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MANAGEMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

An interpretative framework for analysing managerial ideology, normative control, organizational culture and the self

Theaanna Kiaos^{1*}

Abstract: This article presents an interpretative framework that fuses together key concepts that would be applied by way of ethnographic and qualitative research methods. The framework seeks to enable interpretations concerning the subjective experience of employees under various cultural conditions by specifying essential conceptual building blocks that gradually build on top of each other, resulting in a more complete theoretical framework for empirical application. The framework is highlighted in four parts A, B, C and D to enable an analysis of an organization's managerial ideology, normative control, an organization's culture from the integrationist perspective, its various subcultures and microcultures from the differentiation perspective, and cultural ambiguity from the fragmentation perspective. In addition, interpretations concerning the performances displayed by employees are supported by adopting one of the six sites of enactment as a guide for dramaturgical interpretation, notably, front stage scenes, front stage encounters, front stage relationships, back stage scenes, back stage encounters and back stage relationships. Finally, the interpretative framework enables the analysis of subjective experiences by adopting psychological and sociological concepts of the self as



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T.A. Kiaos is a critical ethnographer. Her research explores the boundary between the psychological and societal focused views of the self. Her PhD research encompassed several interconnected topics, notably, managerial ideology, normative control, the underlying systems of cultural and subcultural meaning with a particularly strong focus on conceptions of self enacted in everyday organisational life and how such enactments reflect self-consciousness in the workplace. She has consulted with organisations in a variety of industries, including government, healthcare organisations, consulting firms and private enterprise to assess and improve an organisation's ideology, culture, culture change management practices and approaches to leadership. Dr Kiaos received her PhD in Management from Macquarie University Business School and her Masters in Health Communication from the University of Sydney. T.A. Kiaos currently works for the University of New South Wales.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Organizational leaders who promulgate strong cultures must find better ways for understanding how their decisions impact the subjective experiences of employees. This article presents a way for researchers to interpret the subjective experiences of employees while they work by fusing together key concepts that would be applied by way of ethnographic and qualitative research methods. The framework is highlighted in four parts to enable an analysis of an organization's ideology, normative control and culture from various perspectives. By adopting one of the six sites of enactment as a guide for dramaturgical interpretation, the framework enables the analysis of subjective experiences as employees traverse various cultural conditions and is strengthened by adopting the psychological and sociological proposed concepts of the self. By expanding the realm of possible interpretations concerning the subjective experiences of employees, leaders and researchers can better understand how culturally directed decisions impact language and behaviour in workplace settings.

employees traverse various cultural conditions. This article extends existing theory by expanding the realm of possible interpretations concerning the subjective experiences of employees under various cultural conditions within organizational settings.

Subjects: Strategic Management; Culture & Development; Research Methods in Management; Subcultures

Keywords: managerial ideology; normative control; presentation ritual; organizational culture; sites of enactment; dramaturgy; ethnography; qualitative methods; cultural psychology

1. Introduction

Today, ample literature can be found in various management journals that highlights the importance of managing an organization's culture, including literature that claims to help activate cultural change (Atkinson, 1990; Duan & Mueller et al., 2020; Hill & Kolanowski et al., 2011; Nesbitt & Su et al., 2001; Petriwskyj & Wilson et al., 2016). Yet, collecting data that aims to interpret the subjective experiences of employees, particularly as employees traverse various cultures within organizations, including subcultures and microcultures remains a marginalised pursuit.

Methods for studying organizational culture vary from the functionalist and positivist approaches by adopting deductive logic in search for generalisations, to interpretivist approaches that search for cultural meaning by way of inductive methods. Although researchers have tried both methods in their quest to solve cultural issues in workplaces, few have explored the subjective experiences of employees across an organization's various cultures (Kiaos, 2022; Kunda & Ailon-Souday, 2009; Van Maanen, 1991) to present the changing nature of language and behaviour under various cultural conditions.

This article posits that vital steps would be taken toward accurately interpreting the subjective experiences of employees while they are performing their work by analysing the changing nature of language and behaviour while employees traverse various cultural conditions within organizations. The lapse in current management literature reflects this need in order to both expand and refine our current frameworks so that the subjective experiences of employees can be interpreted with higher levels depth and precision. This should be an ongoing and important pursuit for researchers in the field in order to reduce tensions related to the excessive use of dramaturgy required by employees to perform their work. For this reason, this article proposes an interpretative framework for the analysis of ideology (Geertz, 1973), managerial ideology (Barley & Kunda, 1992), normative control (Kunda & Ailon-Souday, 2009), organizational culture from three perspectives, notably, integration, differentiation and fragmentation (Meyerson & Martin, 1987) and the self (Freud, 1963; Goffman, 1959, 1983).

The interpretative framework is designed to capture not only easily accessible empirical data such as the characteristics of an organization's culture that would reflect the integrationist perspective (Meyerson & Martin, 1987) but also the framework is designed to uncover cultural nuances concerning the organization's social reality examined across an organization's various membership groups as experienced by employees that would normally remain either elusive, private or ignored. In this regard, the interpretative framework includes concepts that can aid the analytical process concerning how employees display themselves while traversing various organizational cultural conditions by adopting one of the six sites of enactment, including front stage scenes, front stage encounters, front stage relationships, back stage scenes, back stage encounters and back stage relationships (Kiaos, 2022). Finally, to enable interpretations concerning the subjective experiences of employees, the framework includes psychological (Freud, 1963) and

sociological (Goffman, 1983) concepts of the self. In essence, the interpretative framework can be used to address the below six research questions:

- (1) What is the organization's managerial ideology, who are the sources of ideological influence, and what forms of normative control are adopted as reflected by the integrationist perspective of the organization's culture?
- (2) What are the prominent characteristics of the organization's integrationist culture that affect everyday work such as the organization's values, rules and rituals from the perspective of the organization's membership groups?
- (3) What subcultural and microcultural characteristics are identified from the differentiation perspective?
- (4) How does the organization's culture reflect ambiguity from the fragmentation perspective and under what transient and context-specific circumstances are these made evident?
- (5) How does the nature of language and behavioural displays change when employees traverse the dominant culture from the integrationist perspective, subcultures and microcultures from the differentiation perspective and under conditions of cultural ambiguity?
- (6) What interpretations can be made concerning the subjective experiences of employees under various cultural conditions?

By adopting the interpretative framework, our understanding of culture within organizations deepens by extending theory in several ways. Firstly, by fusing together key concepts to analyse the changing nature of language and behaviour from three cultural perspectives, notably, integration, differentiation and fragmentation (Meyerson & Martin, 1987). Secondly, by introducing six sites of enactment to assist in the interpretative process as reflected in front stage scenes, front stage encounters, front stage relationships, back stage scenes, back stage encounters and back stage relationships (Kiaos, 2022). Thirdly, by incorporating additional concepts, including Freud's (1963) superego and Goffman's (1983) interaction order to enable deeper interpretations reflective of the subjective experiences of employees under various cultural conditions.

To articulate the complexities of the framework, this article is divided into three sections. The first section presents foundational literature that discusses the assumptions informing different research paradigms by addressing philosophical issues that underpin the logic and the application of the framework by way of interpretative research methods. In this regard, the first section begins with an exploration of Kuhn's (1970) perspectives concerning the evolving nature of research paradigms, followed by the competing research paradigms that have dominated organizational culture studies. In this regard, Meyerson and Martin's (1987) three perspectives of organizational culture are presented, including the integration, differentiation and fragmentation views of culture.

The second section addresses the conceptual components of organizational subcultures, notably, the nature of enhancing, orthogonal and counter subcultures within organizations (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Meyerson & Martin, 1987). In this regard, and consistent with research methods required to conduct an empirical analysis of this sort, the interpretative framework also addresses subcultural analysis from an emic perspective (Pike, 1967). In addition, the interpretative framework further extends Meyerson and Martin's (1987) subcultural theories by incorporating an additional concept, notably, microcultures (Kiaos, 2022) which would function within broader departmental or business unit subcultures.

The third section introduces the interpretative framework's building blocks. Part A includes ideology (Geertz, 1973), managerial ideology (Barley & Kunda, 1992), normative control (Kunda & Ailon-Souday, 2009), organizational memberships and presentation ritual (Kunda & Ailon-Souday, 2009) as well as organizational culture from the integrationist perspective (Meyerson & Martin, 1987). By carefully layering these concepts in this specific order, the interpretative framework makes it possible

to answer the first two research questions. Part B fuses additional concepts together, including subcultural (Martin & Siehl, 1983) and microcultural concepts (Kiaos, 2022) from the differentiation perspective, as well as cultural ambiguity from the fragmentation perspective (Meyerson & Martin, 1987). In this way, the interpretative framework would seek to bring to the surface not only easily accessible cultural data but also cultural knowledge that is elusive, private or previously ignored by answering research questions three and four. Part C introduces the six sites of enactment to assist in the interpretation of the changing nature of language and behaviour as employees traverse various cultures of the organization, thereby providing an answer to question five. Finally, Part D enables a deeper exploration and interpretation concerning the subjective experiences of employees by including psychological and sociological conceptions of the self by means of Freud's (1963) superego and Goffman's (1983) interaction order, thereby providing answers to research question six.

2. Literature review

According to Kuhn (1970) the term paradigm describes the way a scientific breakthrough can provide an exemplary model for conducting research if affirmed and validated by the collective scientific community. From Kuhn's (1970) perspective, scientists firstly express through their research a dedication to normal science and to solving puzzles. Next, serious anomalies emerge, which Kuhn argued leads to some sort of crisis. Finally, a resolution emerges through what Kuhn (1970) termed "incommensurability" (p. xi) that is, the scientific expression of new ideas and assertions that cannot be strictly compared to outdated ones. In this vein, the interpretative framework as presented in this article reflects a new way for analysing the subjective experiences of employees, while they perform their work, and therefore cannot be fully compared to outdated models.

In this vein, Burrell and Morgan (1979) explained paradigmatic shifts that took place in studies of organizational culture. Specifically, Burrell and Morgan (1979) presented a typology that demonstrated distinctions between four, sometimes overlapping paradigmatic perspectives and research approaches. Their four paradigms reflect structural functionalism, radical structuralism, interpretivism and radical humanism, which are constrained by two continuums, regulatory and radical, objectivist and subjectivist approaches with each presenting key distinctions in scientific method. Each paradigm proposes an acceptance of certain political and epistemological assumptions (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Consistent with the interpretative nature of the framework, this article supports Burrell and Morgan's (1979) interpretivist and radical humanist paradigms.

Indeed, it is important to state why this approach is worthwhile at the outset. Parker (2000) argued that researchers who adopt a functionalist paradigm seek to discover data about organizations in order that an elite, typically managers, can better exercise control over their employees. From this perspective, the meanings held in cultural assumptions from the functionalist perspective are suggested to be what culture fundamentally *has* (Smircich, 1983). In other words, organizational culture from Smircich's (1983), Smircich (1985) perspective could be viewed as something an organizational *has* versus something an organization *is*. This distinction moves the interpretation of an organization's culture as social facts to an organization's culture as ongoing social constructions (Smircich, 1983, 1985).

Functionalist approaches tend to be dominated by quantitative methodologies. The most commonly deployed measurement techniques being surveys that encompass a range of scales, including Likert measures and other numerically based systems that provide, at best, very static pictures of cultural congruence within organizations (Martin, 2001; Smircich, 1985). Within the functionalist research paradigm, there is very little recognition of conflict or divergent cultural perspectives. If conflicts do occur, they are considered pathological and are believed to have a "negative impact on a perceivable homogenous culture based on a manipulable set of dominant values, shared beliefs and rules of behaviour" (Parker, 2000, pp. 62–3).

In addition, most functionalist research negates the possibility of observing and documenting resistance, conflict or contradiction in favour of an analysis toward the determination of consensus (Parker, 2000). Functionalist research is designed to diagnose symptoms that undermine the potential for increased production and profitability. For this reason, it is argued that the functionalist approach is designed to assist and improve managerial control over the subjective experiences of employees. The desired end state is a consensus approach to a shared culture (Schein, 1990; EH Schein, 1991). A shared culture means prescribing values and behaviours which are to be internalised and accepted by all employees. The key agents who shape this normative ordering are typically senior managers, leaders or founders (Schein, 1983). This normative ordering manifests by way of social engineering, notably, through symbols and ceremonies (Dandridge, 1981, 1986, 1988), stories (Martin & Powers, 1983; Wilkins, 1983), rites and rituals (Beyer & Trice, 1988; Trice & Beyer, 1985, 1993) and reward systems (Sethia & Von Glinow, 1985).

Relatedly, the second research paradigm presented in Burrell and Morgan's (1979) typology for the analysis of organizational culture is radical structuralism. In epistemological terms, like the functionalist paradigm, radical structuralism is informed by the positivist assumption that organizations are entities and that culture within an organization can be studied mostly by adopting quantitative methods. Both paradigms share the perspective that ideas and meanings are subordinate to commercial and economic imperatives. Parker (2000) argued that any resistance under a radical structuralist approach, "is defused by or mediated through the effects of ideology and false consciousness ... the only likely understanding of organizational culture is as an effective tool of repression" (p. 69).

Before embarking upon a discussion concerning the final two paradigms which intrinsically concern the interpretative framework presented in this article, it is important to return to Kuhn's (1970) argument of paradigm invisibility. According to Kuhn (1970), scientists may be unaware of the subjective nature of their selected paradigm and believe that they directly perceive the "truth" (p. 170). Numerous critical scholars of organizational culture, those who subscribe to functionalist and radical structuralist paradigms, likely make such assumptions (Kunda, 2013; Martin, 2001; Meyerson & Martin, 1987; Smircich, 1983, 1985). An important shift away from this orientation has been provided by scholars who subscribe to interpretivist and radical humanist approaches who have made worthwhile contributions, particularly in relation to the nature of hegemony in social structures in workplace settings. As Kuhn (1970) articulated, "at times of revolution ... the scientist's perception of his environment must be re-educated ... the world of his or her research will seem ... incommensurable with the one inhabited before" (p. 25).

Smircich's (1983), Smircich (1985) contributions represent one such paradigmatic shift in organizational culture research. Where the functionalist and radical structuralist paradigms negate the importance of cultural meaning, interpretivism emphasises the local nature of cultural processes by deducting the subject of enquiry to actor level phenomenon (Parker, 2000). Interpretivism includes the collective study of artefacts (EH Schein, 1991), organizational symbols (Martin & Powers, 1983; Wilkins, 1983), languages and rituals (Martin & Meyerson, 1987). Interpretivists examine organizational artefacts (EH Schein, 1991), including architecture, furniture, tradition, meetings, images, events and clothing: conventionally neglected topics attempting to "decode" the systems of meaning that typically bypass thresholds of consciousness (Parker, 2000, p. 70). The analysis of participant language is central since an organization's culture manifests in and through its use of language (Parker, 2000). From this perspective, slang, jargon, acronym and technicality become exemplifiers of cultural processes "because they are illustrative of the kinds of communities that organizations inhabit" (Parker, 2000, p. 70). In essence, the interpretivist paradigm clearly distinguishes itself from functionalism and radical structuralism by its methods.

For interpretivists, ethnographic inquiry in combination with the qualitative analysis of texts are common approaches for the study of organizational cultures and subcultures (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Smircich, 1983). Most importantly, the use of questionnaires and surveys are treated with suspicion. Interpretivists may also attempt to uncover the deeper cognitive or semiotic structures in

organizational practices by uncovering underlying cultural assumptions. In this regard, interpretivism emphasises the reading of organizational texts to decode underlying “binary structures of meaning ... codes that inform and explain organizational practice” (Parker, 2000, p. 71).

According to Parker (2000) subjectivists take ethnographic inquiry a step further by attempting to deconstruct the coherence of any conception of culture by a continual dialectic between the explicit and implicit. Subjectivism, then, requires a strong reflexive stance by the social scientist (Frost & Moore et al., 1991; Jones, 1996; Turner, 1988). However, Parker (2000) also argued, “the problem ... with the interpretivist paradigm is that there is an implicit assumption that social order is constructed consensually and there are not wider conflicts over the definition of symbols themselves” (p. 74). Kuhn (1970) offered a perspective as to why this research problem manifests in the first place, “If two people stand at the same place and gaze in the same direction ... we are under no compulsion to suppose that the sensations of our two viewers are the same” (p. 191).

While one preferred research paradigm may be easier to apply over others, if a social scientist looks and thinks hard enough, other cultural manifestations and interpretations will become visible. In other words, social scientists might change their chosen research paradigm in light of new insights. To exemplify this point, critics of interpretivism claimed that an inadequate amount of depth, agency and sophistication, particularly in relation to mechanisms of power, control and meaning were presented in academic literature (Parker, 2000). Such perceived inadequacies for the study of meaning resulted with an emerging fourth paradigm, radical humanism. According to Parker (2000), “the value of radical humanism is its twin stress on power and meaning ... certain groups have more power to enforce their understandings than others, although this does not promise their acceptance because subordinated groups also have the power to resist” (p. 75).

The radical humanist paradigm conceptualises organizational culture as a contested relation between meanings with distinctive understandings of a particular social group which may be in conflict with other social groups. The term subculture (Martin & Siehl, 1983) is particularly relevant because it recognises that ideas within a social group are not homogeneous, in fact they are plural and often contested (Van Maanen & Barley, 1983). From the radical humanist’s view, the topic of organizational culture raises both political and epistemological concern. Political because culture can be used by managerial elites as a form of normative control (Kunda & Ailon-Souday, 2009) and epistemological because, as Smircich (1985) asserted, organizational culture is meaningful because it represents what organizations *are*. In this vein, organizational culture is formulated as institutionalising forms of legitimate power that support the status quo. Therefore, the radical humanist approach is valuable, not only because it makes it possible to consider the various subcultures within an organization but also because it focuses on revealing cultural ambiguities by discovering inconsistencies of meaning reflected by individual perspectives of culture within organizations from the lens of power and control. As Dahler-Larsen (1994) posited, “corporate culture’s insensitivity to alternate voices may therefore actually be detrimental to corporate culture itself leading to cultural fragmentation because reservations, reflections and contrasting opinions in organizations do exist” (p. 11). This view was echoed by Parker (2000) who argued “radical humanism’s critical perspective enables the normally silenced voices to speak and hence dethrone the dominant technocratic rationality of business organizations” (p. 76).

This interpretative framework provides clear justification for the adoption of Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) interpretivist and radical humanist paradigms and, most importantly, the exclusion of both the functionalist and radical structuralist approaches for the analysis of organizational culture. Specifically, the interpretative framework considers both meaning and power within an organization’s culture, its various subcultures and microcultures, enabling researchers the opportunity to collect and interpret rich cultural data from employees as they traverse various cultural conditions in organizational settings.

3. Interpretative framework

3.1. Part A: Managerial ideology, normative control and organizational culture from the integrationist perspective

The first part of the interpretative framework is designed to empirically answer the first two research questions:

- What is the organization's managerial ideology, who are the sources of ideological influence, and what forms of normative control are adopted as reflected by the integrationist perspective of the organization's culture?
- What are the prominent characteristics of the organization's integrationist culture that affect everyday work such as the organization's values, rules and rituals from the perspective of the organization's membership groups?

To answer research questions one and two, the interpretative framework begins with the researcher undertaking a broad exploration of the organization's ideological authoritative systems of meaning. According to Geertz (1973), "ideology is an authoritative system of meaning where schematic images of social order publicly proposed by those who claim authority ... endow maps ... and matrices for the creation of collective consciousness" (p. 220). Ideological discourses and narratives are rather easily identifiable through auxiliary sources of data such as websites, social media accounts or any publicly available documents that promulgate carefully created images of the organization and its social order. Those who promote an organization's ideology can be characterised as sources of ideological influence who speak on the organization's behalf. These members would typically include senior leaders within the organization and may also include highly important external stakeholders (Kiaos, 2022). Each ideological influencer would be investigated in terms of their narratives and, in turn, their degree of ideological influence. One way this would occur would be through an assessment of how ideological influencers present themselves to their employees, including their proximity and familiarity (Kiaos, 2022) across each of the organization's department or business units as well as other important constituents such as partners or customers. This level of analysis would require some access to the organization as an observer. By applying basic ethnographic skills, this data could be captured rather easily with consistent recording of fieldnotes and auxiliary data. However, without delving deeper into the idiosyncratic nature of language and behaviour by those who hold ideological authority and under various cultural conditions, significant empirical gaps would emerge. In order to rectify these empirical failures, the researcher would require a closer analysis of the organization's managerial ideology (Barley & Kunda, 1992).

In the organizational setting, Barley and Kunda (1992) proposed that managerial ideology is "a stream of discourse that promulgates, however unwittingly, a set of assumptions about the nature of ... corporations, employees, managers and the means by which the latter can direct the other two" (p. 200). From this perspective, the promulgation or enactment of managerial ideology by agents of authority can direct employee behaviour through the management of an organization's culture. Kunda and Ailon-Souday (2009) claimed that managerial ideologies represent the organization as one which espouses unifying values and moral involvement in an effort to manage and shape worker's identities, emotions, attitudes and beliefs through culture. This effort at controlling the subjective experiences of employees is said to motivate organizational commitment, loyalty and productivity and is also known as normative control (Kunda & Ailon-Souday, 2009). In exchange, the organization promises or delivers self-actualising rewards. As Kunda and Ailon-Souday (2009) explained, under normative control, "members act in the best interest of the company ... they are driven by internal commitment, strong identification with company goals and intrinsic satisfaction from work" (p. 11).

Normative control refers to forms of control exercised to obtain cultural consensus. In other words, shaping the performances of employees by directing language and behaviour that is aligned to the

integrationist view of an organization's culture (Meyerson & Martin, 1987). This alignment is typically reflected by careful management of values, rules and rituals. An integrationist portrait of culture reflects consensus (Schein, 1990; EH Schein, 1991) as existing throughout, by excluding the possibility of ambiguity. Another empirical complexity, therefore, the researcher would encounter relates to uncovering managerial ideologies and forms of normative control as targeted toward employees in different departments or business units. In this regard, ideological formulations would be determined by closely examining each membership group within the organization.

Organizational membership is viewed as being bound by degrees of perceived use value where membership groups fall on a spectrum in terms of their subjection to full or partial ideological formulations by agents of normative control (Kunda & Ailon-Souday, 2009). As part of the analysis, the researcher must consider each of the organization's membership groups, notably executive leaders, middle management, various departments or business units, including project groups and frontline units. Indeed, there may be several, all requiring a detailed analysis in relation to their prominent characteristics, not limited to demographic data. One way to conduct this exploration is to incorporate yet another building block, notably, presentation rituals (Lukes, 1975). Presentation rituals function as a conduit between managerial ideologies, shaping language and behaviour by creating a basis for a shared definition of an organization's social reality within which employees are expected to express and confirm (Kunda & Ailon-Souday, 2009). Indeed, in organizational settings, presentation rituals are themselves strong forms of normative control because they offer "managers a mode of exercising or at least, seeking to exercise power along the cognitive and affective planes" (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989, p. 49). This, according to Kunda and Ailon-Souday (2009) causes "members to 'internalise' the culture" (p. 93). In essence, presentation rituals are symbolic cultural forms intended to "act on the values, loyalties, sentiments and desires of employees" (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989, p. 89).

In sum, Part A of the interpretative framework presents key building blocks to address how the researcher can empirically answer the first two research questions through relatively simple ethnographic and qualitative case study methods. By collecting and analysing various other artefactual materials, including annual reports, codes of conduct and other formal rules for behaviour including values, rewards as well as other easily accessible forms of auxiliary data, the first two research questions can be answered. However, without a deeper exploration of the organization's culture from a differentiation perspective (Meyerson & Martin, 1987) that seeks to analyse various subcultures (Martin & Siehl, 1983) and microcultures (Kiaos, 2022) as well as fragmentary cultural perspectives (Meyerson & Martin, 1987) the four remaining research questions cannot be meaningfully answered. To address this empirical problem, the interpretative framework includes an analysis of organizational subcultures (Martin & Siehl, 1983) and microcultures (Kiaos, 2022) from the differentiation perspective (Meyerson & Martin, 1987), in combination with fragmentary perspectives of culture (Meyerson & Martin, 1987). This approach would enable a more thorough and complete analysis of the organization's various cultures. More importantly, this approach can enable interpretations regarding the changing nature of language and behaviour as employees traverse various cultural conditions.

3.2. Part B: Organizational subcultures

The second part of the interpretative framework is designed to empirically answer the third and fourth research questions:

- What subcultural and microcultural characteristics are identified from the differentiation perspective?
- How does the organization's culture reflect ambiguity from the fragmentation perspective and under what transient and context-specific circumstances are these made evident?

As mentioned, Meyerson and Martin (1987) conceptually defined three views of culture in organizations, notably, integration, differentiation and fragmentation perspectives. Of concern

now is the differentiation perspective which focuses on cultural manifestations that have inconsistent interpretations (Martin, 2001). In this regard, consensus may exist in and between subcultures where subcultures may exist independently or in conflict with each other (Martin, 2001; Martin & Siehl, 1983; Meyerson & Martin, 1987). Studies that adopt a differentiation perspective generally seek out subcultural differences where “dissenting voices are not silenced or ignored” (Martin, 2001, p. 102).

Subcultures may also be bound by occupational lines, including managerial, professional and “proceed along functional or vertical lines, or, on the basis of networks of personal contacts based on work, friendship or demographic identities such as race, ethnicity or gender” (Martin, 2001, p. 103). Subcultures may have rigid or blurred boundaries (Martin, 2001). In some cases, staff members may deliberately blur boundaries (Kondo, 1990; Kunda & Ailon-Souday, 2009) for personal gain. The differentiation perspective, therefore, offers the possibility of subcultural conflict, a point that is conceptually crucial because it permits a fuller exploration of the underlying workings of power (Alvesson, 1996; Clegg et al., 1996; Mumby, 1987, 1988). Given this foundational literature, the interpretative framework must further incorporate additional characterisations of an organization’s culture by including the identification and analysis of microcultures (Kiaos, 2022) that function within broader organizational subcultures.

In Kiaos’s (2022) view, where organizational subcultures can function along departmental divisions and business units, microcultures would function within these divisions and enact strong, albeit, specific informal rules and values for operating within them. A microculture (Kiaos, 2022) would be identifiable through informal communication strategies as well as elusive behavioural nuances between a group of employees who function within broader organizational subcultures (Kiaos, 2022). For this reason, microcultures are much harder to detect, requiring the researcher to adopt high levels of ethnographic sensibility in order to identify and delineate microcultural boundaries.

To answer the fourth research question, Meyerson and Martin’s (1987) fragmentation perspective diverges again by conceptualising the relationship among cultural manifestations as neither clearly consistent nor inconsistent. Instead, interpretations of cultural manifestations are ambiguously related to each other (Meyerson & Martin, 1987). From the fragmentation perspective, cultural consensus is transient and issue specific (Martin, 2001; Martin & Siehl, 1983; Meyerson & Martin, 1987). To provide answers to the fourth research question, an organization’s culture must be analysed from the fragmentation perspective, a process that would require a level of cultural immersion over a period of time to uncover the changing nature of language and behaviour by employees under various cultural conditions. Here, a brief yet important methodological consideration is presented regarding the empirical application of etic and emic concepts (Pike, 1967) and considered foundational as part of the interpretative framework.

Etic concepts manifest by way of examining culture as an outsider (Pike, 1967). By contrast, emic concepts are analysed by studying culture as an insider, incorporating symbolism to make sense of constructed realities through extended immersion and close observation of participants, or, in this case, employees. The interpretative framework applies both etic and emic concepts because culture is many different things to different employees depending on their position within the organization, their prescribed roles and their membership group. The emic approach would reveal important language nuances as reflected through the analysis of the differentiation and fragmentation perspectives (Meyerson & Martin, 1987). In this regard, the emic approach would be adopted to interpret the various languages that employees use in a variety of different settings and under different working conditions, allowing the researcher to look for inconsistent interpretations of cultural data. The researcher should seek to learn ethnographic methodological techniques that enable them to gain suitable access to the organization along with its employees across each membership group. In addition, the researcher should adequately discern the appropriate participants for inclusion through an analysis of behavioural style and dialogue in the early phases of fieldwork by specifically looking

for data which would reflect an insightful and reflective participant. The researcher should seek to build trust with those participants as quickly as possible in order to collect rich data that is both important and meaningful in relation to their subjective experiences, while they traverse various cultural conditions. Indeed, excellent literature is easily accessible for new researchers embarking upon ethnographic data collection methods (Brettell, 1993; Kunda, 2013; Kunda & Ailon-Souday, 2009; Silverman, 2020; Spradley, 2016; Van Maanen, 1979, 1991, 2011).

3.3. Part C: Sites of enactment

The third part of the interpretative framework is designed to empirically answer the fifth research question.

- How does the nature of language and behavioural displays change when employees traverse the dominant culture from the integrationist perspective, subcultures and microcultures from the differentiation perspective, and under conditions of cultural ambiguity?

To answer the fifth question, additional concepts are required, specifically, concepts related to presentations of self (Goffman, 1959). Indeed, at this junction, it is important to extrapolate Goffman's configurations of the self reflecting the front and back stage. According to Goffman, the front stage reflects language and behaviour that aligns with social norms, rules and values. In this regard, the framework conceptualises the language and behaviour that employees display on the front stage as aligning with the organization's ideology (Geertz, 1973), managerial ideology (Barley & Kunda, 1992), normative control (Kunda, 2006) and the integrationist perspective of the organization's culture (Meyerson & Martin, 1987).

3.3.1. Managerial ideology, normative control, integrationist culture and front stage displays

This section amalgamates and presents several concepts to assist researchers in illustrating how managerial ideology (Barley & Kunda, 1992), normative control (Kunda, 2009) and the integrationist perspective of an organization's culture (Meyerson & Martin, 1987) would be analysed in relation to employee language and behaviour on the front stage (Goffman, 1959) as reflected in front stage scenes, front stage encounters and front stage relationships (Kiaos, 2022).

3.3.1.1. Site of enactment: Front stage scenes. In front stage scenes (Kiaos, 2022) agents of normative control display selves that reflect ideal membership and a model for language and behaviour by adopting narratives to communicate about themselves or others, typically in relation to the organization's interests. Agents of normative control may make the occasional joke, offer congratulations or make pre-emptive statements as part of their presentation in order to elicit a desired response from audience members. Subjects of normative control may smile, laugh, nod, make pithy comments or ask questions in an effort to demonstrate dramaturgical loyalty to other staff present. In essence, both agents and subjects of normative control seek to maintain, reinforce and legitimise their membership within the organization.

Agents of normative control are typically well prepared before they enter a front stage scene, where they emphasise the organization's communal nature. In the context of such formal presentation rituals, ideological influencers demonstrate what it means to be an exemplar employee through acts, presentations and speeches made on behalf of the organization. From this perspective, agents of normative control present themselves with dramaturgical care, evident through the selection of words, deeds and actions.

Front stage scenes would involve occasions such as conferences and large formal gatherings with degrees of self-consciousness considered high for both agents and subjects of normative control. Attendance is usually pre-arranged and is generally mandatory.

3.3.1.2. Site of enactment: Front stage encounters. Front stage encounters (Kiaos, 2022) involve both agents and subjects of normative control. In front stage encounters, agents of normative control display selves that reflect ideal membership, a model for language and behaviour that reflects alignment to the organization's integrationist view of culture. In essence, language and behaviour that depicts the organization's ideal social reality. In front stage encounters, agents of normative control communicate by way of narrative about themselves and others, typically in relation to the organization's interests and may formally invite subjects of normative control to engage in the encounter. For instance, agents of normative control may ask questions or deliberately engage in dialogue with external others to elicit engagement. In front stage encounters, subjects of normative control respond thoughtfully to questions asked of them and may offer quite serious commentary concerning perspectives of themselves or others, or issues relating to the organization itself. While the atmosphere can vary from one moment to the next, social niceties typically prevail in these encounters evident through the odd joke, laugh, nod or pithy statement to suggest cognitive and emotional dramaturgical congruence between agent and subject.

Generally, in front stage encounters, agents of normative control seek to maintain, reinforce or further their membership legitimacy. Subjects of normative control are also seeking to maintain, reinforce or further their membership legitimacy within the organization, or may use such encounters to convince agents of normative control that acquiring membership on their part is well deserved. Degrees of self-consciousness are high for both agents and subjects of normative control and include occasions such as formal interviews, formal trainings and formal meetings. Encounters of this sort vary in size, however they tend to be either small or medium gatherings. Attendance is typically mandatory.

3.3.1.3. Site of enactment: Front stage relationships. In front stage relationships (Kiaos, 2022) agents of normative control display selves that reflect ideal membership, a model for language and behaviour that is consistent with the organization's integrationist culture. Such occasions are used by agents of normative control to discuss, highlight or exaggerate their own importance. In front stage relationships, agents of normative control talk about themselves, sometimes others and usually in relation to the organization's interests. They may share the stage, sometimes reluctantly, but more or less equally with subjects of normative control. For instance, both agents and subjects of normative control listen to each other, ask questions and deliberately engage in dialogue in an effort to maintain or to build good will in the relationship. In this site of enactment, high degrees of self-consciousness would be observed for both agents vis-à-vis subjects, with each selecting their words, deeds and actions very carefully in order to preserve membership legitimacy.

In front stage relationships, subjects of normative control respond thoughtfully to questions and may offer quite serious commentary concerning perspectives of themselves and others or issues relating to the organization. The atmosphere can vary from one moment to the next; however, cognitive and emotional dramaturgical congruence between agents and subjects is typically on display. In this regard, front stage relationships are used for reinforcing a staff member's legitimacy in the relationship and for the purposes of maintaining and advancing social standing, typically by promoting one's personal agenda either directly or indirectly. Front stage relationships include occasions such as formal one on one meetings, or other formal, albeit small group meetings where there are obvious power differentials between employees. Attendance is pre-arranged and considered mandatory.

3.3.2. Subcultures, microcultures, cultural ambiguity and back stage displays

According to Goffman (1959), the backstage reflects dramaturgical performances which are less self-conscious and, hence, where employees would more likely express psychological relaxation by reducing their degree of impression management. In other words, back stage displays reflect language and behaviour that at times might be out of alignment with the organization's ideology (Geertz, 1973), managerial ideology (Barley & Kunda, 1992), normative control (Kunda, 2021) and the integrationist perspective of the organization's culture (Meyerson & Martin, 1987). This disparity would reflect subcultural and microcultural nuances and distinctions as well as cultural ambiguities. The below three concepts can assist researchers discern the language and behaviour of employees on the back

stage by seeking to uncover elusive, private or previously ignored cultural data, notably, by way of back stage scenes, back stage encounters and back stage relationships.

3.3.2.1. Site of enactment: Back stage scenes. Back stage scenes (Kiaos, 2022) involve agents and subjects of normative control who are bound by organizational subcultures and can be further bound by microcultures within them. In back stage scenes, agents and subjects of normative control display selves that may be either in alignment or contrary (or flux between) the organization's managerial ideology and its integrationist culture. In other words, agents and subjects of normative control display selves that flux between ideal membership, often, but not always in response to an external power source that enacts opposing strong, albeit informal values and rules. In back stage scenes, agents and subjects of normative control also flux in degrees of self-consciousness. This oscillating phenomenon could be due to private information that is held in confidence by some members and not others or various reasons that are not privy to all who participate in the scene. Back stage scenes typically include large informal gatherings. Attendance is usually pre-arranged and considered by most to be mandatory.

3.3.2.2. Site of enactment: Back stage encounters. Back stage encounters (Kiaos, 2022) involve both agents and subjects of normative control who are employees associated with particular organizational subcultures that reflect occupational, managerial or professional groups and who work towards common organizational ends. In back stage encounters, agents and subjects of normative control can express discontent or cynicism when their views or actions are suppressed by others within the organization reflecting language and behaviour that appears less self-conscious. Back stage encounters can also be characterised by numerous microcultures that function within broader subcultures across departments or business units. In this regard, microcultures are bound by their own informal rules and values.

In back stage encounters, agents and subjects of normative control can create mitigation strategies for organizational ends in alignment with their roles, tasks and KPIs in relation to members of other subcultures who operate incongruently to the organization's integrationist culture. In addition, agents and subjects of normative control would utilise this encounter as an opportunity to engage and build goodwill by coming together against a common or pending threat specific to business operations that involve them. The atmosphere can be serious or relaxed with irony or cynicism against outside members as featured in dialogue which would appear to induce cognitive and emotional dramaturgical congruence between members of the encounter. Back stage encounters would include occasions such as informal meetings and informal gatherings along professional, occupational and/or managerial lines. Encounters of this sort vary in size, however they tend to be either small or medium gatherings. Attendance would be considered by most to be mandatory or optional.

3.3.2.3. Site of enactment: Back stage relationships. In back stage relationships (Kiaos, 2022), employees would display language and behaviour that reflect thoughts that are most tightly tied to their underlying feelings. Staff members, regardless of agent vis-à-vis subject status of normative control would adopt language and behaviour that would not necessarily reflect alignment to the organization's managerial ideology or the integrationist culture because it has personally worked against them in some form or capacity. In this regard, back stage relationships are used for venting, discussing, highlighting or exaggerating contentious issues within the organization and matters pertaining to others in relation to themselves. Employees share the stage, more or less equally, and may or may not reply thoughtfully to questions, however, may offer sympathy or empathy to express support if required. In doing so, employees may use irony, cynicism and humour at the expense of themselves or at the expense of others as a way to express their underlying feelings. The atmosphere would be supportive and friendly where a staff member's social status is mutually protected in the relationship. Back stage relationships would be used by staff members to manage feelings associated with intrapersonal tension and would likely

include those affiliations that have developed over the medium and long term. Attendance is generally pre-arranged but not mandatory.

3.4. Part D: Interpreting the subjective experiences of employees under various cultural conditions

One obvious empirical problem the researcher will run into concerning the above six sites of enactment reflects the degree of realness behind front stage versus back stage displays (Kiaos, 2022). On the front stage, does the self witness its front stage display as “real, not real or somewhere in between?” (Kiaos, 2022). In other words, what broad interpretations can be made concerning the subjective experiences of employees and to what extent does the nature of language and behaviour change as employees traverse various cultural conditions? Part D attempts to solve this empirical problem by considering psychological and sociological conceptions of the self thereby providing an approach that seeks to answer the sixth research question.

Why are interpretations of this nature important? One perspective is provided by Hochschild (2012), in that employees may surface act with precision but will do whatever they can to minimise further invasion from outside influences upon their emotions. According to Hochschild (2012), “in surface acting we deceive others about what we really feel but we do not deceive ourselves” (p. 33). By contrast, deep acting as Hochschild (2012) construes it is the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display that requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others. To resolve the tension, a worker has to develop an ability to depersonalise situations (Hochschild, 2012). In other words, employees can observe and interpret their real selves in situ and would make an assessment about their underlying feelings under certain cultural conditions. In this vein, the conscious acceptance of a division between the real self and the work self enables a way for employees to avoid stress while performing at the expense of relinquishing a healthy sense of wholeness (Hochschild, 2012). The foregoing argument, therefore, provides the necessary justification for the inclusion of concepts related to the psychological and sociological views of the self. Hence, Freud’s (1963) superego and Goffman’s (1983) interaction order are added to the interpretative framework to provide researchers with an opportunity to make meaningful interpretations concerning the subjective experiences of employees under various cultural conditions. Conceptually, Freud’s (1963) superego is interpreted as a “form of social-psychological conscience that guides what one is normatively oriented to do in social interactions” (Hancock & Garner, 2015, p. 426) and combined with Goffman’s (1983) interaction order, stated as:

an ongoing drama of performances that can be collaborative or antagonistic, tightly scripted or improvised, consensual and routine or widely divergent and wildly unpredictable ... The interaction order is not only a force in the present but also an internalised structure, composed of fragments and sediments from many moments of self-formation. (Hancock & Garner, 2015, p. 419)

These two important concepts enable researchers to formulate meaningful interpretations reflecting the subjective experiences of employees under various cultural conditions. In this regard, ethnographic and qualitative methods would be adopted enabling access to various cultural conditions for which to collect valid data. Indeed, the perceptive skill of the ethnographer will likely determine empirical success concerning investigations and interpretations of this nature.

4. Conclusion

To date, collecting data that aims to interpret the subjective experiences of employees as they traverse various cultures within organizations, including subcultures and microcultures, remains a marginalised pursuit. To close this literary gap, this article presented an interpretative framework by fusing together key concepts that would be applied by way of ethnographic and qualitative research methods to allow leaders and researchers to provide more accurate interpretations concerning the subjective experiences of employees within organizations under various cultural conditions. The interpretative

Table 1. Interpretative framework reflecting research questions, concepts and key scholars

	Research question	Interpretative concepts of framework	Key scholars
Part A	What is the organization's managerial ideology, who are the sources of ideological influence, and what forms of normative control are adopted as reflected by the integrationist perspective of the organization's culture?	Managerial ideology; normative control; organizational culture from the integrationist perspective	Geertz (1973); Lukes (1975); Barley and Kunda (1992); Kunda and Ailon-Souday (2009); Kiaos (2022)
	What are the prominent characteristics of the organization's integrationist culture that affect everyday work such as the organization's values, rules and rituals from the perspective of the organization's membership groups?	Organizational culture from the integrationist perspective, including values, rules, rites and rituals; presentation rituals; and organisational membership groups	Van Maanen (1979); Meyerson and Martin (1987); Van Maanen and Kunda (1989); Schein (1990); EH Schein (1991); Kunda (2006); Kunda and Ailon-Souday (2009)
Part B	What subcultural and microcultural characteristics are identified from the differentiation perspective?	Subcultures; microcultures; organizational culture from the differentiation perspective	Martin and Siehl (1983); Meyerson and Martin (1987); Kondo (1990); Kunda and Ailon-Souday (2009); Kiaos (2022)
	How does the organization's culture reflect ambiguity from the fragmentation perspective and under what transient and context specific circumstances are these made evident?	Cultural fragmentation and evidence of ambiguity	Martin and Siehl (1983); Meyerson and Martin (1987); Martin (2001)
Part C	How does the nature of language and behavioural displays change when employees traverse the dominant culture from the integrationist perspective, subcultures and microcultures from the differentiation perspective, and under conditions of cultural ambiguity?	Sites of enactment: Front stage scenes; front stage encounters; and front stage relationships	Goffman (1959); Kiaos (2022)
		Sites of enactment: Back stage scenes; back stage encounters; and back stage relationships	Goffman (1959); Kiaos (2022)
Part D	What interpretations can be made concerning the subjective experiences of employees under various cultural conditions?	Subjective experiences of employees	Freud (1963); Goffman (1983)

framework documented the necessary building blocks to enable an analysis of an organization's managerial ideology, normative control from the perspective of an organization's integrationist culture, an organization's various subcultures and microcultures by adopting the differentiation perspective, and assisted by the six sites of enactment as reflected in Table 1.

Foundational literature was presented in relation to the assumptions informing research paradigms, specifically by addressing philosophical issues that underpinned the logic and the application of the framework by way of interpretative research methods. In this regard, an exploration of Kuhn's (1970) perspectives concerning the evolving nature of research paradigms was discussed, followed by competing research paradigms that have dominated organizational culture studies, including Meyerson and Martin's (1987) three perspectives of organizational culture, notably, integration, differentiation and fragmentation perspectives.

Part A of the framework which reflected the first step of the analytic process amalgamated key concepts, including ideology (Geertz, 1973), managerial ideology (Barley & Kunda, 1992), normative

control (Kunda & Ailon-Souday, 2009) and organisational culture from the integrationist perspective (Meyerson & Martin, 1987). Part B of the framework which represented the second step of the empirical process fused several additional concepts together concerning organizational subcultures, notably, the nature of enhancing, orthogonal and counter subcultures within organizations (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Meyerson & Martin, 1987). In this regard, and consistent with research methods required to conduct an empirical analysis of this sort, the interpretative framework addressed subcultural analysis from an emic perspective (Pike, 1967) and further extended Meyerson and Martin's (1987) subcultural theories by incorporating an additional concept, microcultures (Kiaos, 2022) which would function within broader departmental or business unit subcultures. Part C reflected the third step of the empirical process and introduced the six sites of enactment to assist in the interpretation of the changing nature of both language and behaviour as employees traverse various cultural conditions. Finally, Part D, the fourth step of the analytic process would enable deeper and more meaningful interpretations concerning the subjective experiences of employees by including psychological and sociological conceptions of the self by means of Freud's (1963) superego and Goffman's (1983) interaction order.

In summary, this article suggests that critical steps would be taken toward more meaningfully interpreting the subjective experiences of employees while they are performing their work by analysing the changing nature of language and behaviour while employees traverse various cultural conditions within organizational settings. This lapse in the literature reflects an urgent need to both expand and refine our current frameworks so that the subjective experiences of employees can be interpreted with higher levels of meaning, depth and precision. As mentioned at the outset, this objective should be an ongoing pursuit for leaders and researchers in the field in order to reduce tensions that employees experience due to the excessive use of dramaturgy required by them to perform their work. The interpretative framework, therefore, is designed to capture not only easily accessible empirical data such as the characteristics of an organization's dominant culture but also to uncover cultural idiosyncrasies concerning an organization's subcultural and microcultural social realities as examined across various membership groups and under various cultural conditions as experienced by employees.

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