Theoretical Approaches Regarding the Concept of Organizational Culture

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Abstract
This article proposes a theoretical approach to the concept of organizational culture. The study makes a foray into defining the concept of organizational culture and reviews the elements of organizational culture identified in the literature. The concept of organizational culture is presented diachronically, captured in the vision of the great classics and the contemporary vision. Clarifying this concept helps understand the perspectives that the organizational culture analyst will address in his research approach and for students who become familiar with the organizational environment.

Keywords: *Organization; culture; organizational culture; organizational values; organizational rituals;*

1. Introduction

To define *the organization*, there is a diversity of perspectives and approaches generated by the complexity and variety of the types of organizations constituted by human societies. Burell and Morgan identified four sociological perspectives of organizational analysis, namely: the *functionalist one*, which considers the organization as an integral part of a more comprehensive social system that serves the interests of its members; the *interpretive one*, which is centered on affirming the instability of the social balance and the need for negotiation permanent between the actors to achieve balance, the *radical humanist perspective* and the *radical structuralist one*, which points to the accentuation of the conflict and his potential in the transformation of society (Burrel & Morgan, 1979). According to Richard W. Scott, there are three perspectives on approaching the *organization concept* (Vlăsceanu, 2003, pp. 55-56).

- as a *rational system* in which organizations are considered to be social structures with a high degree of formalization and centered on the pursuit of specific goals;
- as a *natural system* in which the organization is a collective whose members have common but also different interests and where the informal structure of relationships is more relevant to organizational behavior than the formal one;
- as *an open system*, where organizations are defined as systems of independent activities that connect transitory coalitions of participants.

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***The Annals of Dunărea de Jos University of Galați*, Fasc. XX, Sociology, no. 19, 2024, pp. 57-70.**

The rational approach of the organization is based on the classic image of a social entity constituted to achieve a particular purpose and specific objectives (Vlăsceanu, 2003, p. 55). The first theorizing from the rationalist perspective began almost simultaneously in the USA and Europe at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. In the USA, Fr. Taylor, the initiator of scientific management, proposes a rationalization of the activity of managers and workers through a scientific organization, and in Europe, Max Weber and R. Michels elaborate theories on bureaucracy as a new way of institutional organization. Analyzing the forms of administrative management, Max Weber describes the bureaucratic form of organization of enterprises as the ideal type of administration because it is based on the rational-legal way of management; it assumes a hierarchy, a system of formal rules, the emphasis is on professional qualification, on discipline and control, and relationships in such an organization are characterized by impersonality and impartiality (Lafaye, 1998, pp. 16-17). He launched the first definition *of an organization in sociological literature: A social relationship which is either included or limits the admission of outsiders will be called an organization.* (Weber, 1978, p. 48). In Weber's conception, social relations are constituted as organizations only under the conditions of the existence of an authority that holds representative power, possibly of administrative staff, and of decision-making positions in the functions of the staff, which represent the executive power. Also essential are targeted actions, without which there can be no talk of the organization.

Other representative explanatory models for the rationalist approach are those of H. Simon, James March, and Richard Cyert, who, unlike the classical theorists, who sought to identify the optimal means of achieving goals and increasing organizational efficiency, are more interested in establishing satisfactory alternatives for achieving goals, recognizing the limits of human rationality. Thus, in their conception, each level of the organizational structure is an end goal for the lower levels and a means of achieving the goals for the higher levels (Vlăsceanu, 2003, p. 57).

Some typical features can be deduced from the rationalist theories in the definition of the organization (Vlăsceanu, 2003, p. 58):

- The organization must fulfill its role of increasing the efficiency of social activities.
- In turn, the efficiency of an *organization* depends on the character of scientific and organized means of activity and management.
- The structure of organizations is treated as a means to achieve ends.
- Very important for effectively fulfilling the proposed goals are the degree of specificity, rigor, and precision of the formulations and the rigor in applying the established rules and principles.

A new model for understanding and interpreting organizations develops in the 1930s, using an organic approach to the concept of organization. Like a living organism, the organization is considered to be in a constant struggle to find balance, with *survival as its fundamental goal* (Vlăsceanu, 2003, p. 59).

The informal structure of the organization, consisting of status and power systems, communication networks, work arrangements, etc., is of maximum

importance for the representatives of this perspective. Theorists of this perspective include Elton Mayo, Chester Barnard, Philip Selznick, and Talcott Parsons.

According to Chester Barnard (1968), an organization is a system of consciously coordinated activities by two or more people (pp. 39-40). The foundation of the existence and functioning of organizations is *cooperative social action.* This action is possible in conditions where at least two people can communicate with each other, wanting, at the same time, to contribute to achieving a common goal (Barnard, 1968, pp. 94-95). However, cooperative action is unstable because it depends on individual factors, such as the intensity of the desire to participate, individual satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Barnard, 1968, pp. 84-85) etc. In Barnard's opinion, organizational communication is essential because it ensures the preservation of the state of mind in the organization (Barnard, 1968, p. 95).

In Etzioni's view, organizations are *social units deliberately constructed and reconstructed to seek specific goals* (Etzioni, 1964, p. 4). Porter, Lawler, and Hackman identify five aspects that enter the definition of organizations: social composition, goal orientation, differentiated functions, rationally intended coordination, and continuity in time (Hoffman, 2004).

Philip Selznick considers organizations to be *adaptive organisms* (Selznick, 1948, pp. 25-26), because of people with different attitudes, behaviors, habits, and commitments. He highlights unique, distinctive features that differentiate organizations, outlining the concept of *organizational personality (culture)* (Selznick, 1948, p. 28). In his conception, when an organization acquires a distinct identity or personality through the crystallization of values, institutionalization occurs, transforming the organization into an institution (Selznick, 1948, p. 27).

Talcott Parsons elaborates at the end of the '50s, an analytical model for any collectivity. His model, known by the acronym *AGIL,* identifies four essential functions necessary for a social system to survive:

- *Adaptation*, represented by material forces, especially related to the economic sphere, where the primary value is *money*.
- *Reaching the goal* (Goal *Attainment)* is correlated to the political sphere, where the specific value is power.
- *Integration***,** which aims at the issue of solidarity, of the feeling of belonging to a social group, where, in order to achieve integration*,* compliance with the rules is necessary.
- *Latency* **-** is represented by the field of institutionalized values*.*

This model analyzes organizations by relating them to the whole society, highlighting that the specific purpose of an organization represents, at the macrosocial level, a specialized function of this system. From a structural point of view, however, the organization as a stand-alone system can include subsystems with an adaptive role. Also, the organizational system comprises specialized subdivisions for different functions to optimally achieve its intended purpose (Parsons, 1964, p. 69). Noteworthy in Parsons' organizational analysis model is his idea of needing a multidimensional definition of organizations (Hoffman, 2004, p. 60).

The open systems model approaches organizations from two perspectives: the internal system of relationships and *the integration of organizations in the*

environment, as a broader system that constitutes the framework in which organizations operate. This dual approach considers the organization as an interdependent system consisting of many subsystems interacting with each other, the environment, and the organization as a whole. Conceived in this way, the organization becomes a system whose boundaries are no longer well-defined but rather diffuse (Vlăsceanu, 2003, p. 63).

Representative of the open system perspective are contingency theories and Karl Weick's theory. The first ones emphasize that there is no single way for an organization to achieve the expected efficiency. However, the various ways of structuring must be adapted to the environment to be effective. Lawrence and Lorch, for example, state that the fit between an organization's internal characteristics and the demand of the environment determines its ability to adapt. Also, different environments have different requirements, so organizations must develop structures adapted to the environment (Vlăsceanu, 2003, p. 64). T. Burns and GM Stalker identify *organizational systems of a mechanical type*, which correspond to a stable environment, being characterized by a clear hierarchy and a sharp differentiation of tasks, and *organizational systems of an organic type*, characterized by a continuous adaptation and redefinition of individual tasks, due to unstable environmental conditions (Vlăsceanu, 2003, pp. 64-65). Karl Weick emphasizes, through his theory, the organization's members' role in creating, defining, interpreting, and influencing the environment in which they operate. They are not only people who react to a given environment but "the initiators and builders of the environment through action" (Vlăsceanu, 2003, p. 66).

Synthesizing the theories regarding the organization and identifying organizational characteristics, Oscar Hoffman tries to develop a universally valid definition of organizations, which he describes as institutions that have as specific features the fact that:

> *a) involves the free (voluntary) membership of its members; b) involves a relatively specialized activity; c) its content refers to its members, although it may also work with other individuals representing their field of specialized activity; d) presents a relatively autonomous character regarding its birth and operation* (Hoffman, 2004, p. 74).

Thomas Hobbes introduced the *concept of culture* in the social sciences to denote spiritual life (Hoffman, 2004, p. 99). Having a Latin origin, the term *culture* was initially used to denote the activities related to cultivating the land. The analogy between the cultivation of the spirit and that of the earth is not new. It can also be found in the ancients. For example, Cicero spoke of *culture agrorum* and *culture animi*, which are understood as the education of the spirit. In Germany, the term *kultur* was first used in studies of universal history in the 18th century to denote progress. Later, the notion of *civilization* was developed, also originating from the Latin language, from the noun *civilitas*, which expressed the qualities needed by the citizen in relating to the other city members. Most specialists differentiate between the notion of civilization, which refers to the outer side of man, and that of culture, which refers to the human spirit (Hoffman, 2004, pp. 99-100). The sociological perspective, however, no longer differentiates between the two terms, approaching culture in all its social

aspects. Thus, Tylor Edward Burnett considers both terms when constructing the definition of culture:

> *Culture or civilization, [...] is that whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society* (Tylor, 1920, p. 1).

In the definition proposed by Kluckhohn, the following attributes of culture are identified (Hoffman, 2004, p. 110):

- it is an essential concept comparable to the role played by evolution in biology, gravity in physics, and disease in medicine;
- the human creates culture in relation to his biological structure and requirements;
- culture is created and transmitted by people;
- it is a way of thinking, feeling, and living;
- culture is not identical with society; it represents the way of life of social groups;
- it is transmitted through learning;
- the essence of the cultural process is selectivity;
- the selectivity is conscious and rational only exceptionally;
- regulates the whole life of humans;
- offers techniques for adapting to the external environment and other people.

Linton believes that culture represents a specific life model of a particular society, without which it could not function and survive (Linton, 1968, pp. 65-71). The cultural model perpetuates itself from generation to generation, configuring more specific cultural models (Linton, 1968, pp. 84-87).

There are several approaches to the term in the specialized literature regarding *organizational culture*. Joanne Martin and Debra Meyerson identify three perspectives related to the study of organizational culture: that of *integration*, in which organizational culture is described as being shared by all members of the group; that of *differentiation*, in which the division of organizational culture into subcultures is adopted, and the perspective *of fragmentation*, specific to post-modernist research, which addresses how organizational cultures become inconsistent, ambiguous, or divided (Hoffman, 2004, p. 122).

The first theorizations of the term belong to Jacques Elliot, who talks about *enterprise culture*, defining it as:

> *All its members share the customary and traditional way of thinking and doing things to a greater or lesser degree, and new members must learn and at least partially accept this to be accepted into service in the firm* (Elliot, 2001, p. 251).

The one who consecrated the concept of *organizational culture* is, however, Edgar Schein. He defines an organization's culture by what it has assimilated in its history as a social unit (Schein, 1985, p. 17). Regarding the cultural content of organizations, Schein identifies three essential aspects: *the artifacts* (value carriers) located in the visible plane, the *values and behavioral norms, which* are in the intermediate plane, and *the system of beliefs and presuppositions* located in the organizational structure's deepest level which have an indisputable truth value (Schein, 1985, pp. 23-27).

Adherents of the substantial perspective, partisans of the integrative role of organizational culture, introduce the concept of a strong culture, thereby understanding the intense character of organizational culture and its great tendency to spread, being appropriated by the majority of an organization's members. Characteristics of these strong cultures include a high degree of intolerance towards those who reject the central values and the manifestation of solid constraints according to behavioral expectations (Hoffman, 2004, pp. 118-119).

Geertz Clifford approaches the concept of organizational culture from an interpretive-symbolic perspective, considering the symbolic elements, the essential factors that contribute to the creation of the organizational culture and the organizational image, by transmitting a *meaning* of the concepts or ideas (Hoffman, 2004, pp. 119-122). Symbols acquire individual interpretations, which is why the culture of organizations is created through interaction between individuals and groups with different interests, ideas, and aspirations (Hoffman, 2004, p. 121). From an interpretative-symbolic perspective, within an organization, several cultural types interact. Thus, *the official organizational culture,* imposed by managers for the operation of the organization, is identified, *the countercultures*, which represent networks of informal cultures in conflict with the official cultural type, and *the subcultures*, which represent cultural subsets that coexist alongside the dominant culture, presenting some differences from this (Hoffman, 2004, pp. 122-123).

Regarding organizational culture's content, Eugène Enriquez states that organizations present themselves as proper cultural, symbolic, and imaginary systems (Enriquez, 1992, p. 35). As *cultural systems*, organizations offer a culture that consists of a system of values and norms, a way of thinking, and a way of understanding the world, which guides the conduct of various social actors. They also develop processes of training and socialization of different actors, as well as criteria for selecting desirable behaviors and attitudes, playing a role in the inclusion or exclusion of members from the organization. Cultural aspects are indispensable for the stability and permanence of organizations, constituting their element of identity (Enriquez, 1992, pp. 35-36). As *symbolic systems*, organizations contain unifying myths, establish rites of initiation, passage, and fulfillment, and create heroes and legends for collective memory and legitimacy systems that give meaning to organizational action and life (Enriquez, 1992, p. 36). As *imaginary systems*, organizations operate on two levels: *the utopian imaginary*, which expresses a relationship between man and the world, a way of responding to individual and collective desires and visions, a way of protecting individuals from an identity crisis, and *the motor imaginary*, responsible for manifesting the creative imagination of individuals in their work (Enriquez, 1992, p. 37).

Great importance in the analysis of organizational culture is played by Geert's theory Hofstede, who develops an operational model for the analysis of national culture on five dimensions (Hofstede, 2010, p. 31): *distance from power*, *the difference between collectivism and individualism*, *the difference between masculinity and femininity,* and *differences regarding the propensity to avoid uncertainty*. Taking a structural view of culture, Hofstede defines culture as "a collective programming of thinking that differentiates the members of one social group from another" (Hofstede,

2010, p. 6). His analysis model is currently considered the most relevant for approaching national cultures and applies to organizational cultures. In his conception, organizations are nothing more than manifestations of overall cultural systems, showing that social influences enter the organization through the organizational culture (Hofstede, 2010, pp. 23-24).

2. Elements of Organizational Culture

The organizational culture includes the system of values to which the members of the organization adhere, the rules or institutional norms, the managerial style, the attitudes of the employees, the mission of the organization, the artifacts, symbols, and cultural products, and the ideology of the organization (policies and principles that guide the actions of the members of the organization).

The value system is the central element of the organizational culture.

Defining *value* is a process that proved extremely difficult due to the plurisemantic nature of the notion in ordinary language. This has led to a divergence of meanings in the various branches of scientific research (Voicu & Voicu, 2007, p. 9). Thus, the economic sciences take the meaning of *cost, exchange,* or *utility* (Deth & Scarbrough, 1998, p. 22), the exact sciences associate it with the meaning of *physical size*, and the humanities approach the normative meaning of values, which become reference criteria for the behavior of people and communities (Voicu, 2007, p. 3). In the social sciences, the definition of value has also generated different views of the various subfields. However, the researchers agreed on a few common points, namely (Deth & Scarbrough, 1998, pp. 25-28):

- The great majority ascribes to the concept of value a relative meaning, stating that values do not provide indisputable means of establishing absolute patterns.
- Another common point of view places values at the individual level (vary according to each person's interests, aspirations, and preferences) but with an essential social determination (values adapt and change according to the socio-cultural contexts in which people act).
- The third aspect asserts values' role in guiding individuals' actions and behaviors.

To make a clear differentiation of the value concept from other terms with similar content, the researchers agreed to identify the features of the values that could constitute their defining conditions (Deth & Scarbrough, 1998, pp. 25-28):

- The most obvious characteristic is that values cannot be directly observed. Defined as objects or affective reactions to stimuli such as things, situations, actions, events, symbols, or even fragments of imagination, values can be analyzed through human manifestations, attitudes, and behaviors (Voicu, 2007, p. 9).
- The moral content of the values implies issuing value judgments that express the polarities of some ethical categories: good – bad, right – unjust, etc. These value judgments involve relating reality to a situation, to an ideal that differs from one society to another and from one era to another (De Finance, 1992, pp. 129-130).

- Values are desirable conceptions that contain moral considerations about how an activity, behavior, or attitude should be related to with individuals' needs, interests, and motivations (Deth & Scarbrough, 1998, pp. 25-28).
- The high degree of stability of the values. Unlike attitudes, which change more quickly due to their contextual character, values, grouped in value systems, last much longer over time as they are more complex and profound (Voicu, 2007, p. 9).
- Values have cognitive (by identifying meanings about surrounding realities), affective (by an emotional reaction to stimuli), and volitional (express individual or social will by consciously selecting the preferred response alternative) connotations (Deth & Scarbrough, 1998, pp. 25-28).

The literature expresses divergent opinions regarding the social character of values. Although Thomas and Znaniecki affirmed the social side of values, later research by Allport and Adorno placed the concept at the level of individual personality traits (Deth & Scarbrough, 1998, p. 34).

Starting with Rokeach, researchers reconsider the social character of values, rejecting the thesis of values as fixed entities that characterize the person in his individuality. Gibbs, for example, talks about values as collective evaluations, and Folsom states that values are ways of reasoning and thinking that characterize communities, not individual desirability (Deth & Scarbrough, 1998, p. 34). In his work, *Tradition and Revolt*, Nisbet states that the problem of communities automatically implies the problem of values (Nisbet, 1999, p. 130). From another point of view, Moscovici states that values permeate the entire universe of social life, as things, ideas, and activities receive, in a continuous intersubjective exchange, consensual meanings through language (Deth & Scarbrough, 1998, p. 35). This thesis considers value a social property for individuals who share a particular meaning of the social universe. Kluckhohn emphasizes this point, stating that an individual's distinctive values signify participation and membership in a particular group or community (Deth & Scarbrough, 1998, p. 35).

Attempts to systematize the meanings implied by the concept of value are not reduced; however, due to the simple identification of a few prominent characteristics, the scope implied by the term is much more comprehensive. Being determined by the general context in which social reality unfolds, the notion of value was discussed with that of *culture* (Voicu, 2007, p. 7). Researchers always refer to values as fundamental cultural elements when talking about culture. According to Kluckhohn, the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and the values they carry (Hofstede, 2001, p. 5; Kluckhohn, 1951, p. 86, n. 5). Krober and Parsons define culture as a set of ideas, values, and symbols that act to shape human behavior, while Triandis talks about the objective artifacts that define a cultural group (Hofstede, 2001, p. 9). Hofstede makes a clear distinction between the concepts of value and culture. He states that values are individual and collective properties, while culture only characterizes collectivities. Values are invisible until they become evident through behavior, while culture manifests more through visible elements, such as symbols, heroes, or rituals. According to the same author, culture determines the uniqueness of a human group in the same way that personality determines the uniqueness of an individual. Human

groups are characterized by common cultural traits intended to guide their members in adapting to the environment. At the center of the cultural system are the social norms and values shared by the majority groups in the respective population (Hofstede, 2001, pp. 9-10).

Another distinction that sociologists make to explain the concept of value is between the notion of *attitude* and that of *value*. According to Thomas and Znaniecki, attitudes represent processes of individual consciousness, while values are objects that guide attitudes and govern individuals' social behavior (Deth & Scarbrough, 1998, p. 22). Most researchers, however, state a strong connection between value and attitude due to the two notions' cognitive, evaluative, and behavioral character (Deth & Scarbrough, 1998, p. 31). Thurstone, for example, uses the term attitude to denote the set of ideas, beliefs, feelings, and prejudices of a person related to a particular subject. Other researchers believe there is a permanent exchange of meanings, and symbols between values and attitudes, and the most recent theories launch the concept of *value orientation*. This concept reflects the attitudinal character of values (Deth & Scarbrough, 1998, p. 32). These value orientations are general dispositions in a latent state in the individual's consciousness, activated in specific situations, determining specific behaviors (Voicu, 2007, p. 6). Parsons speaks of attitudes as a way of manifesting values. A value or a value orientation can determine several attitudes, and the latter can be caused, in turn, by different values. Also, the values determine each other, generating the phenomenon of value dependence. The interdependence of values allows them to be organized into *value systems* or stable frameworks to guide individuals' actions (Voicu, 2007, p. 7).

Several researchers have defined the concept of value with that of *social action*, the consensus being that values influence the way individuals act, and more than that, value expresses what is desirable in action (Deth & Scarbrough, 1998, p. 30). For example, Parsons defines values as the ultimate engine of social action, essential elements for social systems (Voicu, 2007, p. 4). Kluckhohn describes value as a conception that influences the selection of available ways, means, and ends of action. Thomas and Znaniecki consider value as a possible object of activity, and Rockeach defines values as a set of beliefs about certain conduct (Deth & Scarbrough, 1998, p. 29).

According to researchers, cultural value is identified by philosophers of value, with the ultimate value being the ideal of a given social personality, which can be represented by a nation or even humanity itself (Andrei, 1997, pp. 202-203). All other values (social, moral, aesthetic, religious, etc.) are facets of cultural value. Some authors distinguish between *subjective cultural values*, aimed at the spiritual affirmation of a personality, and *objective values*, aimed at practical material results. This distinction was deepened and taken by some as absolute values (religious, aesthetic, and theoretical values) and others as objective values (technical, economic, ethical, and legal values), the latter having a social character (Andrei, 1997, pp. 199-203).

Social value generally designates what is admitted, recognized, and recommended as worthy of respect in a concrete society and what guides social

interactions and decisions of social actors (***, *Le travail, a good pour l'homme ...*, 1984, p. 30).

The norms. Another distinction made by sociologists was that between values and *norms*. According to Muchielli, values are principles shared by a group of individuals. Every society has a set of values that guide individuals' thinking and behavior, and the difference between values and norms is that values are expressed through social norms (Baggio, 2006, p. 134). In Maisonneuve's opinion, norms are a set of rules and conduct, the violation of which generates sanctions (Baggio, 2006, p. 134). Margaret Andersen and Howard Taylor believe that both values and norms are part of the broader framework of culture, constituting landmarks in the adaptation of members of communities to a given social environment, these norms and values being different from one cultural group to another. In other words, values determine what is socially acceptable, while norms ensure compliance with these values (Andersen & Taylor, 2008, pp. 62-64).

Contemporary researchers have shown that people do not participate in a single domain of social life, do not belong to a single community, and do not possess a single set of values valid anywhere and anytime. They participate simultaneously in several areas of social life and belong to several groups or communities, each with its values. Thus, one can speak of family life and values, spiritual life and spiritual values, professional life and professional values, etc. By this pluralism of values, the sociological and philosophical tradition speaks of various axiological fields such as ethical, religious, economic, legal, political, social, and cultural values (Polin, 1977, p. 228), etc.

Culture results from a relatively long formation process, like an individual's personality. Just as people's personality traits become stable over time, so do organizational culture traits. The past influences the current traditions and customs of the organization and the success they have had. It becomes difficult for managers to change them at some point, requiring a long and challenging change process.

Most of the time, in the research of organizational culture, the emphasis is placed on values, norms, basic assumptions, and aspects that prove relevant to the organization. Over time, other structural, static, or other characteristics began to be considered, and researchers, in the first phase, only preferred to mention them through concepts such as *rituals, rites, stories, ideologies, ceremonies, etc.* How these notions are created, maintained, and transformed is increasingly coming to the attention of researchers trying to go beyond their simple statements of them.

Some researchers locate *rituals and ceremonies* on the surface of organizational culture. They are consequently very visible and constitute less studied aspects of organizational culture. However, Schein appreciates that, although easily visible, rituals and ceremonies are challenging to research and interpret because of their deeper roots in employees' mindsets.

Defining *organizational rituals* can be difficult. There is the danger of too specific definition, which draws its inspiration from the religious sphere (in this case, the ritual is an *order according to which the religious service proceeds*), or the danger of too general definition, in which ritual appears to be any human activity. An acceptable definition could be the following: *Organizational rituals are actions*

promoted in institutions, having a procedural structure comprising repetitive elements within scenarios loaded with meanings; they favor the identification, adherence, and training of people to achieve organizational objectives (Avram & Cooper, 2008, p. 255). Another definition presents rituals as *a set of detailed and standardized techniques and behaviors that reduce anxiety and produce technical consequences of practical importance* (Avram & Cooper, 2008, p. 252).

The ritual is a dynamic process and has a festive character. Through rituals, connections are established between the organization's members and between its present and past.

Robert Young drew the following characteristics of rituals (Avram & Cooper, 2008):

- *To establish connections - Ritual helps the person establish connections with others. Through* rituals, newcomers are more easily integrated into the community. Also, through rituals, those who are part of the institution become linked to its traditions, history, and prestige, enter the system, feel that the symbols of the institution have been transferred to them, and become part of a whole.
- *It clarifies values. Ritual is a mode of operation of meaning, combining values with behavior and sometimes creating the impression of the sacred. Values are an essential part of a ritual,* and it is crucial to understand the values conveyed through it.
- *It facilitates the selection of symbols—the meaning of the ritual is linear and rational but emotional and circular, so it is easier to recognize than* describe. For example, a ritual may symbolize that a particular person being promoted or penalized.

Specialized literature structures several types of rituals and describes them through different approaches. The most common is the *rite of passage.* The most common in the literature is the rite of passage. The ethnographer Van Gennep considers that the individual's life in the organization consists of a series of stages: employment, affirmation in the organization, transfer, promotion, dismissal, and retirement. Each stage is associated with ceremonies whose objectives are identical: to help the individual move from one situation to another.

Work rituals signify how things go within an organization. They can have a formal character and be associated with informal elements. They mark aspects of the organizational climate and indicate what is specific to the organization: the clothing accepted in the workplace, punctuality, habits related to lunch breaks, coffee or cigarette breaks, receiving or sending correspondence, etc.

Promotion rituals emphasize the status and new identity obtained by a member of the organization and facilitate the acceptance and recognition of the promoted.

Punishment can also embrace the structure of a ritual. Beyond the values of discipline, conformity, and quality of work they promote, the sanctioning rituals have a formal character of excellence. They are tributary to a set of norms and laws regulated by the Labor Code.

Through relational rituals, the individual strives to convey a particular image of himself. He presents others with a particular moral requirement, forcing them to evaluate and treat him at his status level. The others know his status and character characteristics (Avram & Cooper, 2008, p. 262).

The rituals of relating and interaction are very evident when dealing with a first interaction or social distance. Their analysis focuses on how newcomers are integrated and the boss-subordinate relationship. Relationship rituals can be extended beyond the institutional framework. For example, spending free time together with the members of the organization can reduce social distance and integrate newcomer members. Therefore, the rituals of relating and interaction indicate the formal or socio-affective status of the person in the organization.

The study of organizational rituals is essential in defining the organizational climate. Knowledge of organizational rituals has diagnostic value. Rituals are cultural indicators along with symbols, language, ideologies, myths, humor, etc. Understanding rituals creates meaning. Through them, members share familiar feelings, develop feelings of belonging to a particular social group, and develop organizational attachment.

3. Levels of Organizational Culture

In the definition of organizational cultures, the following levels were identified:

- *The visible aspects of culture,*
- *The meanings assigned to various aspects of organizational life and*
- *Mixed levels*, those that combine these approaches.

Ed. Schein, one of the most representative specialists in organizational culture, emphasizes the theoretical importance of depth of understanding, distinguishing between three levels of organizational culture. At the most superficial level are the material manifestations of culture or artifacts: the stories that circulate in the organization, the rituals associated with various organizational events, the dress code, the aspects related to the design and interior decoration, or the architecture of the building. The organizational values represent the next level as principles and standards within the organization, and the deepest layer of the organizational culture is the fundamental beliefs of its members. In most cases, these are silent and difficult to identify because they are taken for granted. They exist outside of ordinary consciousness and are, in most cases, inaccessible to the conscious (Hoffman, 2004, p. 116).

The definitions also differ in the extent to which they consider culture shared by the organization's members. Some emphasize only the unanimously accepted components, while others focus precisely on the conflicting and inconsistent perspectives that exist in organizations and give rise to organizational subcultures.

AD Brown and J. Martin make a valuable selection of definitions of the studied concept, through which they exemplify the different particularities of the definitions of organizational culture (Avram & Cooper, 2008, pp. 199–201):

- *Culture represents a set of beliefs shared by all the members of an organization* (Sathe, 1985).
- *A generally accepted definition of culture organizational includes the system of values, symbols, and conviction shared by group members, inclusive embodiment these values, symbols, and meanings at the level objects materials and practices ritualized. The idea of culture also includes customs and traditions, history, be it mythical or current beliefs shut up, rules and expectations, meanings and / or significance common associated with objects and rituals, assumptions shared and directions intersubject* (Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1984).
- *Culture is a pattern of shared beliefs and values that give members of the organization certain meanings and provide them with rules of behavior within the organizatio*n (Davids, 1984).
- *Culture does not necessarily imply a uniform set of values. Different values may appear in different people within the same culture. In this case, what unites the members of one organization? I suggest we look for a common frame or a series of ideas shared by all the organization's members. The possibility exists that all people will disagree with these ideas or will be evaluated differently (positive or negative). They may have different opinions about an idea, positive or negative, but all are oriented towards them* (Feldman, 1991).
- *A pattern of shared fundamental assumptions by which the group learns how to solve its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, how to work well enough to be considered valid, and thereby instruct new members to perceive the approach correctly respectively, to think and feel alike about the problems they have to solve* (Schein, 1992).
- *When organizations are examined from a cultural perspective, attention falls on aspects of organizational life that have been ignored or little studied over time, such as the stories or anecdotes that are told to each new employee to explain how they are doing the things around here, the way the offices and personal effects are arranged, the existing jokes, the atmosphere in the organization (the cover-ups and extravagances, the dirt and noise), the relationships between people and so on. Culture observers also consider aspects of work life that other studies ignore, such as official/formal policies, differences in individual pay, identifying relationships, and more. An observer of culture is interested in the surface aspects of cultural manifestations because the details can be informative, but they also look for their meanings* (Avram & Cooper, 2008, pp. 199–201).

These different perspectives on organizational culture have led to numerous disputes about the objectivity and subjectivity of the researcher or the analyst who tries to understand an organization's culture. The outsider-insider ambivalence and the qualitative-quantitative ambivalence have generated controversy among researchers. From our point of view, objective and deep knowledge of the organizational culture can be achieved through interaction with the organization's members in compliance with the principles of objectivity, ethics, and research deontology.

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