is uncertain whether the preferred values will continue to be expressed, the interpretation of the transition seems to be postponed. The comments made are ambivalent, in the form of “on the one hand, on the other” statements. If the values most important to the individual are seen to be in decline, lost or likely to be lost, however, the transition is interpreted negatively. It is associated, directly or indirectly, with a workplace that is less positively valued.

Faculty members make sense of their experience in ways that seem closely associated with how they behave in the workplace or with how they anticipate their colleagues behaving. Those who use pragmatic perspectives and interpret the transition negatively, for example, say their colleagues are withdrawing from organizational activities. Those who use pragmatic perspectives and interpret the transition positively speak of enthusiasm for their work but not necessarily of being involved in organization-wide activities.

Those faculty members who use an emergent cultural perspective consistently indicate increased job satisfaction; they sometimes indicate a
decreased level of organizational commitment, however. Those who use a traditional cultural perspective retain a high level of organizational commitment if they think traditional values are retained; they seem ambivalent about whether they will remain engaged if they are uncertain if traditional values are retained terms. If they think traditional values are lost, they anticipate that they or others will disengage from organizational activities or are already doing so. They may report this disengagement as distinct from dedication to their professional duties ("I shut the door; I make sure I’m a good teacher and I ignore what’s going on out there."). They may speak as if they make no distinction between the two sets of activities ("The more isolated we feel, the less incentive we have to do well.").

In overview, I suggest the following. The organizational culture is characterized by fragmented patterns of interpretations. There also are fragmented patterns of interpretations of the transition. Among those who interpret within a traditional cultural perspective, for example, people may interpret the transition negatively, positively, or ambivalently, according to whether they think that traditional values will be lost or retained, or whether it is not yet clear what will happen. Among those who interpret within an emergent cultural perspective, the transition is interpreted positively, because academic values are expressed more strongly. For people who interpret within either cultural perspective, cultural
symbols are linked in meaningful relationships and they are related to how people in the setting act (as Smircich, 1983a, p. 350 suggests). Among those who interpret within a pragmatic perspective, the transition is seen positively, negatively or as neither positive nor negative, depending on the individual’s interpretation of whatever issue is taken to be of particular importance in terms of self-interest. Associated with these fragmented interpretations, there also are fragmented patterns of linkages with the organization (described here as organizational commitment) and fragmented patterns of response to one’s job or to aspects of the job (i.e., job satisfaction). Among those who interpret within a traditional cultural perspective, for example, people may indicate that they or their colleagues retain their level of commitment, have lost it, or are uncertain whether they or their colleagues will remain engaged, according to whether traditional values will be retained or lost, or whether it is not yet clear what will happen. Among those who interpret within an emergent cultural perspective, an increased job satisfaction, but not organizational commitment, characterizes the accounts. Among those who interpret within a pragmatic perspective, people who see the transition positively express enthusiasm for their work; those who see it negatively express low levels of organizational commitment. The strongest patterns are that (i) the only category of interpretation consistently associated with the retention of
organizational commitment are those who say they believe traditional values will be retained and (ii) the only category of interpretation consistently associated with an increase in job satisfaction are those who use an emergent cultural perspective. Those who believe traditional values will be retained indicate no decline in job satisfaction. This overview is outlined in Tables 5 and 6.

These changes in the employee-organization linkages and in job satisfaction can be seen to be associated directly with changes in values and beliefs in the work environment (following Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982); those changes in workplace values and beliefs can be seen to be associated directly with changes in the external environment (following Nisbet & Perrin, 1970).
Table 5
Sensemaking Perspectives, Interpretation, and Linkages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Interpretation of Transition</th>
<th>Linkage [commitment]</th>
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<td>Traditional Cultural Perspective</td>
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<td>positive</td>
<td>all: retained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent Cultural Perspective</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>some: decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic Perspective</td>
<td>varies with issue resolution</td>
<td>some: decline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6
Sensemaking Perspectives, Interpretation, and Job Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensemaking Perspective</th>
<th>Interpretation of Transition</th>
<th>Job Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Cultural Perspective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values in Decline</td>
<td>negative</td>
<td>some: decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values Uncertain</td>
<td>ambivalent/postponed</td>
<td>some: decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values Retained</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>all: retained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent Cultural Perspective</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>all: increase/retained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic Perspective</td>
<td>varies with issue resolution</td>
<td>some: decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>some: increased</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 11

CONCLUDING THE STUDY

This chapter consists of two sections. The first is a summary of the study; the second section offers some of my reflections on the study. This chapter, like many of the preceding ones, moves from description to interpretation. Also like many of the preceding ones, the interpretive section features themes, images and puzzles. As I conclude the study, I find I have an enriched appreciation of organizational culture and sensemaking, as suggested in the preceding chapters. I also find I have puzzles not yet solved and riddles not yet answered and some uncertainty concerning which are which.

SUMMARIZING THE STUDY

In this study, I have two related purposes. I intend to explore, describe and attempt to understand (a) the organizational culture at Multisite and (b) what the transition to becoming a university college means to faculty members at Multisite.
The data were collected by means of participant observation and open-ended interviews. For a ten month period beginning in early 1993, I observed people in casual interaction and in various organizational activities. In the fall of 1993 and into early 1994, I attained a nominated sample of faculty members and conducted interviews with thirty nine persons in 35 individual interviews and one group interview.

I describe the organizational culture at Multisite in two ways. I contrast what is said about the past with what is said about the present, a contrast that recurs in the interview accounts of many faculty of medium and long term service. I also organize and interpret what is said by means of a thematic analysis, by exploring what I come to label the cultural themes of family, of participation, and of institutional mission.

What people say of meanings in the past suggests an integrated system, in which the patterns of interpretations are characterized by clarity and consensus. The values associated with the traditional themes of family, participation, and community college mission are compatible and mutually supportive. What people say of meanings systems in the present suggest a fragmented system, in which the patterns of interpretations are characterized by dissensus and confusion as well as consensus. There are dichotomous belief systems concerning social relations and
the decision making process and multiple interpretations concerning these beliefs. There are multiple belief systems concerning institutional mission, some of which oppose, enhance or seem unrelated to other beliefs concerning institutional mission. There also are multiple and contested interpretations concerning these beliefs. The integrated and fragmented systems of meaning are summarized in Tables 7 and 8, respectively.

I describe the process by which faculty make sense of the transition in terms of three interrelated elements. These are (i) the individual’s sensemaking perspective, (ii) a symbol or issue of particular importance to the individual, and (iii) the relation or connection the individual makes between the perspective and the issue or symbol.

I use Geertz’ (1973) sensemaking perspectives, with some modifications, as follows. I use cultural perspective as he uses religious perspective, as a view in which certain beliefs are taken as non-hypothetical truths, often signified by cultural symbols. I identify two cultural perspectives, which I define in terms of whether the beliefs that are taken as important are traditional or emergent cultural beliefs. I use pragmatic perspective as Geertz’ (1973) uses commonsense perspective, a view characterized by the pragmatic motive (i.e., the wish to act upon the world so as to bend it to one's practical purposes).
Cultural Beliefs in the Past: An Integrated System

We are family
we care for, support, respect, appreciate one another
we are co-operative, collaborative
we have respect for the perspectives of all and the work of all members
we talk to, listen to, are open with, have time for, one another
we have harmonious relations, elected committees, distinctive style
we offer a comprehensive curriculum
we train for jobs
we nurture the individual
we provide access to all segments of the community
we know and respond to the community
we seek out those who would not seek us out
we value all programs equally

We are a community college
We know what we are doing

[integrated values: egalitarian values underlie family and participation;
democratization of opportunity and equality of status underlie mission]
Table 8

Cultural Beliefs in the Present: A Fragmented System

Traditional beliefs now coexist with emergent beliefs

**Traditional:** We are family

*Emergent:* we do not know one another,
we do not have time to talk, to listen
we are competitive
we are ending up with a two-tier system
we care about achieved status

**Traditional:** We are participatory

*Emergent:* our power has been taken away
the decisions are made by administrators

**Traditional:** focus on students, jobs training, community, comprehensiveness

*Emergent:

degree programs mean the end of comprehensiveness
degree programs add to comprehensiveness
our new focus is the full time degree student, the degree programs
I don’t consider myself a teacher, I consider myself an academic
the institution will split vocational programs will fall by the wayside
there are segments of the community we no longer serve
the academic world is a different world

we [still] know what we are doing    we are uncertain what we are doing
We are a University College

[fragmented values: the values of egalitarianism, democratization of opportunity and equality of status are contested]
Within this perspective, the individual often focuses on a particular issue of practical, not symbolic importance. I also use the terms scientific (i.e., an analytic view) and aesthetic (i.e., a dwelling on appearances) perspectives as Geertz' (1973) uses them. Most faculty seem to use either cultural or pragmatic perspectives. Some faculty slide among sensemaking perspectives; some faculty seem to use multiple perspectives.

In terms of all three elements in sensemaking, a great deal seems to be idiosyncratic. Objective characteristics (such as length of service, academic or professional credentials attained, and whether one teaches in a program that offers degrees) are not associated directly with what perspective an individual uses, for example, and do not predict what symbol or issue is likely to be central. Individuals may focus on the same symbol but interpret its expression differently. For example, faculty for whom traditional values are important interpret the transition negatively or positively, depending on whether they think those values will to be lost or retained. If they are uncertain what will happen, they suspend interpretation. Table 9 illustrates some different interpretations of comprehensiveness, a particular symbol that is critical to many who hold a traditional cultural perspective.
### Table 9

Traditional Cultural Perspectives, Symbols and Interpretations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Values in Decline</td>
<td>comprehensiveness</td>
<td>negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>I really think the government will direct the loss of comprehensiveness ...</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>it’s a real loss. (Barb)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values Uncertain</td>
<td>comprehensiveness</td>
<td>ambivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>The question is, are we going to lose the comprehensive college for the</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>community? (Russ)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values Retained</td>
<td>comprehensiveness</td>
<td>positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>I’m no longer concerned with losing comprehensiveness because</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>faculty run this college. (Keith)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individuals may focus on different symbols but arrive at similar interpretations of what is happening. For example, faculty for whom emergent values are important all interpret the transition positively. They focus on various symbols of academic life, however, including support for research, "an academic flavour," an opportunity to use one's training. Table 10 illustrates different symbols (and contradictory views of research activity) in emergent perspectives.

Individuals may focus on the same issue but arrive at different interpretations of what is happening. Faculty who take a pragmatic perspective interpret the transition negatively, positively, or neutrally, depending on how what is happening affects them. Table 11 illustrates different interpretations of the self-interest issue.

The interpretations of members are considered important because they are assumed to be associated with the attitudes that people develop and with how people behave in the organizational setting. I summarize relations between interpretations and attitudes to the job or organization as follows. Among faculty who take a traditional cultural perspective, organizational commitment is maintained or in decline, according to whether traditional values are seen to be retained or in decline. Among those faculty who are uncertain whether traditional
Table 10
Emergent Cultural Perspectives, Symbols and Interpretations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol: support for research</th>
<th>Interpretation: positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching is just one of the things I do. ... We have this scholarly activity definition now so research is acknowledged as a part of the job. (Matt)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol: teaching, using training</th>
<th>Interpretation: positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We don’t have time for research. Teaching takes all my time. ... excited about getting back into some of the things we were trained to do ... he says, and reaches out to touch something [.touches textbooks]. (Rob)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol: teaching, seeking knowledge</th>
<th>Interpretation: positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research wasn’t my forte, teaching is. ... One of the things that excited me was giving the place some academic flavour; it stimulates both students and faculty. ... This is what we do, we teach. ... Personally, I don’t consider myself a teacher, I consider myself an academic. I mean I’m a person who seeks knowledge. (Alan)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11

Pragmatic Perspectives, Issues and Interpretations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Interpretation of Transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How it affects my workdays</td>
<td>neither positive nor negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It hasn’t meant a whole lot to me. It hasn’t affected me positively or negatively.</td>
<td>(Val)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How it affects my workdays</td>
<td>positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For me personally, it’s a good thing. It means I can expand my horizons if I choose to.</td>
<td>(Lynn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How it affects my workdays</td>
<td>negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The meaning basically is an heavier workload without the resources to do it. ... I’m exhausted and not finding the rewards I once felt and not feeling supported.</td>
<td>(John)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
values will be retained, many individuals speak ambivalently, suggesting that people may remain engaged with organization-wide activities but also may withdraw from such activities. Within this category of comments, some people imply maintenance of, or decrease in, job satisfaction according to the perceived status of traditional values. Other people do not reveal their attitude to their work.

Among those faculty who take an emergent cultural perspective, the transition is seen as a positive change; all these members express increased job satisfaction. Some indicate they are less involved with organization-wide activities; in other accounts, it is unclear if there is a change in involvement.

Among those faculty who take a pragmatic perspective, the attitudes expressed and the action taken and intended vary according to whether the individual sees his or her interests being meet. Those who interpret the transition negatively and those who have a neutral interpretation say that people are less involved in organizational activities. Those who interpret the transition positively express enthusiasm for some job-related or career-related activities but not necessarily for organizational activities.

I suggest that the organizational culture at Multisite is changing as a result of factors in the institution’s external environment. The transition to becoming a university college is a response to external demands. It is associated with
changing meanings and it has made the differences between emergent and traditional cultural values especially salient. As well, meanings have been changing over time, sometimes incrementally, sometimes unevenly across the institution, in response to various external decisions and demands.

I also suggest that changes in the systems of meanings at Multisite are associated with changes in the attitudes some members have to the workplace or to their work. The shift away from the traditional meanings, the communal and participatory values and norms, is also a shift away from organizational factors that build and maintain organizational commitment. Organizational commitment remains strong only among those who believe that the traditional values remain intact, or nearly so. The shift away from Multisite’s traditional values also can be seen as a shift towards the Gesellschaft values of individualism, self-interest, and specific-interest oriented motivation. This shift is consistent with the increased job satisfaction I identify among those who focus on emergent, rather than traditional, values.

Overall, I have suggested the following. The organizational culture at Multisite is characterized by fragmented meaning systems, including both traditional and emergent cultural values. Some faculty interpret what is happening on the basis of traditional (e.g., communal and participatory) cultural values.
Other faculty interpret what is happening on the basis of emergent values (i.e., values associated with academic settings and values associated with Gesellschaft social groups). Some faculty interpret what is happening on the basis of pragmatic interests. Faculty may interpret the transition positively or negatively, they may be neutral to it or they may postpone their interpretations. Differences in interpretation depend on what is perceived to be the status of the cultural symbol or the resolution of the issue of greatest importance to the individual.

Associated with these fragmented patterns of interpretations, there are fragmented patterns of comments about attitudes, actions, linkages with the organization (i.e., organizational commitment) and response to one’s job (i.e., job satisfaction). Faculty members who use an emergent perspective interpret the transition positively; they speak of enthusiasm for their work; they may or may not indicate they are less involved in organization wide activities. Faculty members who use a pragmatic perspective and interpret the transition negatively, say that they or their colleagues are withdrawing from organizational activities. Those who use a pragmatic perspective and interpret the transition positively may speak of satisfaction with what is happening; some of them indicate they are less involved in organization wide activities. Faculty members who use a traditional cultural perspective and who say they think traditional values are retained
continue to show organizational commitment. Those who say they think traditional values are in decline say that they or their colleagues will disengage from organizational activities or are already doing so. Those who are uncertain if traditional values will be retained seem ambivalent about whether they or their colleagues will remain engaged. Some of the different interpretations and attitudes that are expressed are illustrated in Tables 12 and 13 and organized in terms of sensemaking perspectives.

Finally, I suggest that (a) the changes in the beliefs and values in the organizational context have been precipitated by factors in the external environment and that (b) the changes in organizational linkages have been precipitated by changes in the beliefs and values in the organizational context.

**REFLECTING ON THE STUDY**

Initially I thought I would organize my reflections on the study in two sections. In the first, I would ask, What have I learned?; in the second, What's missing? What do I want to learn? Whenever I thought of something I had learned, however, a number of questions immediately came to mind. When I thought of some understanding that seemed to be missing, it often seemed to be
### Table 12

**Cultural Perspectives: Fragmented Patterns of Interpretations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Interpretation of Transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional: Values in Decline</td>
<td>interpretations: negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude/Action:</strong> I have a sense of losing that concept of the community college. ... You really become more focussed on your own area ... less generally interested and less generally feeling a part of what's going on in those other areas. (Adam)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional: Values Uncertain</td>
<td>interpretations: postponed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude/Action:</strong> I've just resigned from that committee because I can't keep up. ... A lot of us can say, I'll just keep my head down ... or continue to be a participant. (Pete)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional: Values Retained</td>
<td>interpretations: positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude/Action:</strong> The new mandate opens up opportunities ... things I'm interested in doing. ... If you buy into it, it will work. It's like the half-filled glass... ... It's certainly spurring me on to keep on getting credentials. (Rita)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent Cultural Perspective</td>
<td>interpretations: positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude/Action:</strong> Rather deliberately, I don't do that [group decision making on details]anymore. I'm here to teach. ... It's caused me to reeducate myself and speak nothing but positively about it. (Rob)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13
Pragmatic Perspectives: Fragmented Patterns of Interpretations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Interpretation of Transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic Perspective</td>
<td>interpretation: negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude/Action:</strong></td>
<td><em>I'm fairly bitter. ... I can't get time enough to get out of this department to talk to anybody. ... It's really awkward ... to be told we're supposed to do more for less ... very dissatisfying to never feel you're never finished. ... The change in participation is simply coming back each year and being able to identify a few more people who have fizzed out, burnt out. (John)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pragmatic Perspective</th>
<th>interpretation: positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude/Action:</strong></td>
<td><em>It means I can expand my horizons if I choose to. ... I hope this scatteredness is temporary. ... So many things going on you focus on certain ones and ignore the rest. (Lynn)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pragmatic Perspective</th>
<th>interpretation: neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude/Action:</strong></td>
<td><em>I'm not on as many committees ... too darn busy and now there are more people to spread it around, now I can do my own thing more. ... I just go along in my own little orb or orbit. (Val)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pragmatic Perspective</th>
<th>interpretation: postponed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude/Action:</strong></td>
<td><em>It's not quite a university college [yet]. ... If it doesn't go in the direction ... I might reconsider where I want to be. (Lew)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
more like a tension I could not quite grasp, rather than a question I could articulate. Sometimes it seemed like an image I was uncertain that I had understood or an attempt to make a connection to apparently unrelated theory that I was uncertain I had made.

I decided to organize this section in terms of images, tensions, and a puzzle or two. It consists of eight sub-sections. It begins with a gardener's image; consideration of five tensions follows; the seventh sub-section concerns an image of a spy, and the eighth explores one last puzzle.

Yellow Pansies

I ask myself what I have learned in doing this study and find that I am thinking of a package of pansy seeds with a picture of bright yellow flowers on the front and directions for planting on the back. This image reminds me that I have, on occasion, bought such packages and planted the seeds, sometimes following the directions, at least to some extent, and other times, scattering them haphazardly. I associate this image with pleasant and related surprises.

One surprise, relatively mild, seems to arise from skepticism. I am surprised that what I see corresponds to what was promised by the impersonal and generic messages of the seed package. The other surprise is more intense. As I
plant the seeds, I have a vague idea that seedlings may result and they may become hearty plants. That abstract sense of the possible, however, did not provide sufficient preparation for the freshness, texture and colour of real life.

My experience as a novice researcher offered numerous experiences that parallel my gardening experience. That is, experiences of knowing in an abstract way what was a possible or even likely outcome but still being surprised by the wonderful depth and richness of the real life experience. For example, I read that the observer could come to see patterns in interactions, revealing language use, and so on. I read that what people said would reveal themes or core understandings and the symbols that represented those beliefs, and that how people interpreted what was happening influenced how they behaved in the setting. There was, nevertheless, the sense of discovering something new and unexpected as I described the culture, developed the thematic analysis, and “discovered” the apparent associations among interpretations, attitudes, and organizational behaviour.

The experience of a novice researcher is not all pretty colours, of course. I read, as well, that a qualitative study demands a tolerance for ambiguity, that one must persist, remain open, and wait for what emerges rather than focusing too soon. I found doing so anxiety-inducing, as the literature suggests it is. I also
found it worthwhile, as the literature suggests it will be. This "wait and see"
approach seems as true for the analysis of data as for its collection. The metaphor
of planting seeds suggests two points that are relevant here. The first occurs
above: appreciation of the real life phenomenon, when it occurs. The other point
is that, although there is some general sense of what may result, the exact form
and extent and development is unknowable until it gradually makes itself known.

Another unexpectedly rich discovery concerned the complexity of
meanings, the multiple, evolving nature of meanings and their inherent ambiguity.
Teaching has multiple meanings; when considered in terms of meanings with
which it sometimes is associated, such as the contextual meaning of research and
other academic pursuits, teaching is a contested meaning. Anyone familiar with
college settings will not be surprised that the nature of the program in which one
teaches influences what one says about teaching, that there is no consensus on
what teaching means, and that some individuals speak as if they are certain what is
and is not good teaching. I am surprised, however, with the variations among
what is said by members in the same program, with the richness and complexity of
meanings concerning teaching, and with the extent to which some beliefs are
incompatible with other beliefs. Among those who have doctorates and teach in
degree programs, for example, there are differences in how important teaching is
in the individual’s career and in how research is associated with teaching. There also are differences in whether what emerges is an image of “college teaching” or of “university teaching.”

A number of comments on teaching surprised and puzzled me when they were made. For example, Alan speaks of how important teaching is to him. He speaks of sitting on the podium with cap and gown and thinking, as each student files by, that “I’ve touched these students. This is what we do; we teach.” He goes on to say he considers himself an academic, not a teacher, by which he means he is a person who seeks knowledge, who has to know. If I hear in the first set of comments a college perspective on teaching, as I did as it was said, I am surprised with what then seems like a shift to an emphasis on pursuing knowledge. If I recognize an academic perspective throughout the comments, then I am not surprised that the discovery of knowledge takes priority over the process of disseminating knowledge. Again, it is the richness of the experience of exploring cultural meanings rather than the “fact” that they exist that impresses.

The centrality of subjectivity often is implicit in what is written above (immediately above and throughout) and the tension between subjectivity and objectivity pervades my experience and, I expect, that of participants. This tension is one of a number that I am uncertain how to understand.
Another tension is that between the individual and the group. Dimen-Schein (1977) describes the individual and the sociocultural as "two simultaneous but different orders of phenomena" (p. 7). To think of them as dichotomous is partly accurate because they are different processes but also partly false, because they occur at the same time and affect each other (Dimen-Schein, 1977, p. 13).

Other pairs of terms I label tensions are the past and present, style and substance, public and private forums, and the particular and the general. I am uncertain how to understand the relation between each member of the pair. Any of these pairs of terms may be labels that describe different but perhaps related phenomena or any of them may be discriminated aspects of the same phenomenon. It may be that some or all of them can be understood best as Dimen-Schein (1977) describes the individual and the social context: partly dichotomous and partly not.

**Past and Present**

One general question about the past is whether or not to think of the stories of the early years as more or less accurate accounts. There are also a number of more specific questions that come to mind. I consider the general question first and then the others. I suggested above that the reports of the early years may be
reasonable reports of the experience of many people and that those who say the reports are myths are people who became organizational members after that period. This is different from what is perhaps the more obvious suggestion: that the reports are inaccurate because memory simplifies, clarifies, and idealizes experience. These two suggestions are not mutually exclusive, however. It may be the case that the early years were characterized, to a great extent, by participatory and communal values and hence by relative harmony. It also may be the case that the bias implicit in hindsight, the feeling of order, clarity, and rationality that retrospective sensemaking produces (Weick, 1995, p. 26) influences what is said about the past.

I have indicated one bit of evidence that suggests the reports of the past may be more or less accurate: there is a coherence to the stories and a consistency among what is said by all story tellers. Another point is that certain “facts” of the situation (e.g., a newly established institution; the first president’s focus on values and on participation; a young, idealistic faculty, most of whom are in their first professional position; a new institutional type, founded on values to which most members had already been socialized in their student experience) are consistent with the conditions associated with the development of an organizational saga (e.g., Clark, 1972) or a “strong” culture (Ouchi, 1980).
Another bit of evidence is as follows. I became a college faculty member elsewhere several years before Multisite was founded. Reports that Multisite was a great place to work, that all were involved in decision making, that it was a small but exceptionally successful institution, began circulating in the college sector early in its history and continued throughout its development. This does not, of course, "prove" the reports were accurate; at the very least, however, it indicates that those reports were taken as credible by a good number of interested persons.

One specific question is about how issues were framed in the past. Some people talk about the gaining-status period, for instance, as being "fear-driven." This view seems likely to shape what comes later. It seems as if the transition was framed as a threat rather than an opportunity in that period, at least by some organizational members. I wonder what effort, if any, was made by those in favour of the change to persuade their colleagues to see it as an opportunity. I wonder if something in the distinctive style of interacting, with its emphasis on listening and on harmony, is inconsistent with overt attempts at influence. The beliefs associated with the transition in that early period have other sources than what was happening at that time, of course. Assumptions concerning academic values have a long history. Nonetheless, I think the matter of how a change of this sort is framed internally and how the framing process is negotiated early in the
period in which the institution first considers the possibility would be a rich research opportunity.

The past seems ever present as people make sense of their present experience and it seems impossible to understand fully what impact it has on interpretations and actions. I hear a lot of comment on the past but I hear it all in the present. I have no way of knowing what I would have heard in an earlier period. I consider the perspectives I think I hear in what people say. I think of those who care about traditional values, see them in decline and feel less connected with the organization and perhaps, with their daily work. I wonder what I would find if I went back to Multisite after a number of years. Would those same individuals still seem like persons with a traditional cultural perspective, in the “values in decline” category? Or would they seem to have adapted to the situation by taking a pragmatic perspective? I wonder about a number of people to whom I ascribe a pragmatic perspective. Some of them (e.g., Dan, John) express regret with the decline in values; yet what they indicate as most important is a pragmatic issue. Are some of these individuals people with “lapsed” cultural perspectives? Do members change from one predominant sensemaking perspective to another over time? If so, events of earlier periods, especially those that affected some units more than others, may be associated with such a change.
An interest in the influence of past events on present interpretations suggests a longitudinal study of organizational sensemaking.

**Style and Substance**

One apparent indicator of the influence of the past at Multisite is the style of interacting, the friendly manner. Thinking of this style suggests a number of questions and a number of tensions. One tension or set of contrasts that remained with me throughout the study, for example, was the relation between style and substance. The style of interacting seems to have remained constant; yet many comments suggest that the values that underlie it are less often expressed in the setting. It may be that the expression of values is not limited as much in terms of general interaction as it is limited in processes that involve institutional decision making. It may be that a style persists for some time after the substance has been lost; this persistence may be associated with habit and modelling rather than deeply held values. It may be that the observer's task is made more difficult in a setting in which values are changing but the old values continue to be expressed by means of a historic style. In that case, what the observer sees is less informative of the present meaning systems than it would be in an organization undergoing less significant change.
The style often is described by members as friendly, as nice; sometimes they tie it to the rural or "country" nature of Multisite's region. That "country" style entails social maturity and sophistication; it requires a high level of interpersonal skills. I have suggested that the style serves as a "soft" means of conflict resolution. I also suggest that the traditional participatory process has provided a "training ground" for the development and practice of these skills. I wonder how much changes in the style over time will reflect changes in the group process. I also wonder how much the style really has remained constant. Among my earliest observations at Multisite were two impressions of social interaction: there was the pleasant style and there was the quick pace. I wonder if the quick pace is fairly recent. It may be that the traditional style is practiced when people interact but that people interact less and less. It may be that the style reflects 1970s values and the pace, the 1990s "reality."

The Individual and the Group

Thinking of the Multisite style suggests another tension, as well as the past-present and style-substance tensions. This is of how best to understand the relation between the individual and the group. One of the first things I recognized in conducting the study was how much each individual is a social being, how
much the way things are done becomes the way each individual does things. I did occasionally notice things people did and said that stood out as not the way things are done, of course. The fact that they stood out and that these incidents were so few illustrates the point: Individuals sometimes behave in idiosyncratic ways and more often they behave according to the norms of the social group.

As I have noted above, sometimes it became clear at meetings that people were not in agreement. When this happened, people would express their views, and sometimes, the differences would be resolved without any apparent tension. Sometimes, it seemed as if some unspoken rule dictated that one could only indicate disagreement a certain number of times and must then let the matter go. Sometimes, the views would be expressed, the matter would be left unresolved and the discussion moved on, leaving a sense of unresolved tension. After one Advisory Council meeting at which this happened, I observed a newly elected member of the Council discussing the meeting with an experienced member in a coffee room.

Judy, the novice member, seemed very upset. She was saying that if this was what it was like, she would quit. If it was just sitting there pretending to agree when you did not agree, she would rather not be there. As she spoke, she repeatedly said, “it’s bullshit, the whole thing is bullshit.”
experienced member, was nodding agreement throughout this and yet reassuring her and encouraging her to persist. He said, “Yes, it’s bullshit and that’s what you do. You just smile and let it go this time and get at it again. The whole thing is bullshit and that’s how we do it.”

Public and Private Forums

This exchange illustrates another set of contrasts; the tension between public and private presentations. It may be that Bernie might have said what he said to Judy to any other member of the Council, as long as the setting was private (more accurately, almost private: I was quite centrally placed in the coffee room throughout the exchange.) Yet, he probably would never have said that to the whole group when they were assembled as the Council. It also is worth making clear that Judy did not reveal her discomfort with what was happening when the meeting was in session.

In the first phase, I hear comments that seem to be themes made explicit. Some people say in public that we are family, that we are participatory. Many people say in private that, in the past we were family, we were participatory, but now, that is less true, or no longer true. Yet, when those statements are made, there is nothing observable to suggest that those expressions of themes are, in any
sense, minority opinions. On the face of it, this is not surprising. Even in a setting with less emphasis on courtesy, people are unlikely to challenge what is said when it seems a rhetorical expression, perhaps a sort of wishful thinking. However, there is something about this image, in which a few people make comments that many people say once were accurate but no longer are, that tugs at me.

The contrast between what is said in public and private forums seems associated with a sense of what is seemly, with a set of unspoken norms, as implied by Bernie’s response to Judy. Some of the reiteration of values in the public forum may be intended to direct action at least as much as to describe it; it may provide a “soft” way to influence what is happening while still complying with the norms of behaviour.

The contrast between what is said in public and private forums does not seem to be explained by fear of retribution. It may be better understood in terms of the contrast between rhetorical comment and reflective discussion. How the reflection that occurs in private comes to inform and influence what happens in public sessions interests and puzzles me. That interest is broader than, but subsumes the question of, the relation between one-to-one collegial conversations and what is said when large groups are involved in institutional decision making.
The exchange between Bernie and Judy also suggests another tension, that between events and process. Judy is concerned with an event and Bernie tries to reassure her by talking of process. I want to understand various processes and I observe events and set up the “event” of an interview. Events like meetings provide forums in which changes in meanings are negotiated and demonstrated. Yet, the many “small” interactions, within or outside public events, that constitute the processes by which meanings change, are fluid, imperceptible or ambiguous. They sometimes seem contradictory.

For example, I suggest that the budgetmaking and strategic planning processes may be forums in which changes in the decision making process are demonstrated. I suggest that no one challenges the absence of a truly participatory process and I speculate that this may be due to norms of behaviour that avoid confrontation and to an increased awareness of the power of those with hierarchical position. However, this is just one dimension of the negotiation of meanings in public forums. Individuals with hierarchical position sometimes persist with presenting a position when they encounter disagreement. More often they back off; they may return to the issue later or they may leave it alone. A number of interview informants speak of specific issues on which administrators had taken a position but with which they did not persist when they encountered
opposition. The attempt to close the book-store at North Campus is one example (pp. 217, 238). It triggered a response Dan describes as “people really mustered” and the store was not closed. The disposition to avoid confrontation seems to characterize persons in all roles at Multisite. It probably is a significant factor in what meanings change and how they change.

There is another way to look at how meanings change. Meaning systems change in three phases: recognition that the current systems are no longer appropriate, a period of instability in meaning construction, and a revised meaning system (Bartunek, 1984; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). The three interpretations (i.e., values retained, values in decline, values uncertain) within the traditional cultural perspective may illustrate these three phases. On the topic of participation, for example, Leah, Cathy, and Barb (i.e., values in decline) have revised their understanding of how decisions are made; Jane and Pete (i.e., values uncertain) seem to have recognized that the old meaning may not apply but they have not constructed a new one yet. It may be that Luke and Keith (i.e., values retained) still hold the “old” belief and have not moved to the second phase of meaning instability. Yet, each says he had been concerned at an earlier time with how things would change. It may be that each has gone through a period of re-examining his assumptions and has found evidence in the present situation to
support a new meaning that is very much like the old meaning. In which case, the three interpretations within the traditional cultural perspective do not illustrate the three phases.

**The Particular and the General**

There is a cluster of questions that suggests the tension between the particular and the general. In this case study, I have focussed on one institution without any expectation of what general issues were likely to emerge. Yet, I find I am considering a variety of issues that are central in workplaces in the 1990s. The comments on information overload, time pressures, lack of resources and feelings of insecurity that surface again and again, for example, are consistent with what is said in most organizations, regardless of the goods produced or the services provided. Reports that employees feel less known, less appreciated, less confident they will be taken care of, surface in many workplaces. A widespread decline in organizational commitment and related employee-organizational linkages have been reported in the literature for some time, for example, and now seems a part of popular wisdom.

The comments at Multisite and elsewhere imply or declare that this low level of linkage is a change and a negative one. There is the assumption that there
was an earlier period in which there were stronger linkages; implicit is the assumption that stronger linkages were to the advantage of the individual, the organization, and the broader society. One question that arises is how to understand how this has happened and why it has happened. That is, if “the good old days” were so great, how did it happen that we do things so differently now?

The idea that social unions often shift from communal to non-communal values in response to competitive forces comes to mind. If most people would prefer a communal context, while rejecting a competitive stance, it is uncertain why things change, unless hierarchical decision makers have a different view and hold sway. If most people would prefer to remain competitive, however, but still value the warmth of a communal context, then it is not surprising that the change occurs and that many people express regret.

This reminds me of Eva’s comment on the gaining-status period: “It was almost a schizophrenic process because you cherished those things which gave this thing character and there was a fear of losing that and at the same time the potential for growth was exciting.” I wonder if institutional decision making often is driven by a set of values that is incompatible with the values that people would like to underlie social relations. This could be described, in simplistic terms, by saying that some members would like the organization to be Gesellschaft in the
world and Gemeinschaft “at home.” Although social unions often are characterized by a mix of both Gesellschaft and Gemeinschaft values, it seems doubtful an organization could function with a mission predominantly shaped by Gesellschaft values and social practices predominantly shaped by Gemeinschaft values. If the dominant values that underlie the two must be compatible, it would be predictable that many members who support a competitively-oriented mission will be discontent with the social context in the organization. It may be this is part of what is happening at Multisite and at many other organizations.

What emerges concerning institutional linkages, more specifically, quality of membership, suggests a number of points to explore. One point concerns a particular discrepancy between my data and what the literature predicts. “Previous research suggests that one of the strongest predictors of commitment is tenure in the organization. The longer employees work in the organization, the more likely they are to report high levels of commitment” (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982, p. 65).

It would be interesting to understand why this does not seem to be true at Multisite. To say that this does not seem to be true seems an understatement, in light of how adamant some employees of long tenure are about their decline in commitment. I have indicated, above, various factors in the setting (e.g., less
involvement in decision making) that are consistent with a decline in commitment. Doing so, however, does not describe how the decline happens. I wonder, for example, if a researcher intent on understanding how commitment is maintained or lost could investigate the “self-reinforcing cycle” between behavior and congruent attitudes, between attitudinal and behavioural commitment (as described, p. 491). I wonder if one could identify particular behaviours that long-term employees did in the past and no longer do because the cycle has ceased to be reinforcing. I wonder what the critical reinforcement is. Barb, for example, says, “we have worked our butts off all these years with all these cutbacks, with shortage of staff, ... and you’re still asking us to do that, you’re asking us to do more.” Barb links her response, her sense of having had enough, with “the same ideas that Bill [Multisite’s second president] left for,” and I wonder what is of central importance in her change in attitude. Is it that we are still being asked to do more? Is it that Bill left because of these requests? Is there a reward that was once there that no longer is?

The idea of a psychological contract, of the exchange process between the employee and the organization that includes non-economic as well as economic factors, seems relevant here. It would be interesting to understand how interpretations of the transition and of incremental changes have changed the
nature of that contract over time. Again, the value of a longitudinal study surfaces.

Mowday, Porter, & Steers (1982) emphasize that strong employee linkages have both positive and negative implications for organizations (p. 216). Possible negative implications include the stagnation often associated with a low level of turnover; the continuing membership of worst-performing employees, and the risk of “overly committed employees who may be so oriented to the narrow and short term interests of the organization that they are blinded to its broader and longer range interests” (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982, p. 16). Multisite and other institutions are undergoing structural change to maintain a competitive stance. I wonder if institutional decision makers in such a circumstance sometimes intend to effect a decline in linkages or, at least, are not unhappy when it occurs.

However, strong linkages among the employees who interact with the primary consumers of the organization’s service have potentially important influences on overall organizational effectiveness (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982, p. 208). In educational institutions, of course, instructors are among those employees. Also, an organization needs strong linkages in periods of rapid growth and when critical or uncertain circumstances face the organization (p. 209). Mowday, Porter, & Steers (1982) say that organizations need to diagnose what the
level of linkages currently is, whether and where improvement is needed, and if so, how to bring it about. It would be interesting to know what such a project in an educational institution would reveal.

At least two other broad and related questions come to mind on the topic of organizational linkages and workplace attitudes in educational organizations. One question is the relation between instructional duties and the quality of organizational membership. Susan’s comment, that she makes sure she is a good teacher and she closes the door on “the rest” (i.e., organizational activities), indicates the belief that one can separate one’s classroom activities from the institutional context or, at least, from one’s feelings about the institutional context. This belief, that teaching occurs in an impermeable “compartment,” seems pervasive in educational institutions. In my experience, for example, it is not uncommon for college instructors to say that when the political situation becomes too difficult to deal with, they withdraw from organizational activities and “concentrate on the classroom.” They often refer to closing the classroom door. In my experience as a high school teacher, it was not uncommon for some teachers to dismiss some directives from the district office with a comment that suggested they would not comply with it. These comments also included a reference to closing the classroom door, implying, sometimes with a wink, that they could and
would do what they liked there. It might be useful to identify the assumptions that underlie these beliefs; it might be useful to policy makers as well as to instructors to explore whether the classroom really can be kept separate from “the rest of it.”

The other question is what influence, if any, there is on the quality of organizational membership when the individual has administrative duties as well as, or instead of, instructional duties. Those who are department heads, programmers, or non-teaching faculty have, or may have, different experiences of the workplace. Some of them (e.g., most department heads) always have the choice of “going back to the classroom;” some (e.g., most non-teaching faculty, such as the librarians, counsellors, and nurses who practice their professions rather than teach them) do not. It might be useful to explore what effects these experiences have on attitudes and linkages.

Finally on this topic of the general and the particular, a number of themes recur at Multisite that seem generally of concern in contemporary workplaces. These include the references to time pressure and information overload, as indicated above, and also the beliefs that many people are suffering severe stress and that some people are experiencing burnout or soon may do so. The themes also suggest the subjectivity-objectivity tension, by which I mean that they touch
on socially constructed phenomena and yet are experienced as objective factors in the setting. What is interesting and puzzling is that some people in the same setting speak of feeling rejuvenated, of new-found enthusiasm. Occasionally, the same individual refers to enjoying the challenge of what is happening now and within a few sentences, speaks of concern with burnout.

Other themes that seem related and that recur are concerns with quality and with lack of autonomy. Some people speak of less energy in the work place, less creativity in one’s work, too little time and money to plan innovative degree programs. By and large, those who speak of themselves in terms of feeling alienated, experiencing more stress or expressing less creativity are those who perceive their central symbol to be in decline or their issue to be resolved unsatisfactorily. Those who speak of rejuvenation, of energy, of opportunities to do exciting things are those who perceive their central symbol to be secure (e.g., those who take a traditional cultural perspective, values retained) or enhanced (e.g., those who take an emergent cultural perspective) or their issue to be resolved satisfactorily (among those who take a pragmatic perspective).

I suggest, above, that in the early years, many members saw themselves as proactive in the institution and the institution as proactive in the broader setting. I also suggest that, now, some members seem to believe that the institution and its
administrators function reactively, although others are pleased with what they see as an adaptive, proactive stance in the present. I wonder how best to understand two patterns I notice in clusters of perceptions. There seems to be an association among (a) perceptions of being reactive rather than proactive, at the personal (professional) and institutional levels, (b) perceptions of stress, burnout or disengagement from organizational activities, and (c) perceptions of values in decline or self interests that are frustrated. There also seems to be an association among (a) perceptions of being proactive, at the personal (professional) and institutional levels, (b) perceptions of rejuvenation and excitement, and (c) perceptions of secure values or of self interests that are being met.

**The Spy**

In the period in which I was attempting to make sense of what people said about participation, an image came to mind. It was of a much earlier meeting at Multisite, a memory seemingly forgotten until I found myself processing, again and again, images of Multisite people at meetings. Perhaps a decade before the study began, I was a part of a group of individuals, each of us representing one of the province's community colleges, who were responsible for curriculum and
instruction in a set of subject areas at our institutions. We met regularly over a period of time, at different institutions around the province.

We met at Multisite after we had several earlier meetings in various locations. As I entered the meeting room, I noticed there were considerably more people at the table than the dozen or so of us who constituted the working group. Someone said that it was the culture here, that meetings were open to all. The meeting began with people introducing themselves. One man said cheerfully, "My name is Tom Timmins and I'm a spy." A number of Multisite people laughed; Tom seemed pleased with that response. Tom went on to say he was new at Multisite and was going to make the most of the fact that all members could attend and participate in all meetings on campus. He elaborated further on this, saying that when he had heard a bunch of administrators from all over the province were holding a meeting, he had to be there. He made a series of remarks, seemingly intended to be amusing, about how he was suspicious of what might happen whenever persons with "fancy titles" were holed up in one room without being watched. He said he was new to the college sector and to the world of work as well as to the institution, so he had lots of questions. Tom went on to outline what his initial questions were. In fact, he went on for some time.
The meeting lasted for several hours. The time was spent responding to Tom’s questions and those of a few other people new to the process with which we had hoped to re-engage. The discussion outlined a great deal of information on college programs generally and on what this group had done so far. None of this was useful to members of the work group who had attended the previous meetings. We conducted very little business that day, other than to establish the time and place of the next meeting. We resolved never again to meet at Multisite.

I find the image of the spy troubling. I have learned how important “open” meetings at Multisite are in the traditional belief system there and how the participatory approach is crucial in developing involved and socially skilled organization members. I would not like to suggest that Tom should not have been there or should have been made to limit his comments. Yet, at the time, I quite happily could have throttled him and if I were in the same situation again, I expect my feelings of frustration and my enthusiasm for getting him by the throat would be just as strong.

One way in which this image is troubling is that it suggests a number of questions difficult to answer. How does an organization operate effectively, while remaining sensitive to the developmental needs of members? How does an
organization find the balance between decision making processes that are time
effective and decision making processes that involve members?

That last question captures a tension that pervaded the budgetmaking
process at Multisite and points to a serious issue in the college sector (and perhaps
in other sectors) generally. The issue is that administrators must make critical
decisions as concerns budget matters in settings in which the professionals they
deal with are members of collective bargaining units. Some members of those
units take union membership to mean that they cannot engage in discussions, or
even provide information to discussions, when the discussion may lead to layoffs
of fellow union members. Yet, administrators can make better decisions when
they have input from those who know the details of how institutional units
function. Often, those persons are department heads and others with
administrative responsibility who are members of collective bargaining units. The
image of the spy suggests to me various difficult issues that concern decision
making and the involvement of faculty members.

One Last Puzzle

There is a pattern in my observations I find difficult to interpret and
somewhat troubling. I was uncomfortable recognizing it at first. Whenever I
thought of it, I found myself thinking of the Recapitulation Theory. The Recapitulation Theory (or Biogenetic Law) states that the embryological development of the individual organism recapitulates the evolution of the whole group or species. This is stated more succinctly as ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. Hence, the fact that gill slits (structures that in many Vertebrate animals go on to develop into gills) appear at some stage in the development of human embryos recapitulates our species' evolution from water-dwelling, gill-breathing animals.

This is the connection with my data. When people talk about the early years (the 1970s) at Multisite and about being deliberate in identifying institutional values, what they say seems to describe a setting in which an organizational saga culture develops. It also describes a setting in which a “strong” (meaning values are shared) organizational culture develops. That is, their description recapitulates what was said by theorists writing about colleges and about organizational culture at the time. In Clark’s (1970) work on distinctive colleges, for example, the link between organizational effectiveness and the development of an organizational saga was made. Clark (1970) described colleges of this type in terms of the collective understanding of unique accomplishment, in terms of organizational accomplishment being the basis of pride and identity for the group,
in terms of an emotional loading (i.e., an emotional dimension added to the rational purpose) that turns a formal place into a beloved institution. The image of the past at Multisite is consistent with this view and with an integrative view of culture, with an emphasis on harmony, consensus, and clarity.

What people say about the present suggests they recognize there is consensus on some meanings, dissensus on others, and confusion on still other meanings. Many people comment on the lack of agreement on some issues and the lack of clarity on other issues. What people say sounds as if they are following the advice given to those who would attempt to describe and explore organizational culture in the 1990s. That is, they seem to use multiple perspectives; they seem to move among integrative, differentiative, and fragmentation perspectives.

I state my tentative recapitulation theory, as follows. Participants' narratives recapitulate researchers' theories. Like the original recapitulation theory, this one does not concern itself with cause and effect. Like the original recapitulation theory, as well, this one suggests that something that surfaces in one component, one side of the equation, in a manner of speaking, can encourage us to seek the parallel element in the other component.
I take the idea of culture as a means of sensemaking and look at narratives in two periods with a sense of the theory in those two periods. In participants’ narratives of the early days, people often speak of shared values. Because of the ongoing influence between the individual and collective levels of sensemaking, values and other meanings at the individual level are critical in developing the shared interpretations that sustain social consensus. Culture as shared meaning means people use the same set of meanings to interpret what is happening and hence come up with a shared understanding or set of beliefs about organizational “reality”.

In participants’ narratives of the present, values and other meanings at the individual level are diverse and this diversity underlies the mix of social consensus, dissensus, and confusion on how to understand what is happening. Culture as a shared frame of what the issues are, but not as shared meaning concerning those issues, means people come up with less consistent understandings of what is happening than they do when there are shared meanings. These understandings are not without pattern, however; they are structured in terms of the set of shared frames. Taking a fragmentation perspective on a culture does not mean that the sensemaking function within that
culture consists of unpatterned interpretations; it means only that the patterns are complex.

The metaphor of the kaleidoscope can illustrate this sense of common frame without consensus on meanings. If we assume that people pick up the kaleidoscope at different times and hence begin with a different display, and that once they hold the kaleidoscope, they can turn it with more or less rigour and can focus on whatever patterns or bits are of interest to them, then we can understand how they can generate such different interpretations of what they see. However, they are all looking at the same kaleidoscope with the same set of elements and a finite number of patterns. The interpretations are more diverse than if they all have the same interests and look at the same pattern. The interpretations are considerably less diverse than if they each have different kaleidoscopes with different assortments of elements, however. This is an image of organizational sensemaking in an organizational culture characterized by shared frames of reference.
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## Appendix

Informants in individual interviews (Alphabetical order by pseudonym)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Does/will Program Offer Degrees?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barb</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celia</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuck</td>
<td>Early</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eva</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jay</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keith</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leah</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lew</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix (continued)

Lynn               Medium
Marg               Early
Mary               Medium    Yes
Matt               Early     Yes
Pete               Early     Yes
Rita               Early
Rob                Early     Yes
Russ               Medium
Shawn              New       Yes
Susan              Medium    Yes
Val                Medium
Walt               Medium    Yes
Wendy              Early     Yes
Group of 4         Varies
(Ada, Anna, Amy, Anita)

Length of Service  Early: Faculty members who started in 1970s
                   Medium: Faculty members who started in 1980s
                   New: Faculty members who started in 1990s

Those who do not have yes under Degrees column include faculty who are (i) instructors in programs that will not offer degrees, (ii) Continuing Education Directors, and (iii) non-teaching faculty. I do not distinguish among these categories for reasons of confidentiality.