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The development of the cognitive organization

Barrett, Frank J., Ph.D.
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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COGNITIVE ORGANIZATION

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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The Development of the Cognitive Organization

by

Frank J. Barrett

ABSTRACT

Much of organizational theory is rooted in the organism metaphor following the structural-functionalist paradigm (Morgan, 1986). Research has focused on the givenness of the social order, the uncovering of patterns of social life to demonstrate transhistorical, enduring regularities. This thesis is a longitudinal study of a management group, a description of the evolution and transformation of the group's awareness over a five year period. Adopting a hermeneutic perspective, this study is a discourse analysis of the group's language over a five year period as it evolves from bureaucratic to egalitarian. After analyzing the evolution of interpretive repertoires and the expansion and contraction of the cognitive horizon of possible meaning, I propose a framework for understanding the dynamics of meaning expansion in a group. The central thesis here is that a change in social relationships precedes the emergence of new knowledge. This study follows a management group that operates according to bureaucratic rationality. Under this framework for meaning transaction and interaction contexts, discourse focuses on problem identification and short-term solution search. Discourse is marked by negative, debilitating thought. Since agreement is most easily achieved through discussion of troublesome details, bonds between members are reinforced by the cognitive search for identifying problems and the limits on possible action. Thinking is often deductive, logical,
paradigmatic as most assertions require explicit proof and the range of imagined action is constricted. Within an egalitarian context, however, members develop a metacognitive capacity. Under this framework for meaning transaction, members' discourse begins to focus on valuing, in addition to problem solving, creating future scenarios of possible worlds rather than only identifying past problems. As members develop a common script for what constitutes co-authorship and successful meaning transactions in various groups and forums, language transcends its denotative functions and becomes liberated to connote possible worlds. New tacit agreements are achieved without logical, deductive battles. Members become capable of treating speech as playful and creative and are able to separate the person from the expressions.
"Human life is driven forward by its dim apprehension of notions too general for its existing language."

--Alfred North Whitehead
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"Of the making of many books there is no end. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit."

This quote was inscribed in a book of poems given to me by my former poetry teacher and mentor, Ernest Sandeen. (The gift was, of course, a collection of his own poems.) His inscription reflected in many ways my own experience writing this thesis. My engagement with this thesis has been in so many ways "vanity and vexation of spirit." Quite disconnected from the world, from friends, from family, and from parts of myself, I and those close to me have suffered and sacrificed. Ernest's inscription does not end with this quote, but offers graceful recompense: "But with such warm and faithful friendships the making of these poems seems worthwhile after all. Deep thanks for this."

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The field of Organizational Theory has been characterized largely by a structural-functionalist orientation to social life. There has been a research tendency to study organizations as made up of structures that perform functions for the necessary survival of the overall system. The methods that further this theoretical perspective have been largely logical-positivist methods and have led researchers to focus attention on uncovering patterns of social life, to demonstrate transhistorical, enduring regularities in order to demonstrate the stability, ongoing maintenance, and overall social order of organizations. Research has focused on the givenness of the social order and largely has ignored the ongoing, transformational nature of organizational life.

Further, research in the field has tended to focus on the individual from a rational and goal-oriented perspective. Pfeffer (1982) distinguishes three perspectives of organization theories based on action orientation: action seen as purposive, boundedly or intendedly rational and goal-oriented; action seen as externally constrained or situationally determined; and action seen as emergent and unfolding. He concludes:

The rational perspective on action greatly dominates the other two, with the external constraint perspective probably coming in a close third behind the phenomenological approaches. And
the individual level of analysis has dominated the research on organizations.

As an introduction I will discuss how the field has been restricted by the structural-functionalist orientation that reveals to the inquirer a social world of basically static structures and a logical positivist paradigm that produces knowledge that explains what but fails to understand how. Further, I will discuss the shortcomings of the root assumptions of the focus on the individual act or as rational, purposive and goal-oriented.

This thesis is a longitudinal study of a management group, a description of the evolution and the transformation of the group's awareness over a five year period. It is a study of a management group's change from an alienated to a more authentic awareness. Adopting a hermeneutic perspective, I attend to the relational, rather than individual action patterns. From this perspective, we can see the social nature of knowledge and learning, how the horizon of knowable objects expands and contracts. Also we can see how groups exhibit certain thinking patterns and create second order transformations (Torbert, 1989). By adopting Vygotsky's (1962) perspective that social interaction precedes individual development, we can see how changes in the relational arrangements led to changes in ontological and epistemological assumptions of human nature. By describing the linguistic transactions, we can see how a group comes to interpret and understand novelty; how members become skilled observers of appropriate and inappropriate behavior; how members develop forestructures of knowledge and preconceptions that trigger
inferences that have consequences on the range of action; how categories and status assignments are social accomplishments.

The Logical Positivist Approach to Understand Organizations

I would like to trace for a moment the basic assumptions that underlie the structural-functionalist paradigm that has guided so much of our understanding of organizational life. Saint Simon (1964) and Comte (1953), the founding fathers of sociology, saw sociology as emulating the methods of the natural sciences. The task of the new discipline would be to explain the relationship between the various parts of society as it evolves in progressive stages toward a new social order - the industrial society. Society and groups were seen as organizations that behave according to natural, external laws. Similarly, Spencer (1973) saw society as a self-regulating organization that will evolve into a more complex and integrated social system. Durkheim (1938) was less concerned about the progress of society and paid more attention to analyzing social order and the dangers of anomie and disorder that threaten society. Durkheim's analysis of social order strongly influenced the development of the functionalist paradigm that would find its culmination in the work of Talcott Parsons.

Parsons (1949) articulated his functionalist theories in the turbulent 1930s, a period that resonated with America's readiness to see society in terms of firm, clearly defined structures (Gouldner, 1970). Parsons' theory of society as a self-maintaining, homeostasis system with a variety of mechanisms that contribute to internal stability epitomizes the structural-functionalist paradigm. The
metaphysical assumption that underlies the conceptual scheme is that
the social world is one whole and that there are multiplicity of
differentiated structures that simultaneously contribute to its
wholeness. While this scheme offers the advantage of conceiving of a
complex social world in its wholeness, it engenders a detached
perspective of social life and a strong preference for the present
order, an investment in the functional structures that maintain the
present order. In this fervor for studying "structures," the every-
day, ordinary temporal life of concrete human beings fumbling through
relationships in social groupings, gets overlooked. As Gouldner
(1970) wrote, the functionalist's quest for order takes on the
character of an ideology.

Much of organizational theory is rooted in the organism
metaphor following the structural-functionalist paradigm (Morgan,
1986). Organizations are viewed as goal-setting, purposeful entities
that seek to maintain equilibrium by adapting to the environment. A
short review of a few representative theorists helps to expand this
point. Selznick (1957) looks at goal-directed formal action and
informal activity that aid the organization's internal adaptive
process in relation to this environment. March and Simon (1958) saw
organizations as rational constructs built around limited human
rationality, seeking to establish equilibrium and maintenance. Katz
and Kahn (1966) viewed organizations as purposive, open systems.
People, technology, and resources are seen as inputs to a purposively
rational process geared to maintain homeostasis and offset entropy.
Reminiscent of Parsons' "functional imperatives," they saw social
analysis as geared toward identifying how the subsystems and
transactions with the environment serve to maintain the system. Thompson (1967) shows how organizations are open systems that seek to offset threat and uncertainty by acting as if they were closed systems, exhibiting a "technical rationality" that seeks to protect the technical core by "buffering," "forecasting," and "levelling."

A great deal of effort in research in organizational life has addressed itself to testing these theories. True to the structural-functionalist paradigm, the research has been predominantly logical-positivist, a point we would like to return to. A glance at a few important studies will give a flavor of the trend. Woodward's (1965) study, which opened the avenues for empirical, quantitative measurement of organizational structures (categories were created for organization technology), looked at the relationship between organizational structure and commercial success and found that organizational structure is contingent on the organization's technical production system. Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) further advanced "contingency theory" when they found that organizational structures are more differentiated or integrated, depending on how stable environmental demands were.

Because of the emphasis to explain current social order, equilibrium and the mechanisms of maintenance, Burrell and Morgan (1979) refer to this paradigm as "the sociology of regulation." The emphasis on understanding the interdependent nature of an integrated social systems has led theorists and researchers to attempt to identify and measure organizational structures through logical-positivist methods. These efforts have generated a misleading picture of the ongoing nature of organizational life. Burrell and
Morgan (1979) conclude: "In an extreme though pervasive form, much of contemporary structural functionalism manifests itself in a host of empirical snapshots of reified social structures" (pp. 53-54). This meta-theoretical orientation of logical-positivism needs to be addressed. To the extent that organizations are purposeful, goal-seeking entities, the structural-functionalist orientation has been helpful in our understanding of organizations. The paradigm has provided a useful metaphor, a way to get our hands around an elusive phenomena. However, there is no perspective on "life" or "living, evolving work relationships" in these theories. Logical-positivist research methods are geared toward looking for and measuring, the fixed, static, the rational structures in social groups in hopes of discovering general patterns that explain why a certain organizational "structure" exists.

Our romance with finding transhistorical principles and enduring patterns of behavior have blocked us from realizing the primary goal of science -- making human action and interaction intelligible and understandable. In our efforts to explain why we have been limited in understanding how. In a search for general patterns and structures, we have lost sight of the world of contingencies, choices, dilemmas that do not fall into structural patterns. Human beings are simply not reducible to static properties. Human events are meaningful because of the possibility inherent in choiceful action, not because of inevitability. "A human event such as love derives its meaning precisely from possibility and not from mere necessity" (Falcouner and Williams, 1985).
The empirical methodologies that have generated a picture of purposive, goal-seeking organizations have operated under limited assumptions about human nature and the nature of inquiry itself. This empirical orientation assumes that science should identify recurring, systematic patterns, that prediction and capacity to control destiny are among the chief aims, that the task is to explain permanence among flux and to do so by identifying transtistorical, valid principles, that the stable, fixed and unmalleable patterns in human affairs should be discovered and affirmed.

Organizations are nothing if they are not the result of human choice. However, it is questionable to what degree human intention and human action can be captured, let alone measured, by empirical constructs (Gergen, 1982). Human events and choices, such as decisions regarding how to organize, have meaning because of the possibility inherent in the choices, the variety of options and interpretations available and not because of the dictates of necessity of some enduring pattern or structure. Searching for transtistorical, generalizable patterns that order and maintain a social arrangement ignores the human capacity to direct and re-direct destiny and so truncates our sense of choices available in creating newer, perhaps bolder, forms of organizing. The more we attempt to delude ourselves into thinking that organizations are made of enduring structures, that purposively further a large order, the more we further a sense that men and women act solely according to general laws and patterns. Such knowledge building may be creating a sense of choicelessness, a learned helplessness in future organizing decisions. When it becomes expected or appropriate to follow a
common pattern in the service of a larger order, the door begins to close on infinite potentialities. Our inquiry needs to appreciate that it is also a human nature to avoid becoming static and predictable. Humans have a unique gift, the potential for what Gergen (1982) called "the autonomous envisioning of alternatives." Humans have the ability to reconceptualize, continuously reframe and do not have to accept the apparently "given" as immutable.

The Historical Nature of Social Institutions

Inquiry into organizations, if it appreciates cosmogony (Barrett & Srivastva, forthcoming), can serve to cleanse our perceptions and de-reify our basic assumptions, liberating us to act in a world that appears more malleable. We need to study organizations as evolving, transforming, social constructions, malleable to human choice. Social scientists need to study the historical continuity of organizational life, not in a sense of history as unfolding and predetermined as Comte, Hegel, or Marx would have it, for this kind of historicism would further a sense of the inevitability and necessity of human action. Rather, we need to appreciate the human cosmogony, the creative birthing of different social arrangements, appreciate the irrational, accidental, conjectural moments as well as rational and purposive actions that give birth to various organizational arrangements. A cosmogonic appreciation of organizing is an attempt to understand creative roots, by studying actors' intentions. We need to direct our efforts not toward explaining why something functions, but understanding how and under what conditions something was created, the choices
considered and not taken as well as the paths chosen, the conjectures, the possibilities, the accidental and unintended.

**Purpose of the Thesis**

These thesis examines the interaction of a management group of The Medic Inn, and their development as they evolve from traditional bureaucratic thinking to more egalitarian thinking. This study focuses on changes in their language and concepts and the consequences that their category creation and status assigning have on their interactions. This is a description and analysis of discourse in an effort to understand how language not only reflects reality, but has a formative consequence. Further, having described the developing cognitive ecology of the group, and evolution of meaning, I will discuss the changing interpretive repertoires and the ontological and epistemological assumptions that informed these interpretations. Finally, I will put forth propositions regarding the nature of the expansion of a group's cognitive ecology from bureaucratic to egalitarian assumptions, from alienated to authentic awareness.

This study seeks to address the evolution of consensus within this management culture in terms of the ontological inventory of "what is." It is a study of how this culture develops a consensus for noticing, labelling, and legitimizing proper and improper meaning and behavior.
Overview of the Thesis

The rest of this thesis is divided into 9 chapters. Chapter II is a theoretical framework concerning the social nature of knowledge and an outline of the dimensions of the cognitive organization. Chapter III is a discussion of the methodology for studying the process—how social knowledge is created and transmitted through language. Chapter IV describes the history of the Medic Inn prior to this study and the period September 1984 to February 1985, the managers' sense of fear, frustration, and confusion as the parent company begins to change strategy. They are faced with a need to change dramatically. Chapter V describes the period from February 1985 to February 1986 in which the group attempts to cognitively grasp reality, expand thinking, form concepts, and a frame for action as a response to the ambivalent demands they face. Chapter VI describes the period from March 1986 to February 1987, the deep interpretive differences that members engage in, their battles with dissent, as they attempt to plan and strategize. Chapter VII describes the period from March 1987 to June 1988, the period in which members are less threatened by dissent, become aware of their power as social creators and status assigners as they begin to form scripts for power sharing. Chapter VIII summarizes the change in interpretive repertoires from 1984 to 1988 and describes the changing ontological and epistemological assumptions. Chapter IX is a set of theoretical propositions regarding the expansion of a group's cognitive ecology and concludes the study by discussing the theoretical and methodological implications.
CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE SOCIAL
NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE

To the extent organizations are forged out of a consensus of assumptions, beliefs, values, and visions, they are a product of the human imagination, which is to say, they are socially constructed. We have just begun to explore the consequences of such a notion, to see the radicalness behind this. A few thinkers, not in the organizational sciences, have recognized the power and implications of acknowledging the socially constructed nature of our relationships, whether they be person or institutional interactions (Becker, 1986; Gergen, 1982). But it is fair to say that on a whole, we have yet to fully understand what it is to say organizations are social constructions.

To ask the question is to probe into the very nature of knowledge, understanding, and meaning. And since we are talking about a relational reality, we cannot restrict ourselves to an intra-psychic paradigm, to assume knowledge is something constructed inside people's heads. The "black box" of knowledge and understanding processes is not entirely hidden, but to a great extent, public and shared.

Research in the field that associates knowledge and organizing usually focuses only on individual cognitive processing. It is
important work to be sure, but there is a hesitancy to go beyond the individual sense-making processes. (The work of Karl Weick is an exception here.) Although once recent collection (Sims & Goia, 1986) looks at social cognition in organizations, most of the pieces focus on the cognitive processing of individuals within organizations. The concluding piece acknowledges that cognition is a multi-level phenomena, "not to be construed only as a phenomena occurring at the level of the individual" (p. 358). It hints that a study of cognitive processes in organizations might need to take into account a larger unit of analysis that just the individual. It is the intention of this study to do just that.

To begin with I would like to take a look at the nature of knowledge and understanding, borrowing insights from hermeneutic philosophy. The thinking of Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricouer, Habermas, and others have shed a considerable light on the nature of understanding and knowledge. They have a considerable amount to say about the social-cultural nature of knowledge and knowledge as a dialogical phenomena. Next I would like to look at some of the recent findings in the area of social cognition, as well as cognitive psychology and information processing. Since the "cognitive revolution" of the 1960s that field is beginning to recognize that what man sees in the world is not objective reality but is in a large part created by him. The world as we know it is constituted by our own complicity. There has been considerable convergence between this research and hermeneutic philosophy in acknowledging the social-constructionist nature of human knowledge. I will conclude this section looking at the question of how new understanding occurs. How is it that
individuals' cognitive frames expand to include new meaning and new understanding? It will be argued that this too must be understood by widening the unit of mind to include the social-cultural context. It will be argued that since thinking is internal social relationships (Vygotsky, 1962), changes in social relationships precede the emergence of new awareness. It is the reference group that deems new awareness and new action possible and places it within the horizons of the individual.

To demonstrate the social nature of knowledge acquisition, I will discuss how it is the collective horizon that defines what is knowable and how the world is interpreted and that it is through interaction and discourse that cognitions are formed and awareness emerges. I will conclude with the contention that organizations are indeed cognitive and that these cognitions are multi-level phenomena.

We usually think of cognition as a private, solitary phenomena that occurs in the private recesses of one's mind. Following Geertz (1973), human cognition is more a public than a private activity. Thinking processes involve the interpenetration of the cultural, personality, and social systems. This process becomes obvious when looking at the emergence of new thinking. Thinking is the act of manipulating symbol systems so that the structure of something is understood and these symbol systems are inherently social-cultural. The notion that thinking is an activity that occurs inside an individual's head is a half-notion that overlooks a crucial part of the process, for thought processes involve matching symbolic models against events and processes in the real world. Thus Geertz contends that every conscious perception is an act of recognition: "If my
eyes fall on unfamiliar something, one term of the match is missing. I ask, 'What is it?' What's missing is a model under which to subsume the unfamiliar something and render it familiar" (Geertz, 1973, p. 215). And the match which allows one to see something in the world as familiar, has done so through a social-evolutionary process. This study is guided by such questions: What new models have evolved to render mysterious and sometimes threatening events in the world, familiar? How are these new models triggered and once we know that, is it possible to trigger new models? What events and public discourse have occurred which acted as catalysts, inviting members to form new models to create new meaning? Specifically, what allows members to emerge from the habits of constricted thought to engage in imagining possible worlds? This paradigm for understanding is particularly relevant for groups in transition, when groups find themselves experiencing challenges for which they are ill-prepared:

Cultural symbol systems...come crucially into play in situations where the particular kind of information they contact is lacking, where institutional guides for behavior, thought, or feelings are weak or absent". (Geertz, 1973, p. 218)

The question behind their debate centers on the nature of the mind. Since the early part of this century, social theorists have debated the issue of the social-cultural foundations of mind. Is mind the same across all cultures or is the thinking process a creation of the social-cultural context? If mind is a social creation, what are the processes that create mind? Sociologists like Durkheim and Marx provided macrotheories that emphasized the social foundations. Psychologists have tended for the most part to emphasize the universal characteristics of mind. Laboratory
experiments and intelligence tests tend to be aimed toward making claims for universal capacities and behavioral tendencies of individuals.

Boas (1911) in *The Mind of Primitive Man* argued against the perspective that thinking evolves differently in different cultures. Taking exception to the perspective that observed differences in culture and belief are evidence of fundamental differences in thought processes, "The functions of mind," he wrote, "are common to all humanity." The French sociologist Lucien Levy-Bruhl (1910), in his book *How Natives Think*, upset many anthropologists with his contention that every culture develops a different set of beliefs. These different belief systems, which he called "collective representations" are, in part, evidence of different mental processes. He argued that primitive cultures exhibit a "prelogical" and "loosely-organized" thinking process. Primitive thought follows a different set of rules and operations than those employed by more advanced cultures. Rather than thinking through logical steps, they tend to believe in mystical, magical forces operating in nature. Much later Claude Levi-Strauss (1966) argued that different kinds of categorization are produced by different cultures. Different cultures use different strategies to make sense of the world. While the "primitive mind" uses different kinds of classification systems, tending to generalize from overt properties of parts of a system, they are limited to concrete experiences. Their categories are easily seen and experienced. Western cultures tend to use more scientific strategies, generalizing properties inferred from relations in the system. Neither way of thinking is more developed or advanced than
another because they both represent strategies by which people make sense out of the world and they both involve the ordering, classifying, and processing of information.

Perhaps the foremost sociologist to take the sui genesis perspective was Durkheim. Durkheim (1915) assumed that individual mental processes are not so much manifestations of inner processes, but the result of social evolution: individual mind originates in society. Society, according to Durkheim, constituted a non-rational, moral order, a collective conscience that binds members in a pre-contractual network. Basic categories of thought, including ways of conceiving space and time, are not intrinsic, but emerge from the peculiar modes of social and cultural life. Thought classifications, including scientific categories, are not only transmitted by socialization processes, but are the products of social creation. In his study of primitive religions, he concluded that even temporal divisions such as days, weeks, months, and years correspond to ritual recurrences and ceremonies. "A calendar expresses the rhythm of the collective activities, while at the same time its function is to assure their regularities" (Durkheim, 1915, pp. 10-11, 23). Also, the concept of space, for example, is not the result of some a-priori idea, but the result of mental classification and division. His language of appropriation reveals the constructionist nature of these categories.

Spatial representation consists essentially in a primary coordination of the date of sensuous experience. But this coordination would be impossible if the parts of space were qualitatively equivalent and if they were really interchangeable. To dispose things spatially, there must be a possibility of placing them differently, of putting some at the right, others at the left, these above, those below, at the north or
at the south of...That is to say that space could not be what it is if it were not, like time, divided and differentiated.

These categories of space, since they are common within single civilizations, "almost necessarily imply that they be of social origin" (Durkheim, 1915, p. 24); they "reflect" the mental state of the group and depend on the way the group is founded and organized. How is it that the individual internalizes these categories which appear objectively real? Durkheim gives a partial answer, one that we will return to: such social categories appear to be morally binding to the individual.

The necessity with which the categories are imposed upon is not the effect of simple habits whose yoke we could easily throw off with a little effort; nor is it a physical or meta-physical necessity, since the categories change in different places and times; it is a special sort of moral necessity which is to the intellectual life what moral obligation is to the will. (Durkheim, 1915, p. 30) [Italics mine]

But if this is true, if social activity precedes individual awareness, how does this occur? As Berger and Luckmann (1967) phrase it, I encounter a world of "paramount reality" whose objective existence I do not question. The world appears to me in a series of "typificatory schemes," pre-defined by patterns of behavior which have accumulated, usually unchallenged evidence. These meanings are transmitted through generations and nurtured by role-players who reinforce typifications. These social patterns are handed down chiefly through language. Language serves as the "objective repository of vast accumulations of meaning and experience" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 37). Language has an almost coercive force. Individuals actually "see" a world that is humanly created and yet they tend to follow the patterns as if they were not a human
creation, but have a quality of facticity. Within the general stock of common knowledge, meanings become embedded in routines. The advantage of this is that choices are narrowed and action delimited. Thus, as Berger and Luckmann (1967) point out, the primary knowledge in any social organization is the "pre-theoretical" knowledge, the knowledge that is tacitly transmitted as recipes that define, control, construct and predict. It is "pre-theoretical" because it is the knowledge that directs members' perceptions and selection that then appears to them as the common stock of knowledge.

**Contributions of Hermeneutic Philosophy**

If we are in a world that already has "typifacatory schemes" waiting for us to perceive, how is it we come to know? What is the nature of human understanding? For this we turn to Heidegger and his concept of the "projection of possibility." Heidegger (1927) rejected the old Cartesian notion of inquiring subject confronting distant object. The individual not only does not have a *tabula rasa* mind waiting to receive sense impressions of the object, but the whole notion of the subject and object as distinct is misleading. He also rejects Dilthey's notion that understanding involves some mystical empathy that "transfers" the subject so that he can understand the other. There must be some unity between subject and object prior to any such effort. It is not important to understand how a subject constitutes or understands a particular object, but rather what is the ontological nature of the activity they are both already engaged in? What is the nature of Being? Like Berger and Luckmann's (1967) notion of pretheoretical knowledge, he noticed the
significance of verstehen. It is the fore-structures of understanding, the anticipating consciousness that grasps forward out of a range of possibilities, that makes all understanding possible.

The human being moves out into the world, an historical being coming from some past and "looking forward" to some anticipated place. It is the human nature to be already ahead of itself, to live "as if" in the future, projecting its potentiality.

Heidegger outlined three modes of engagement in the world: the ready-to-hand mode, the unready-to-hand mode, and the present-at-hand mode. The ready-to-hand mode of engagement is the basic practical activity one is directly involved in. Our awareness when carrying out such "automatic" activities is effusive and holistic: We are aware of our situation not as segmented entities, but as a network of potentialities. Involved in this kind of practical activity, we have no focused awareness of ourselves or the objects we are in contact with. Packer (1985) explains Heidegger's concept:

We are aware of the situation we find ourselves in, not as an arrangement of discrete physical objects and not as a portion of the physical universe, but globally, as a whole network of inter-related possibilities, possible tasks, thwarted potentialities, and so forth. This network is not laid out explicitly, but it is present as a "background" to the project we are concerned with, and we can turn to aspects of the network and bring them into focus. (Packer, 1985, p. 1083) [Italics mine]

Heidegger uses the example of the man hammering a nail. He is not aware of himself as a hammerer, nor aware of the movement of his wrist, or the experience of holding the nail, but only of the activity of hammering. As different concerns arise, different facets and potentialities emerge into awareness. The situation is structured by the emerging concerns and different relevant details which
may stand out. So, for example, if the nail is too large, size of
the board becomes relevant. Action will then reflect the concerns:
His frustration with the mis-match becomes relevant, as does the
ensuing search for an appropriate nail. The action fits "my action
and my situation fit each other, structured on the one hand by my
concerns and on the other hand by social and personal styles and
habitual practices" (Packer, 1985, p. 1083). Most of our practical
activities are so automatic we are hardly aware of the network of
skills we bring and habits we use. This ready-to-hand mode is the
mode of most practical activity.

The unready-to-hand mode is the mode of engagement in which we
encounter some problem or difficulty that upsets practical activity.
So, for example, the carpenter may become aware of the weight of the
hammer, where before it was not salient. The present-to-hand mode is
the mode in which the subject withdraws from the object, and logi-
cally analyzes the action. The hammerer becomes aware, for example,
of the tactile properties of the hammer, its size, weight, and
constituent material. The hammer becomes an independent object, as
does the nail and wood, as we analyze these "distant" objects rather
than engage them in activity.

The fundamental mode of human existence is engaged activity.
The carpenter picks up the hammer (ready-to-hand) not because of its
objective qualities, but because of its place in a world of purpose-
imbued objects. The external world is there, full of potential,
waiting to be filled with human purpose and meaning. The mode of
direct practical engagement assumes an ongoing understanding within
this network of possibilities of potential meanings. It is only when
we engage in the "unready-to-hand" mode, when some emerging facet or problem urges us to focus and reflect, that we begin interpreting, that is, "the working out of possibilities projected in understand-
ing" (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 189). It is here that the already understood comes to be interpreted. (Cognitive psychologists may call this the shift from automatic to effortful processing.) The ready-to-hand comes explicitly into sight.

The total involvement of engaged activity precedes any explicit propositional knowledge that is generated in the present-at-hand mode, the mode where subject is detached and analyzing objects. This "pre-understanding" occurs in a taken-for-granted cultural and historical background that is so pervasive that it resists being spelled out. This is the lived world of "everydayness." Thus, the human being exists in an implicit horizon imbued with purpose and potential that cannot be understood by isolating objects within the field of contextual experience. It is the horizon, this projection of possibilities that is the condition of anything being known at all. It is pre-defined as possibly known before it is every encountered as known. Where do these pre-definitions come from? This horizon of imbued purpose, the contexts within which the human projects possibility for herself, are shared and public. Thus, it is cultural habits and norms that shape human awareness.

Gadamer, a student of Heidegger's, continues this line of thinking and contends that all understanding involves a projection of possibilities. Thus, all understanding is inherently dialogical. The act of understanding is like perceiving a work of art or being involved in a conversation. The conversation pulls and makes claims
on each of the participants whose unique historical pre-conceptions both shape and are expanded by the give and take of the conversation. When understanding a work of art, the perceiving subject and the art work co-participate in a "fusion of horizons." The subject brings his biases to the experience and the art "speaks up" and stimulates something in the perceiver as they meet each other. They mutually influence one another in a dialectical fashion.

One must have prejudice when one confronts the world, or else we would have no preconcepts or fore-structures with which to recognize or know anything. In this sense all understanding is prejudicial. Thus, the socio-cultural pre-conceptions that one has inherited and are embedded in, are indispensable to understanding. Prejudices and fore-structures organize perceptions and allow one to engage in give and take dialogue of understanding. In this sense, all knowledge is recognition because old structures of knowledge shape new perspectives. Thus, listeners' biases do not get in the way of understanding, but bring forth meaning. We anticipate, expect, and project, and this gesture is what makes knowledge possible. And keep in mind the expectation we bring to the knowledge encounter derives from the social-cultural network of potential meanings in which we are embedded.

How then is any new understanding, a fusing of horizons, possible? The aim of "genuine" authentic understanding according to Gadamer, is to keep oneself open to what is other. We can attain a valid understanding by self-reflection, raising our awareness of our pre-conceptions we bring to an event. By so doing we can consciously direct and control the anticipations involved in our cognitive
approaches" (Gadamer, 1979, p. 152). These anticipations are the projections of possibilities that make understanding possible. Therefore, a crucial factor in the formation of understanding of a radically different other is the expectation that one will be informed by the encounter:

A consciousness formed by the authentic hermeneutical attitude will be receptive to the origins and entirely foreign features of that which comes to it from outside its own horizons...In keeping to this attitude, we grant the test the opportunity to appear as an authentically different being and to manifest its own truth, over and against our own preconceived notions. (Gadamer, 1979, p. 152) [Italics mine]

Further, the anticipation of "perfect coherence" must be activated in order for an understanding to emerge: "Nothing is really understood unless it is actually presented in the form of a coherent meaning" (Gadamer, 1979, p. 154). So the object "pulls" something in the subject and the subject brings an expectation of coherence. It is both these processes in a dialogical encounter which allow something new to emerge.

This notion begins to place the activity of understanding and knowledge acquisition in the "space between" actor and object. The interactive, dialogical nature of understanding achieves an expanded expression in the ideas of Paul Ricoeur (1974) and his metaphor of human action and discourse as text. Ricoeur appreciates the transformative power of language and discourse in rendering new understanding. In so doing, he adopts the metaphor of human action as text. A text has plurivocal meaning and discourse, like a text, can render meaning which surpasses the event of saying. The intention of the speaker, like that of the author, cannot control the meaning of an expression: "The text's career escapes the finite horizon lived
by the author." So as the reader reads the text, he completes the meaning, in a sense he co-authors the text by imbuing his own meaning. So, too, a listener co-creates the meaning of the speaker's words, which only becomes meaningful as they leave the speaker's horizons and are met by the listener's horizons. Therefore, when one speaks of a problem of not understanding a text, it is folly to try to re-create, return to, the original intentions of the author. So too, it is folly to seek to verify the meaning of a person's speech or act by returning to the intentions behind the original articulation. Discourse has a life of its own, continuously co-created and recreated.

Just as a text can become detached from the author's intentions to render new meaning possible, so, too, with human action. Human action transcends the concrete social condition of its production. Its significance and meaning may far exceed the circumstances of its occurrence: It may contribute to the creation of acts by others, for example.

This continued production of meaning of acts is part of the socio-cultural horizon of possible understandings Heidegger discussed. As acts and discourse trigger co-creation of meaning in a particular direction, the horizon of possible understandings expands or contracts (or does not alter). The question might be then what kind of acts (and meanings) does a particular action trigger? To trace the reverberations of the circumstances of an action, to discover how acts are interpreted and read, would give us an understanding of the potential horizon of understandings within a given social group. I think this is a similar concept to Vicker's (1968)
concept of the "appreciative system," that is the social humus that generates ideas and actions, the "readiness to see" in a particular way.

Ricouer has other things to say about the emergence of new understanding that is worthwhile visiting, for I will return to these concepts later. Like Gadamer’s concept of a fusion of horizons, he asks the question, How is any understanding possible? How does one "see" something in the act of another? Again he returns to the metaphor of reader looking for meaning in a text. In reading the text, the reader might be tempted to seek what is hidden behind the text, Ricouer argues. Conversely, the reader can open himself to that which is "disclosed in front of it," that is, look at possible worlds being pointed to. Opening one’s horizons to "reading the potential reference of a possible world" is what makes new understanding possible.

This kind of interpretive understanding is a concrete reflection which is possible only indirectly through symbols and signs. The first movement in such a reading is to subordinate the intentions of author (or actor), to displace primacy of the subject. This thus expands the conscious horizons of the reader by incorporating the world which the text unfolds. The ego of the reader lets go of the "intentions" of writer and instead engages in self-reflection mediated through world of the text:

In the coming to understanding of signs inscribed in texts, the meaning rules and gives me a self. In short, the self of self-understanding is a give of understanding itself and of the invitation from the meaning inscribed in the text. (Ricouer in Thompson, 1981, p. 56)
For language has the capacity to "say something about something." A sentence is "successful" in this regard if it creates a reference to something beyond itself, and thus is dependent on the circumstances in which it is delivered. Language is successful when its strictly denotative function is transcended, and the text is capable of projecting a second order, a new way of being, of disclosing a possible world:

The literary work discloses a world only; under the condition that the reference of descriptive discourse is suspended. Or in other words: in the second order, in virtue of the suspension of the denotation of the first order of discourse. (Ricouer in Thompson, p. 58)

This is the connotative potential of language. The discourse of the text can create a new order of reference, "the effacement of the ostensive and descriptive reference liberates a power of reference to aspects of our being in the world that cannot be said in a direct descriptive way" (Ricouer in Thompson, p. 59).

Thus, we could ask these questions about the emergence of understanding in a human system: Does the speaker's language invite multi-vocal reading, or does the speaker issue words that attempt to limit interpretation to a preferred reading? Is the reader "open" to seeing possible worlds disclosed or invested in achieving a closure of meaning of the "speaker's intentions"?

So in sum, if Durkheim's contention of the primacy of the social order is correct, we must understand the processes by which social knowledge is created and transmitted. Berger and Luckmann call attention to the pre-theoretical knowledge, the typifications which are perpetuated through time and carry accumulated meaning through habituated patterns, and especially through language. The
hermeneutic philosophies, especially Heidegger, call attention to the
"fore-structures" of knowledge, the pre-understanding that the
individual brings to every activity and that are derived from the
socially established network of possible meanings. Gadamer and
Ricouer discuss the consequent dialogical nature of understanding.
When the individual "understands" or "knows" an object, there is a
fusion of horizons, a dialectical movement between the expectations
and anticipations the individual brings in opening his horizons and
the range of possible meanings disclosed by the object. The
individual's "prejudice," in a sense, confronts the accumulated
prejudiced meaning of the object. Again, this "range" of possible
meanings is a social-cultural creation. Genuine understanding must
make good sense and this "sense" is preeminently social. All of
these philosophers acknowledge that there are collective structures
of knowledge that filter, guide, and select perceptions and inter-
pretations. The cultural context delimits the "readiness" to inter-
pret along given lines.

Before I go on to outline the dimensions of the cognitive
organization, I would like to cite a vignette that illustrates how a
group, in this case a family, provides a pre-theoretical social
arrangement within which an individual member selects precepts and
chooses action. In this example, members are able to see new poten-
tialities in each other as the horizon of possible selection of
details expands to include previously hidden factors:

Consider the Roberts family, whose child is gravely ill.
Mother and father return home from the hospital where they have
each spent a few minutes with their ill infant, holding her and
observing her difficulties in breathing and her somewhat list-
less movements. Importantly, father had rarely held his two-
year-old son when he was an infant; thus it was unusual for both parents to have shared the experience of holding and rocking an infant. Mrs. Roberts, drained from the experience, sits close to her husband on the car trip home, an unusual position for her. When they arrive home, the babysitter tells them that their two-year-old son does not look well. Mother sits at the child's bedside holding his forehead while father goes to get a thermometer. As gently as possible, he inserts it in his son's rectum, also for the first time. Surprised, the little boy does not protest as usual. He has a moderate fever. Mother gets him a tall glass of juice and sponges his forehead. Father searches for the baby aspirin and mother, smiling slightly, shows him where it is kept. A conversation of gestures of central significance is going on here. In holding his ill child, father was not only learning, firsthand, the physical difficulties of his ill daughter; he was also able to experience a tenderness in himself. Mother, too, can see this for the first time and sits closer to him during a routine activity in which they are ordinarily separated. By the time she begins tending her son, she already "knows" that she can count on her husband to participate in his care, even though he has never done so before. The silent acknowledgement of this change comes in her smile when he can't find the aspirin. The father also "knows" that he will be able to successfully insert the rectal thermometer in his son from his experience with his sick child, an experience that has already unveiled for him his own physical tenderness. However, his "knowledge" and that of his wife are genuine social interpolations—a rapid building-up of missing pieces which are beginning to create a solid conviction, a conviction each member of the family holds about one another, of a new physical openness in the family. After this sequence, the little boy begins to get in on this interpolated "knowledge." He now "knows"—without definite prior experience—that his father will be more approachable; specifically, he knows that his father will let him sit on his lap and will let him fall asleep on his shoulder. (Reiss, 1981, pp. 207-208)

Again, we see the inherently dialogical nature of knowledge, the confrontation of anticipating mind meeting inviting world. The meaning of Heidegger's term, "horizon of potentialities" begins to take on meaning here. The metaphor "horizon" suggests something which surrounds, whose distant objects are dimly perceptible and only come into view when something out of the ordinary draws attention to its usually unnoticed shape and demands effortful focus. Once seen, one begins to extrapolate that there is more reality beyond what is
dimly perceptible on the edge of one's scope, a potential. This is what occurs in the Roberts family. A crisis event pushes members to respond in new ways. As the father holds his ill child in a way he never has before, the mother now "knows" that the father will respond with affection and compassion, even though this behavior was not previously in his repertoire. They "know" that they will act in ways not previously imagined as possible. What was once only a dim possibility on the edge of the horizon, now comes into focus as actuality. And all of this remains implicit and unspoken. And now a new "knowledge" about each other can being to emerge.

I think too that this phenomena is an example of what Gadamer and Ricouer had in mind in their notions of understanding as dialogcal and as something which occurs between, not inside of, people. In Gadamer's terms, there is a "fusion of horizons," the father's unprecedented gestures have a new significance within the son's perceptual field, who, on his part, readies himself to see such significance—he expect and anticipates such a coherent meaning from his parents' behavior. In Ricouer's terms, the connotations of each member's gestures and language take on a new meaning beyond their denotative function. So, for example, the father looking for the aspirin now has meaning beyond simply finding pills for his sick child. The gesture now resonates with "new" significance: here is a strong, caring, reliable, warm man.

The Cognitive Organization

It is possible to take these concepts to study the phenomena of organization cognition. Clearly, cognition is a multi-level
phenomena in groups and organizations. I would like to discuss organizational cognition on at least three levels: (1) the shared interpretive paradigm, i.e., the horizon of possible meanings that act as filters that guide selection and information-processing; (2) the process by which interpretive frames are created and maintained, mostly by symbolic gestures of discourse and interaction; and (3) individual schema formations.

I. The Shared Interpretive Paradigms

As Reiss (1981) and others have shown, it is through a shared paradigm that group members select and interpret information about the world. The shared assumptions that define this tacit paradigm then guide individual action. (For an example of a study of the evolution of an interpretive structure in an organization, see Bartunek, 1985; for a further example of how groups' shared schemas get expressed through metaphor, see Srivastva and Barrett, 1988.) This shared schema that guides a group's perceptions is reminiscent of Vicker's "appreciative System (Vickers, 1968). It refers to the members' readiness to see certain aspects of the world. Despite conflicts and disagreements, every group by definition has a shared schema which acts as an organizer of constructs, expectations, fantasies. I will take this to refer, not only to what world the group sees, but how it is seen in process, in other words the epistemology the group exhibits, assuming this about how the world works. Since it is tacit, such a schema must be inferred by working at a number of dimensions, including:

- how problems are defined and once defined, how they are solved;
to what extent the group experiences the world as ordered and stable vs. threatening and unstable;

how novelty is experienced and to what extent the group hesitates to recognize novelty and endures through repetitive patterns vs. a belief that mysteries can be discovered and pursued through inquiry;

how the group defines its connectedness: to what extent they see themselves as a cohesive group vs. separate individuals;

how the group processes information when making decisions: to what extent information is collected before decisions are reached (open vs. closed processes), and to what extent individual members take this responsibility or share it with each other;

- to what extent the group views problems as masterable vs. problems as beyond human capacity.

In sum, then, this dimension of the cognitive organization refers to the shared paradigm that guides basic pre-theoretical assumptions about the horizon of possibilities in the world.

II. The Process Dimension: Discourse

Shared schemas are not only inherited, but must be created and maintained. The processes of communication and discourse and other gestures of symbolic action activate and expand the horizon of the group paradigm. Thus, it is not enough to say what kind of action is possible and likely in a group given its readiness to see possibilities along the dimensions outlined above, but how is the group arriving at these pre-suppositional conclusions? It is through discourse and interaction that possible action is defined and reproduced, perceptions formed, or thoughts altered. The assumption is that people reveal in their discourse what perceived facts stated by others they find convincing. In order to understand some of these convincing moments among members, we must appreciate their speech
acts within communicative context. In order to discover this process of the cognitive organization, we must ask:

- How do members talk, meet and in what contexts?
- Following Habermas (1981), what validity claims are put forth and when challenged how are they redeemed?
- How do conversations achieve well-structured form (Stubbs, 1983) so that they predict what they produce?
- How is discourse structured to activate old schemas and scripts for action?
- How and when does discourse allow for the emergence of new understanding, the expansion of horizons? What moments of interaction and communication further the likelihood that new pre-theoretical "knowledge" will emerge?

This dimension refers to the social in social cognitions. The processing of information occurs in and through interaction. The activation of semantic memory (van Dijk, 1987) reflects the role of information that has been processed through communication. People process information not as individuals, but as members of a group. Interpersonal communication and thought processes themselves are an enactment of group perceptions (see van Dijk, 1987).

III. Individual Members' Schemas

The cognitive organization also refers to the schema formation and activation of its individual members. What history and built-up structures of knowledge do individuals bring into the organization? How do individuals experience the expansion of schemas and enlargement of self? How does the perseverance effect of schemas obstruct individuals from recognizing new features? Less attention will be paid to this facet of the cognitive organization in this study, although inevitably frequent inferences must be made about
individuals' cognitions. This topic, while worthy of study, requires a separate study and most likely a different methodology.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

For some, language is viewed as a reflection of organizational reality. Yet, the focus of this study is to appreciate how language constitutes social reality. In the former case, linguistic analysis would focus on the content of discourse only and the degree to which members share meanings of experience (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). In this thesis the content of language will be studied, but in order to appreciate the constitutive base of language, our attention cannot stop there. We must also look at the structure and process of language, we must investigate the potential for language to release multiple meanings for experience and how language in the form of explanations, accounts, narratives, etc. constitute the speakers' beliefs, values, and cognitive processing. Further, we will investigate how language reflects and changes in meaning over time, how new senses of words emerge to grasp new phenomena. This is the sense in which Vygotsky saw language as a "tool" (Vygotsky, 1962).

This study is a story of how a management group's accounts evolved to reflect their changing beliefs, values, and cognitive processing, a mosaic of accounts in context, accounts interweaving and whirling within the flow of each person's everyday life activity. To begin with, this is a study of a management group that is faced with the need to change dramatically. It is a story of their initial
feelings of fear, powerlessness, isolation, and constricted, self-protective strategies to maintain power. This study investigates what accounts and narratives members tell in everyday conversation and how the language they use not only reflects their early insecurity, but constitutes it. The early accounts reflect fears of threats, frustrated attempts to appease all stakeholders, and strategies to avoid responsibility and attribute blame. They engage in strategic moves to undermine authority and strategies to avoid conflict and dissent. Conversations are often defensive, self-protective, and indirect and no script exists for what constitutes “good meetings.” Over time, their discourse changes as they begin to become aware of their capacity as creators and status assigners. Eventually, as they cognitively grasp the novelty, their speech reveals an increased sense of power when power is shared. Their conversations and accounts become marked by a non-threatening stance towards dissent, members begin to form scripts of sharing rather than restricting power as they express interest in creating good contexts for emerging consensus.

I am concerned with capturing these transformations of meaning through language. In this chapter, I will discuss the appropriate methodology for investigating the following questions: What are the content, structures, and processes of language in this group and how do they transform over time? How and when do new concepts and new words emerge to grasp novel phenomena? When radical new changes from the environment first confront these managers, how do they account for and constitute that experience? How are patterns of turfism and power struggles created and reinforced through narratives and
accounts? How do members struggle in meetings and conversations because no script (Abelson, 1981) yet exists to provide a cognitive grasp of the social situation? How do managers' assignment of status to employees function to provide a sense of cohesion and stability for the "insiders"?

In the early stages of this study, for example, when these managers began to meet to develop a strategic plan, their efforts were awkward and frustrating. Discourse is inadequately grasped, conversations are ill-formed, and members find it difficult to recognize the structure of appropriate conversation. The context is unfamiliar and hence, there exists no script (Abelson, 1981), that would guide them in "what to say in this meeting and how to understand what others are saying." Accounts of frustration and blame emerge and begin to constitute a common script of "meetings are useless and a waste of time." Following the symbolic interactionist perspective, language is essential in constituting the self (Schwalbe, 1983). One's self-esteem is dependent on having a dependable range of objects through which one can navigate (Becker, 1968). In the early stages of this study, this group experienced an ontological earthquake of sorts, and having no language to adequately express or reflect their experience, their awareness of possible action became constricted. Until generative language emerged in their conversations to give them an expanded scope of possible action, many of their accounts expressed a sense of fear, anxiety, and semantic moves to avoid responsibility while attempting to present a positive self.
Language and the Social Nature of Knowledge

In the last chapter we began to appreciate the social nature of knowledge and how individuals' discovery of new meaning and new understanding is far more a social process than we have assumed. The question arises: On what grounds can a determination of meaning be made? We can see when this question is addressed from a hermeneutic perspective, the unit of analysis shifts from the individual to the social sphere.

We know from the hermeneutic theorists discussed in the last chapter that the nature of meaning within a given social group will depend on the nature of the culture and rules of communication. (For further discussion of communicative rules as a source of understanding, see Winch, 1958). The system of meaning and communicative rules is the result of a consensus achieved by a given culture. So, for example, a witch burning in Salem in the 17th century "made sense" and had meaning for most New England residents. However, if a modern day Bostonian were to one day witness a female neighbor tied to a stake, encircled by ministers and burning wood, he would no doubt be puzzled and question the propriety of such an event. Similarly, a modern day Iranian who appears withdrawn, sad, and melancholic is viewed as sacred and "in touch with" Allah; it is seen as a desirable state. Such behavior in a western country is often labelled as depression and treated as dysfunctional. The exact same behavior is seen in one culture as a high state and in another as a low, dysfunctional state. So we see that each culture creates and transmits its own ontological inventory of "what is," develops its own consensus
for noticing, labelling and legitimizing proper and improper meaning and behavior.

This study seeks to address the evolution of consensus within a given culture in terms of the ontological inventory of behavior. This ontological inventory of knowable objects is the network of possibilities which Heidegger discussed. I would like to show that one of the ways to appreciate this ontological inventory, what Vickers called a culture's "appreciative system" (Vickers, 1968), is to study the language and discourse of a given culture. First I would like to review a few of the ideas from the previous chapter and show the activity of understanding occurs at the level of the interperson, in the spaces between actors and that this awareness leads us to the study of language. Specifically, we will see that conversation is a socially distributed cognitive system and has many of the qualities we usually attribute to individual cognitive mechanisms: conversation creates and maintains categories, it creates and maintains memory functions, transforms and reproduces schemas.

Following Heidegger (1927), understanding is possible because of the forestructures of knowledge, the anticipating consciousness reaching out and grasping forward out of a network of possibilities. The human being exists within an implicit horizon imbued with purpose and potential that cannot be understood by isolating objects within that field of contextual experience. It is this horizon, this projection of possibilities that is the condition of anything being known at all. Following Gadamer (1979) since all understanding involves a projection of possibilities, all understanding is dialogical, subject and object co-participating in a fusion of horizons. In
this sense, knowledge is an activity, much like a person encountering a work of art. The subject brings her biases to the experience and the art "speaks up," stimulates something in the perceiver as they encounter one another. In this sense, all understanding is prejudicial because the listener’s biases bring forth meaning. Anticipating, expecting, and projecting make knowledge possible. Such a paradigm begins to place the activity of understanding and knowledge acquisition in "the space between" actor and object. Ricouer (1974) followed this line of thinking and began to appreciate the role of language in shaping and transforming the horizon of possible meanings. Ricouer’s metaphor for understanding is the reader reading a text. As the reader reads a text, in a sense she co-authors it by imbuing her own meaning. In this sense language and discourse have a life of their own. Or to quote perhaps Ricouer’s most famous sentence: "The text’s career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author." In spite of the author’s intentions (author can also mean actor acting), words and actions transcend the concrete conditions of their production as their significance and meaning far exceed the circumstances of their occurrence.

This line of thought leads us to recognize that discourse is action, a point I will return to at length. As discourse triggers the co-creation of meaning in a particular direction, the horizon of possible understandings expands or contracts.

Recall that in Gadamer’s metaphor, in order to understand the perceiving subject co-creating the art work, we must understand the subject’s readiness to see, the subject’s biases, prejudices, fore-structures of knowledge as they are formed and transformed. So too,
in discourse analysis, in order to understand the co-creation of
discourse we must appreciate not only the speaker's words, but also
the listener's biases, readiness to interpret along certain lines,
and how and when these biases are triggered, primed, prepared to
receive a certain meaning. The task of this study then is to trace
the reverberations of the circumstances of an action, to discover how
acts are interpreted and read, to achieve an understanding of the
culture's "readiness to see." Language is most successful when its
denotative function is transcended and it is able to open the poten-
tial horizons of a possible world (Ricouer, 1974; Bruner, 1987).
Language in this sense has a power to liberate, to make references to
worlds beyond. This study then must appreciate the connotative power
of speech, the capacity for language to transform and enliven.
Specifically, a method must be chosen which allows us to answer the
following questions:

· What is the horizon of possible meanings that a culture
  creates and makes available for its members to select?

· How and when does this horizon expand or contract?

· What kinds of acts of discourse does a particular action
  trigger?

· Does the speaker's language invite multi-vocal reading, or
does the speaker issue words that attempt to limit
interpretation to a preferred reading?

· Is the reader "open" to seeing possible worlds disclosed or
  invested in achieving a closure of meaning?

Discourse Analysis: Studying the Functions of Language

The metaphor of action as text leads us to consider discourse
analysis as a method for understanding a culture's horizon of
possible meanings. Here I would like to review both the structure and function of discourse, to show how discourse is action. I would like to discuss the following:

- Structure controls meaning. Discourse predicts forward by delineating the possible range of responses that can follow.

- Language in the form of accounts and explanations functions to create categories, maintain status, order perceptions and further evaluations. In this sense, categorization, as well as evaluation, are social accomplishments.

- It is through discourse that schemas and knowledge structures are created and transformed.

- Language gives rise to the self and facilitates a possible range of action through which the self can knowingly navigate.

In order to show what kind of work utterances do within organizations, how they perform important functions that may change over time, we need to appreciate the nature of discourse and how language is multi-functional all the time.

To understand this relatively recently fascination with language, we need to recognize the work of J. L. Austin (1962) who first realized that utterances are actions, words are deeds. Austin argued against the logical positivist view that sentences which cannot be verified as true are meaningless. He argued against a number of theorists who saw language as an abstract system whose central function is a description of states of affairs. First, he noticed that sentences can be classified according to the things they do. These are sentences that are not descriptions of things, but have practical consequences. For instance, the sentence

"I want you to kill Salman Rushdie"
is not a description of the world that can be verified, but when uttered has practical consequences for the target. The context of its utterance, the "felicity conditions," is what gives the utterance its force. Other examples of performatives:

There will be no more smoking in this area.
I pronounce you man and wife.
Watch out for Joe because he can be a real dog.

In each of these examples, the sentences have practical consequences in the world, they are performing acts, again depending on the context. The second sentence, "I pronounce you man and wife" if uttered by a third grader to a pair of classmates, would have considerably different force than if it were uttered by a priest in a church in the midst of a ceremony. Thus again the felicity conditions, or proper context determines the force of meaning. Austin contrasted performatives with sentences whose function is to describe a state of affairs, that is sentences that can be verified. These, he called, constatives.

Later, in the lectures in which he articulated his general theory of speech acts, he reversed his own distinction and claimed that all utterances have both performative and constative features, that is all utterances state things and do things. All utterances have a meaning and a force and these depend on the appropriate "felicity conditions" or social context in which shared knowledge and assumptions exist between speakers. Different social contexts will produce different forms of appropriate speech. Thus, for example, one would expect to hear a sermon from one's minister at church, but to hear a sermon from one's insurance agent might be inappropriate.
Depending on the proceedings of a given social context, one can usually predict the form, function, and style of language that will ensue. Thus, apologies, blaming, complaining, planning, all have their proper function within certain contexts, depending on the shared knowledge and assumptions that exist between speakers. In the field of social cognition, research on frames (Minsky, 1977), scripts (Abelson, 1977), and schemas (Fiske & Taylor, 1981) are efforts to understand the cognitive processes that social contexts trigger, a point that I will expand on later.

Since people do things with their utterances (they beg forgiveness, they seek approval, they blame, justify, excuse), discourse analysis involved studying the use, function, and consequences of language in various contexts. (The emphasis on various contexts is significant as will become clear later). Discourse analysts continually ask the question: "What is this utterance doing and what is it achieving?" Therefore, what distinguishes discourse analysts from linguists is that discourse analysis is concerned with studying the organization of language in units larger than the clause or sentence. It reflects a concern with language in use within social contexts, such as conversational exchanges, formal interactions (such as formal speeches or rituals), etc.

**Conversation as Joint Productions**

Since language transmits social knowledge between participants, it is through discourse that the social world is created and maintained. This negotiation of meaning between speaker is a complex, almost miraculous, accomplishment because so much intricate
processing is occurring instantaneously. Discourse analysis is concerned with how it is that speakers are able to understand one another in naturally occurring, conversational language, how information is selected, formulated, and conveyed between speakers. Of the speaker's task is to understand his hearers, their expectations and still communicate content, how then is coordination possible, how is meaning negotiated between speakers?

Speaker and hearer always have different problems. And there is no pre-existing fact to which they both have access and to which they can refer. The speaker wants to convey X and makes a guess about what the hearer knows already. The hearer wants to make sense of this, taking into account what he thinks the speaker is assuming. And so on. It is not at all obvious what has to be coordinated with what. This problem of negotiating mutual understanding when speaker and hearer inevitably have different perspectives gives a glimpse of one particular theoretical void over which discourse analysis is suspended. (Stubbs, 1983, p. 31)

That speakers do understand one another implies discourse competence, that is a native speaker's fluency in a conversation, the capacity to transform and manipulate language spontaneously, to understand and create connected discourse in real time, to improvise, to maintain continuity, to respond to unexpected utterances. Socio-linguists typically study language variation, how malleable a language is in different forms and functions. Native speakers have in fact multiple dialects, making judgments about proper contexts for blaming, justifying, joking, asserting, forgiving, etc. Even as contexts change, speakers generally maintain competence. Thus, the language I use with my family is different than the language I use with work colleagues and I am communicatively competent to the extent that I can flow from one group to another.
Conversation is a joint production, held together by specific mechanisms, by the parties composing and interpreting the exchange, making predictions, analyzing the implications of an utterance in fractions of a second. Speakers take account of their audience by designing talk for their hearers. In order for successful, well-formed discourse to occur, speakers must make guesses about the hearer’s expectations. Thus successful conversation depends on tacitly shared knowledge and methods of reasoning, a question that concerns ethnomethodologists as well as linguists.

The Normative Nature of Common Discourse Structures: How Structure Contributes to Meaning

A considerable amount of socially shared and socially organized knowledge must inform members’ reasoning methods, allowing them to recognize ordinary objects and events. Garfinkel (1967) demonstrated that this shared nature of understanding is highly normative. Social activity is rendered intelligible by both overt, explicit accounts and explanations people generate, and by the implicit understanding (the taken-for-granted reasoning) of what is happening within a social context. Since these sense making procedures are part of the moral order, part of discourse analysis involves discovering the normative structure of reasoning that are involved in understanding and producing intelligent interaction (Heritage, 1988). Thus, there is embedded within well-formed discourse sequential organizing principles, rules which shape the trajectory of action. This is the way in which discourse structure organizes and creates meaning, a point that I will return to at
length. One example of a prominent normative structure is the form of *adjacency pairs* (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973) in which the production of a first conversational action (a greeting, questions, etc.) projects and requires the production of a second (for example, a response).

A: Why don't you come to dinner some night?

B: I would love to.

The *rules* of adjacency pairs provide a *tacit script* that helps the interactants grasp how each party is understanding the action. In this case, the first utterance delimits the range of the response, the response is being shaped as an acceptance to some future event and thus the first utterance is framed as an invitation. It is the entire structure that shapes the meaning of the first utterance. In short, the structure and sequence of discourse are significant in determining meaning because of the shaping of context. Each turn in a conversation is shaped by the context of prior talk and each turn establishes a context to which the next turn must be oriented.

It is often clear that speakers have a *pre-theoretical notion of acceptability* of given exchanges, when expressions of complaint or disappointment in deviant utterances are found. In this sense, one of the best ways to understand speakers pre-theoretical expectations of communicative norms is to study *mis-communication*. Such remarks as the following are evidence that speakers have expectations of well-formed discourse that were not met:

1. I make a suggestion and all I get is a sarcastic remark.
2. Why is it that no one will answer my question?
3. We talked about that and Joe didn't say a word.
The fact that errors are corrected by speakers in conversation is evidence of the existence of a norm in regards to what a well-formed discourse should look like.

In this sense, predictability may be one of the most important facets in keeping a conversation cohesive. Certain utterances trigger expectations in the hearer about what kind of utterances are likely to come. Hearers construct the coherence of the conversation by doing their own analysis of the discourse. Therefore, Coulthard and Brazil (1981), discuss the "predictive power of the structural frame." They contend that each utterance sets up a prediction which then classifies the following utterance. In this sense, each utterance is pre-classified even before it is uttered, although the next speaker is free to choose a default option, to ignore or deny the pre-classification. The structural frame of discourse contributes to meaning by classifying the utterances that emerge. It is fair to say that utterances predict forward. Stubbs (1983) cites a telephone conversation as an example of an ill-formed discourse in which a secretary answering the phone was predicting forward, based on a commonly accepted exchange structure, but predicted wrongly.

S: Hello, X college of education.

MS: Hello, can you tell me what department mister A is in. I just want / to

S: just a moment, please

(long pause)

S: I'm sorry. I can't find him. He's not in his study or the staff room.
MS: No, I don’t want to speak to him. I just want to know what his department is so I can post him some papers.

The script-structure helps determine the meaning that follows: Conventionalized forms of exchange urge the hearer to interpret the preceding utterance in a particular way and predict forward the appropriate response. Thus, the meaning of an utterance depends on its place in the discourse structure, the structure in this case being the context of the exchange. In question and answer pairs, this pre-classification is even more obvious. For example:

A. When was that decision made?

B. At the council meeting.

The question A pre-classifies the utterance which follows so that even though a time is not mentioned (the question asks “when”) the utterance is most likely interpreted as an appropriate answer.

Hence, we can begin to appreciate how structure controls meaning and how the social context of speech delimits the range of possible meanings. The various contexts can be larger and more formal than micro exchanges such as telephone conversations.

The principle that certain forms of discourse automatically delimit a range of possible meaning is consistent with Gadamer’s sense of the dialogical nature of understanding embodied in his metaphor of knowledge as the encounter of subject and art work. The art work delimits the range of possible meanings and "speaks up" to the encountering subject. Thus if one were to encounter a painting at an art museum with the words "Van Gogh 1922" printed beneath it, one would look at it differently, expect greater precision, coherence, and beauty than if the words "J.B. Smith 1975" were
printed beneath the very same painting. I would see two different paintings because of the expectations I bring to them. The same dynamics are present in forms of discourse. If one were to randomly turn on a radio station and hear the words "Piersall comes up to bat with a .290 average against the Yankees. . . ." one would sense immediately that one is encountering a special kind of discourse, in this case a baseball game. The speaker and audience have common expectations and assumptions, know that certain details are appropriate and others are assumed and unspoken. The announcer, for example, does not need to review the rules of the game or location of bases each inning. Nor would one expect to hear a stock exchange report. The listener is prepared to hear certain utterances in certain ways that are delimited by this form of discourse. So, for example, if the listener were to hear "The crowd went crazy when Piersall clobbered Whitey Ford the last time"--he would interpret the words to form a particular scene. Most likely he would not envision a crowd turning into an angry mob as Piersall punches Ford. Or if he were to hear the sentence "Jones comes in for the save." he would interpret this differently than if he were to change radio stations to an entirely new context and hear similar words: "According to Luke 13, he will come and save us." Thus we see that it is not the sentence, clause, or individual words that determine meaning, but a much larger unit--the context of speech, the structure of the discourse. Discourse achieves coherence by virtue of the listener's interpretation and this is governed by the expectation that he brings to the encounter based on his reading of the context.
How Discourse Constitutes the Social World

Any conversational interaction is a microcosm of social and personal relationships. Members are not only exchanging content, but also creating and disclosing social knowledge in regard to their definition of the given social context, the nature of the speaker's roles. In this sense, every utterance has multiple functions. In addition to the topic of conversation, the content being exchanged, language can have an interpersonal function. That is, language can serve to maintain and monitor relationships by blaming, forgiving, inquiring, etc. So in the following exchange frustrated attempts to contact a party could warrant the end of a relationship.

A. I tried to call you last night.

B: I was out late.

A: I thought you said you'd be home.

B: I had to get to a store. We were completely out of milk.

In this example, A's utterances have a blaming accusatory tone, while these queries create the expectation that an explanation or excuse is due from B. If B's response did not include such an account, it is not clear whether interaction can be sustained. B's account of his action is an attempt to explain and excuse and hence, interaction can be sustained.

Language can also serve to maintain roles between interactants. Student/teacher, boss/subordinate, doctor/patient roles can be maintained not only by the content exchanged, but also by the structure of the exchange. In a study of teacher-student interaction, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) showed how the relationship is often characterized by the following script:
Example:

Teacher: Initiation  How much is 2 + 7 ?
Pupil:  Response  2 + 7 = 9.
Teacher: Feedback  Good.

Coulthard and Ashby (1975) proposed the following exchange script for doctor-patient interaction:

Example:

Doctor: Initiation  It only hurts when you breathe?
Patient: Response  Yeah, as far as I know.
Doctor: Follow-up  Okay.

These exchange structures serve as a formal mechanism to maintain roles during interaction activities. It would be rare for the patient to initiate an inquiry and then follow-up the doctor’s response. The form of the exchange reminds the participant who is doctor and who is patient.

Also, language can have ideological functions (legitimizing a group or idea). For example, President Reagan promised in 1981 that he would not raise taxes. But in 1985 when he was faced with the need to increase revenue or cut more social programs, he proposed a series of "revenue enhancements." The deliberate choice of the words "revenue enhancement" serve to disassociate the action from a tax increase to give ideological legitimacy to a necessary action that otherwise could be read as a broken promise, and thereby serves to maintain his trustworthiness as a public official. Hence, we see that utterances have multiple functions. Not only is information being exchanged, but language also can serve to maintain
interpersonal relationships, maintain roles, and legitimize ideologies. to name just a few obvious functions. And utterances can be doing all these things at once.

Perhaps the most pervasive social function of language is the creation and maintenance of categories. People’s ordinary explanations and accounts of themselves reveal the social-cognitive information processing within a given group. It is commonly accepted among anthropologists and ethnomethodologists that explanations reveal categories. Psychologists, however, have been hesitant to test their attribution theories on ordinary conversation with examples of verbatim discourse. Accounts and explanations however are very powerful interpretive and re-framing devices and have recently begun to be studied as a living, malleable form of human attribution. Potter and Wetherall (1988) see discourse analysis as a field that can “take us beyond attitude and behavior.”

It is sometimes not obvious how ordinary accounts and explanations reveal social categories and assign status. So, for example, imagine that a visitor from the Third World were to witness for the first time an American football game. He may be puzzled by the apparently hostile behavior among participants. If his tour guide were to say to him, “It’s only a game,” this utterance performs a number of functions:

(1) Creates an intelligible category for puzzling behavior,

(2) Makes apparently improper behavior legitimate,

(3) Reassures the observer that it is not real violence, and

(4) the observer’s anxieties are quelled (he is reassured there is a distinction between he and the players engaged in a game and that he will not be pulled into the violence).
To offer another example, imagine a young G.I. who kills his first Vietnamese civilian. The officer reassures him by creating a special explanatory category: "They're only gooks." The language operates to assign status and in this case makes apparently improper behavior legitimate. Thus, social action is facilitated. It is worth investigating further how people's accounts, explanations, versions, and interpretive repertoires serve to uphold a moral order and create a context that allows for the possibility of action. Van Dijk (1987) in his study of ethnic prejudice, shows how the presentation of arguments, explanations, and stories serve to reinforce ethnic prejudice and group membership. Consider how the following negative stereotypes presented in interviews are sustained by evidence, concrete episodes and stories about minorities. In these examples, people select experiences of others as illustrations of their own opinions, demonstrating the social cognitive processing of information:

(1) (76 year old woman)

I. What if more Surinamese would come and live in this neighborhood. What would people say?

W. I think they wouldn't like it. It is quite a lifestyle, isn't it. From a city council member I know—he lives there on J Street—but in a simple little apartment downstairs. Upstairs lives a Turkish family. That lady used to throw a pail of water on the floor and scrub it. And then it leaks down...And then the food, you know, you smell the onions a couple of houses further down the street.... Yes, foreigners have to adapt, that Turkish lady also did that there on J Street. Because later I asked Mrs. D, "How is it going? How is life?" "No, she has accommodated herself." So she has adapted herself.
(2) (40 year old woman)

My mother gets fish scales on her laundry when Spaniards upstairs clean their fish above it.

(3) (40 year old woman)

And with a colleague of mine, Moroccans live upstairs and they pee over her laundry.

(van Dijk, 1987, pp. 49-50)

These people have formed "scripts" about minorities that they retrieve and recall even though they are relating others' stories, not their own. There is, within the interview context, an active selection of stories they have heard from others. Specifically these events are attended to and cited as illustrations of how "backward" or "stupid" those people are, even though none of the respondents are speaking of experiences they themselves had.

The categories in themselves do not lead to consequences, but the relevance they accumulate and the expectations they ignite through active discourse, are consequential. Categories then can achieve different functions--they generate excitement, they are used to blame individuals or groups, they provide legitimacy for desired outcomes or attractive groups. As Potter and Wetherall (1987) contend, categories are the building blocks that help us to see the social world. They are not solid and defined, but become molded through discourse as they appear in different accounts.

Consequences of Accounts and Categories

Within a group, accounts and narratives produce categories and assign status which then provides an agreed code. Everyone who then shares a given version will agree on enough details that they will be
able to continue interacting. The boundaries of the agreed code and shared images mark the boundaries of the group that can sustain sensible conversation. A process of inference and extrapolation occurs by which members become skilled observers of appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

In this case study, there is nothing inherent in the gestures of MMF leaders, for example, that informs the observer about their intentions. Nor is there anything inherent in a dirty kitchen floor that would inform an observer about the level of competency among employees. In order to infer meaning from these gestures, requires the application of preconceptions that are passed on through language. Also, the noticing of new phenomena or the re-framing of the world requires a change in the forestructures of knowledge, a new system of discourse to notice phenomena that the previous language could not grasp.

These preconceptions trigger inferences that have profound consequences. Gergen (1988) points out in his discussion of psychological discourse and inferences about internal mental states, each inference commits the observer to additional inferences. So, for example, to label employees as "incompetent" is to commit oneself to a separation from them. Often additional assumptions emerge that cannot be objectively supported— that individuals' behavior is capable of being appraised, that there are others who are more capable of appropriate action, etc. This helps us understand the process by which discourse and categorization have concrete consequences in the way that future social life is carried out. Labels assign status and provide a context within which a person's
behavioral potential is limited. The assignment of status determines how one will behave toward the object. So in calling a group of employees "incompetent" may function to reinforce a feeling of competence about oneself and one's peers. A whole system of common discourse may arise that gives one a feeling of solidarity and belongingness. Such a label triggers scripts (Abelson, 1981) and schemas (Fiske & Taylor, 1984) that delimit the possible range of behavior one would notice in employees. As social cognition literature attests (Fiske & Taylor, 1984), I become predisposed to noticing incompetent behavior and this predisposition is likely to persevere in spite of contrary evidence. In a very real sense, I have limited an employee's potential behavior by assigning such a status. Most likely, I would not notice an employee's competent behaviors and where competence does exist, I might attribute it to another cause. I would be rendering such behaviors invisible and unreportable because I have no language, no description, no way to account for it. Further, by assigning such a status I may be committing myself to the inference that the incompetence is "inside" the employee, like some genetic athletic capacity, something inherent and unchangeable. Thus, I would be unable to see the possibility of my own or others' complicity in helping to create inadequate performances. Likewise, for one department to reproduce negative narrative accounts about another department is more than just a power struggle or turfism. These accounts operate similarly to the way van Dijk (1987) demonstrated ethnic prejudice is maintained and reproduced. The accounts become shared meanings among dominant group members and form the cognitive and emotional basis for discrimination in everyday
encounters. The accounts and narratives become the scripts (Abelson, 1977) and schemas (Fisk & Taylor, 1984), the cognitive structures of beliefs and values. They inform the cognitive strategies for interpreting, representing, and retrieving personal experiences, and the conversational strategies for positive self-presentation and persuasion. Language indeed, not only reflects the world, but constitutes the world as well as the self.

The Artificial Intelligence literature and the field of cognitive psychology and information processing offer insights into the relationship between language processing and beliefs, values, and cognitive structures. If we momentarily take the individual as the unit of analysis, we can begin to appreciate how cognitive grasps of discourse structures are possible and how members within an evolving social structure have mechanisms to grasp the complexities of the world. (While I understand that this is a shift to an entirely different paradigm. I hope to bring a closure on the two perspectives.)

The information processing view sees the memory as central and appreciates our capacity to store and reproduce knowledge. Numerous theories distinguish between different types of memories. The short-term memory (STM) analyzes stimuli experienced by our senses, assigns meaning and interpretation to the data. Long-term memory (LTM) stores all the information processed in STM. The STM can store limited chunks of information (between four and seven) at once. After interpreting these chunks, the information is represented in LTM where it is partially retrieved for future use. The structure that assigns the incoming information in STM also organizes the
representation of information in STM. The more these representations are structured, the easier they are to remember. So, for example, it is easier to remember a complete sentence than an arbitrary set of words.

Within LTM, Tulving (1983) made a distinction between episodic memory (EM) and semantic memory (SM). Incoming information that STM analyzes and interprets provisionally is stored as "episodes" in EM. A scene we have witnessed, such as a bus striking a car, is represented as "bus crash" episode. The EM represents interpretations of our personal experiences. The semantic memory (SM) is more general and abstract. It contains general knowledge about discourse structures, language, people, word meanings, interaction rules, etc. The structures that we use to interpret events—the strategies, rules, meanings—are stored there. Since it contains rules for language and interaction, it is most often activated when shared with others in discourse. Since language use and rule application are due to the socially shared nature of meanings, semantic memory is pre-eminently a social memory. While episodic memory is personal and autobiographical, semantic memory is a more abstract, general memory of repeated experiences that form scripts.

Episodic and semantic memory are intimately related so that we can learn from our experiences and interpret concrete events. There are a number of processes that transform EM information, our experience of episodes, into our semantic or social memory. Social-cognitivists tend to use the concept of "schema" to define these clusters of knowledge. A "schema" is a set of expectations and anticipations one brings to an event. It includes accumulated
general knowledge of categories about people and events. Schemas
guide the perception of new information, memory for old information.
They also trigger inferences that go beyond what we presently see and
what we thought we remembered. A schema is stored in abstract form,
so, for example, if one holds a schema about "baseball players,"
incoming information is organized as schematically related to baseba-
ll players. People’s prior knowledge about baseball players helps
them to decide what information is relevant for further information
processing. Thus, schemas are like theories or concepts that guide
how people take in, retrieve, and make inferences about data. They
help people simplify reality by interpreting specific instances in
light of the general case. In short, schemas are the general expec-
tations that guide processing of data. The activation of a schema in
any particular context effects the interpretation and expectations
that follow.

A similar process occurs for more complex knowledge that forms
whole episodes, such as "going to work," or "eating lunch in a
restaurant" or "having a meeting with managers." Members of a
culture "know how" to do these things and act in these situations,
often known as scripts (Schank, 1982; Schank & Abelson, 1977). These
scripts serve to organize our knowledge by describing an appropriate
sequence of events in a particular context. Scripts allow us to
"fill in" missing information, and to notice unusual events that
deviate from the causal chain we have come to expect.

In conversations, we often apply our general knowledge of
scripts to the particular telling of an episode. So, for example,
when I talk about visiting a particularly good restaurant and
enjoying a meal, I do not have to explain who cooked the meal or that it was served by a waiter. Within this culture, I would assume that everyone knows the "restaurant script." Thus, we presuppose that hearers have similar models or scripts that they have built up from experience. We build up, through episodes, a script to understand discourse structures. Thus, the examples of well-formed discourse function smoothly because members have "scripts" or frames (Minsky, 1977) for what constitutes good phone conversations, baseball games, sermons and scripts. In these cases, the semantic memory has scripts that allow individual episodes to be understood. So, for example, if I am scheduled to have a meeting with an authority figure tomorrow, this may recall previous experiences of "authority conversation" and this new episode may be integrated into my general script.

So, in summary, the bridge of information processing and social cognition reinforce the notion put forth by hermeneutic philosophy. We are active creators of the world we see. One might add that we are stubborn active creatures of the world we see. The anticipations and expectations we bring to an encounter (the schemas that are activated) determine what we know or understand. In that sense, as Gadamer pointed out, all knowledge is prejudicial. The two paradigms also acknowledge the role of the social context in activating knowledge in a certain direction, although cognitive psychology, by design, tends to restrict itself to individual processes. Although the language is different, the network of potential meanings on the horizon of social awareness is acknowledged by cognitive psychology. It is unlikely that one will describe one's grocer as holy and sacred, just as it would be unlikely to see one's parish priest as
efficient in market exchange, even though both may be true. In the language of hermeneutics, knowledge is dialogical: I encounter my priest "expecting" to see qualities of sacredness and he, in turn, feels pushed in our encounter to demonstrate such qualities. In the language of cognitive psychology, each of us activates an appropriate schema and retrieve episodes from past experience that guide us in present and future action.

Data Collection

Over the course of this five year period, I engaged in many conversations and participated in many meetings with the group of managers that constitutes the subject of this study. I first entered this organization as an OD consultant and given the environmental push the managers were feeling, with some I was initially seen as another threatening intrusion. I began to build a trusting relationship with the group, however, and continue to work in the organization as of this writing. My status as external consultant gave me unusual entry to a wide range of interviews, meetings, and conversations that were crucial. In a sense, I became a full participant in the organization. Access was never a problem.

My data collection was extensive and detailed. In the first years, I became adept at keeping verbatim notes of interviews and meetings. At meetings in which I was participating heavily I took careful notes after the meetings, as close to verbatim as possible. Finally, when I became enamored of the language shifts, I began to tape record every meeting I attended and arranged to have every meeting of the management group tape recorded even in my absence.
The tapes were later transcribed verbatim. All of this became the basis for an iterative analysis of linguistic and ethnographic data. It is simply essential in doing a discourse analysis to collect and integrate as much verbatim conversation and ethnographic descriptions as possible. The ethnographic descriptions serve to bring forth the social context that gives meaning to the utterances. Data on the social context of interactions are critical to understanding the process of inference.

Over the five year period, I conducted over 250 unstructured interviews. I want to say a word about the use of interview data and much of my thinking on this was inspired by van Dijk (1987). In general, social psychologists have been suspicious (Nesbitt & Wilson, 1977) of self-report data because of impression management, social desirability effects, and cognitive occlusions (Goleman, 1986). However, many of these processes that occur in everyday conversations among people are the very object of study. As van Dijk (1987) argued, interviews are themselves interactions and in the unstructured interviews he reports in his study, people indeed begin to retrieve and reproduce narratives, accounts, and explanations that reveal the categories by which they see the world; they disclose their beliefs and values about ethnic groups in the context of the interview-as-interaction.

In reviewing the transcribed interviews, I took a number of steps. First I perused the utterances for convergence on meaning around particular words, paying particular attention to members' follow-up responses to each others' expressions. I looked for connections between utterances, continually asking myself, "Why does
this utterance make sense in this context?" In this sense, I continually tried to recall that the conversation inherently makes sense to the participants involved. Once it became clear that a convergence on meaning was emerging, I paid attention to particular words, noting what words trigger meaningful responses in others. I tried to discover how and when these key words and their related expressions of "family resemblances" were repeated through various contexts. Throughout my readings, I was searching for the expansive reverberations of language. Also, I attended to the tone of language, asking myself to what degree the language was hyperbolic, aggressive, inviting, inclusive, etc. Finally, I searched for the functions of language, asking myself what purpose given utterances serve, to what extent the language is used to blame, to enhance an other’s or one’s own status, to legitimize an idea, etc.

Linguistic Evidence

Following Antaki (1988), the source of data emphasizes explanations as products of communication, as joint processes. I pay particular attention to attributions putting forth causality, disposition, or responsibility. Attributions serve many functions including enhancement of self-presentation and a sense of control. As Heider (1976, p. 18) stated, "attribution is part of our cognition of the environment" because attributions reveal people’s understandings of themselves and their environment. These attributions are contextualized and embedded within narratives and everyday explanations. Particularly relevant are the study of accounts (Scott & Lyman, 1968), the constructions people put forth when trying to
provide meaning for confusing or significant events. As often as possible in the interviews, I attempted to draw extended explanations from people in an effort to uncover their beliefs and values.

For most of the period under study, the organization was rife with conflict. Interpretive differences flourished as power struggles and turf battles ensued. I began to pay particular attention to subgroups that were bound off not so much by department membership, but by common stories and images. In this particular environment, the conflicts were rarely overt or public. I learned about them from individual conversations and interviews. In public meetings, therefore, I began to pay particular attention to ambiguous uses of language, efforts to avoid conflict, indirect gestures meant to suppress one another. Following Donnelon (1988) negative linguistic forms were frequent: "We can't do that." "He's way out of line." etc. I began to make note of strategic semantic moves (van Dijk, 1987) such as efforts to enhance credibility, efforts to present a positive self-image, and efforts to present a negative other image.

As patterns began to emerge in various context, one unit of analysis that became particularly helpful was the notion of interpretive repertoire put forth by Potter and Wetherell (1987) who build on Moscovici's (1984) notion of the social image. First, to say that discourse has different functions, is to say that discourse is variable in different contexts. Therefore, a study of discourse should study its variations, how in different settings people present different versions. In fact I began to notice how in different contexts, different versions seemed completely natural to the
speakers using them. Following Gilbert and MacKay (1984), we can predict that different functions are manifest in these variations of versions. The functions of speakers' strategic moves in various settings began to become clear to me. Second, Potter and Wetherell (1987), contend that we need to assume discourse is being used constructively. Language is put together in a certain way to serve certain purposes. This reminds the discourse analyst that discourse emerges from pre-existing linguistic resources, that an active selection is occurring, and this particular selection has particular consequences in particular settings. I began to see the "contagion effect" of certain linguistic phrases and concepts. Interpretive repertoires, then, are the regular patterns that speakers engage in, within various contexts. By studying the emerging interpretive repertoires of members, I could begin to infer what schemas and scripts were evolving to grasp the social situations.
CHAPTER 4
"THE BASTARD SECOND COUSINS"
SEPTEMBER 1984 - FEBRUARY 1985

Introduction to the Case

In 1974 the City Plaza Hotel was built by Aroak Company to provide services to MMF patients and their families as well as business guests in the University area. For the first few years, Aroak relied on MMF patient business as its client base. Eventually, they attempted to increase income and began to more actively solicit business outside of the MMF patient population, seeking conference and convention business. Balancing competing strategies—seeking MMF business vs. seeking commercial business—is a theme that would continue throughout the history of the hotel. Historically, the two strategies have been framed as mutually exclusive and incompatible.

The City Plaza's strategy to actively seek outside business began to conflict with MMF’s need to house patients. On a few occasions, the hotel was completely booked and did not have adequate room for patients. Occasionally, special discount rooms for patients would not be reserved if a business conference was available at a higher room rate. Aroak’s strategy for City Plaza began to frustrate some MMF administrators, who began to book patient rooms at other Metroland area hotels. Eventually, as City Plaza lost more patient business, the property became even less profitable.
MMF administrators wanted a nearby hotel to service patients and their families. They felt that the new business was interfering with the hotel's ability to respond to MMF. So in 1980, they made an offer to purchase the hotel and Aroak agreed. When the Board of Trustees purchased City Plaza, they knew they were ill-equipped to operate a hotel, so they hired a hotel management company that had experience in operating a hotel for the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota—the Keller Corporation. Three administrators from MMF—Jake Alley, Gene Woll, and Pat Widel—formed a "hotel committee" to oversee the contractual agreement with Keller Corporation and their operation of the hotel. The name of the hotel was subsequently changed to "The Medic Inn," to reflect the symbiotic relationship with MMF.

In 1981, Keller Corporation moved one of its managers, Karl Fomans, to Metroland to become the General Manager of the Medic Inn. This was the latest in a series of managerial transitions at the hotel. Fomans recalled, "When I was introduced at my first hotel meeting, it was noted that I was the fourth manager in twelve months." Shortly afterwards, the president of Keller Corporation, who had enjoyed a good and informal relationship with MMF's "hotel committee," retired. Keller's new president was much more formal and business-like and did not, in one administrator's words, "have values congruent with MMF's participative, informal culture." Thus, even though Fomans' relationship with the hotel committee seemed to be progressing well, the relationship between the management company (Keller) and MMF began to deteriorate. The contract that the new president presented to MMF was cited as one example of the deteriorating relationship between Keller and MMF: the original contract was
tantamount to a "friendly handshake on paper." It was only seven pages long and filled with language that reflected the specific needs of MMF. When the new president submitted a new contract, he submitted not a special document recognizing MMF's needs, but a standard, formal, document which one administrator described as "25 pages of impersonal, legal jargon." According to the hotel committee, this was just another indication that the management company they hired to operate the hotel they owned, was treating MMF "just like another client," not catering to MMF needs.

In the meantime, Karl Fomans had also grown disenchanted with Keller Corporation. He informed the hotel committee, with whom he had been meeting on a weekly basis, that he planned to resign soon. Given their dissatisfaction with Keller and their good relationship with Fomans, MMF administrators decided to let the contract with Keller expire and retain Fomans as General Manager, making him an employee of MMF. Thus, in 1982, MMF, a premier medical facility, was suddenly in the hotel business. This was one of a few ventures that MMF had initiated which would not fall into the traditional non-profit, medical strategy, a point I will return to in a moment.

Fomans describes the relationship with the hotel committee during this transition period. A contract and details of his employment were, as he put it, set aside for several months. "I was asked to shake hands and trust in them. They wouldn't work it out until later." Fomans describes the informality of the agreement.

I had been meeting with Alley and the others once a week, keeping them informed. We had a good relationship. But I was having trouble with this new style from this guy at Keller. So I went to Alley and told them I was going to resign. They told me they too were disappointed with Keller and this was a good
opportunity for them to let go of Keller Corporation and offer me the job. So they asked me to join in early December. There was no organization behind it, no contract, no salary talks, just a handshake. They said we'll work out the details later. It took three or four months before we even discussed salary or anything. We trusted each other.

The reasons for the delay will become clear momentarily, but they eventually agreed on a contract and Fomans' relationship with the hotel committee appeared relatively informal, friendly, and trusting.

One of the reasons for the delay in coming to a contract agreement with Fomans, was that MMF had begun to enter into a few "profit" enterprises and were deliberating about what kind of arrangements were necessary to run this side of the operation. Eventually, a "for profit" arm was created known as Clinitech and Dan Gass was hired to manage it. One of the branches of Clinitech would be The Beacon Square Hotel Company. Beacon Square Hotel included The Medic Inn and The University Motel, a small nearby motel recently purchased by MMF. Other land was being purchased in the area, with plans to build a restaurant and efficiency apartments.

Fomans was made Director of Beacon Square Hotel Company and part of MMF payroll. His main responsibility continued to be The Medic Inn. Medic Inn employees, however, were employed officially by Beacon Square, part of Clinitech.

At approximately the same time that Clinitech was formed with Dan Gass as its administrator, MMF began to consider another strategy change. Dr. Smith, a world-prominent cardiologist, had many wealthy Arab patients and foreign dignitaries coming to MMF for heart surgery. The entourage that accompanied them was accustomed to first class service and accommodations. The Board of Trustees began to
discuss the need to provide high-quality accommodations for the dignitaries' families. At the time, The Medic Inn was a medium priced, two star facility. With this new call for an "up-scale" service facility, Fomans hired a consultant, Tim Rils, to advise the group on the possibility of refurbishing the top floor of the hotel to provide special context for foreign dignitaries. Rils was a friend and former colleague of Fomans and he had experience working in other four and five star properties.

Before I discuss the proposed strategy changes at MI (The Medic Inn), I will first discuss the managerial situation Fomans found when he took over. When Fomans became Director of Beacon Square Hotel Company, he promoted the Residential Manager, Ric Meers, to General Manager (GM) of the hotel. Ric had previously been manager of a road-side hotel and had been at MI for about one year. Festus Flaherty was named Controller, in charge of fiscal operations. The position of Food and Beverage Director was a troublesome one. As Fomans said, "We had to hire a new one every six months." In 1983, when another Food and Beverage Manager was terminated due to a criminal act, they were faced with hiring another F&B Manager. Given the talk amount the hotel committee about upgrading the services, Fomans proposed to hire Tim Rils, the 17th Floor Consultant. Because of Rils' work history, his salary demands were much higher than what an F&B Manager would warrant. Also, an F&B Manager typically reports to the hotel General Manager, but Rils "could not see himself reporting to Ric Meers," whose experience was in "road-side" hotel operations. So after negotiations, it was decided to hire Rils as Assistant Director of Beacon Square Hotel Company. He was put on MMF
payroll and would report directly to Fomans. Theoretically, he would simultaneously hold two positions—Assistant to Fomans and Acting Director of F&B.

Beginning of Intervention

One of Gass' first acts as Director of Urban Development and Subsidiary Management, was to initiate a fiscal audit of Beacon Square Hotel Company. The auditors' presence at MI caused problems in the young relationship between Fomans and Gass. Fomans not only felt disturbed that his relationship with the hotel committee was usurped, but felt he was being checked on by a newcomer who would not understand the history of the managerial problems at MI. Also, apparently the auditors issued their report to Gass, not to Fomans, intensifying Fomans' suspicions.

I want to emphasize a number of themes that typify the collective interpretive schema that seemed to organize perceptions during this period.

(1) The managers felt insecure in relationship to MMF. They were frustrated with what they perceived was a lack of direction in regard to mission. This insecurity was often expressed in terms of a concern that the hotel must produce a profit or else they would be viewed as failures.

(2) This collective sense of uncertainty was fueled by the transition to Dan Gass. Given Fomans' working relationship with the hotel committee, Gass' arrival was felt as an interruption and his motives suspect. When Gass requested that the management team devise a business plan for the hotel, these efforts were seen as frustrating and added to a sense of loss of direction.

(3) The managers view employees and supervisors as unmotivated, untrained, and barely competent.

(4) The managers had never been called on to meet, plan, and decide as a group. Efforts to democratize were felt as frustrating.
Many of these themes were reflected in an employee survey undertaken in November 1988. Data from this survey will be cited where applicable to provide further evidence of these themes.

**Frustration with Sense of Lack of Direction from MMF**

With Gass' entry in Fall 1984 and the MMF Board of Trustees' wish to provide a higher level of service for foreign dignitaries, the managers were called on for the first time to meet as a group to devise a business plan. Prior to this, they simply "maintained" operations. With the exception of the newly-hired Tim Rils, none of the managers expected that part of their role included writing or devising new policy. Gass' message to the group from the Board of Trustees was related later by him:

It was simple. The Board wanted a hotel that was consistent with MMF's image. And that means upgrading the image of the old Medic Inn. To provide food and housing services for patients and families. Eventually it meant upgrading The Medic Inn for the wealthier guests and building a lower scale property across the street for the middle and lower class patient population. But I knew nothing about the hotel business, so I need them to provide the details of the business plan.

At the time of these early planning meetings, they were for all practical purposes, being asked to devise a new organization, to imagine a new future for which no prior model existed. Perhaps this in part explains the depth of resistance that I encountered when I arrived in the fall of 1984.

The managers did not see this as an opportunity to create a plan for the future. Rather, they felt suspicious and distrustful, both toward MMF and toward Dan Gass' call for a plan. Their pessimism and constricted view of the situation was colored by a number of deeper
anxieties—a fear of being fired, a lack of a clear sense of what MMF really wants, a lack of skills to work as a group, a lack of faith in employees.

Gass called weekly meetings with the four top directors to formulate a business plan which he then would present to the Board of Trustees for approval. They viewed the meetings, however, as confusing and a "complete waste of time." Gass would ask them to provide figures to be used to predict income and occupancy rates. Gass explained that he relied on them as the "hotel expert" to build a credible plan for the future of the hotel. He said, "They're the experts. I know nothing about the hotel business. I just want to create a plan that I can take to the Board for approval."

However, he was experiencing some frustration in communicating with the group. He was acting on the Board's wish to devise a plan to provide residence and hospitality service for upper class as well as the average patient population. "I can't figure out what the problem is. They just sit there in meetings and don't say anything sometimes. It's very confusing."

Fomans and his managers interpreted these gestures as a "lack of direction from MMF." Rather than interpret Gass' meetings as an invitation to direct their future, they expressed frustration over an absence of clear signals about what kind of hotel The Medic Inn should become. Even while Gass was calling the group together to outline a business plan to support the mission, they talked about it as if it were a game. Based on past history, they were convinced the MI would not generate enough business to justify building an upscale hotel in this area. As Fomans said: "We just play along and give
him the numbers he wants. All of us know those are phony numbers. His premise is completely wrong. There's no way this place can succeed in making a profit.'

But why would Fomans and the other three managers who tended to follow suit feel threatened rather than empowered? It appears that his insecurity stems from a lack of pre-theoretical knowledge about how to engage in building a business plan. He feels mentally equipped to act as a manager and carry out a mission, but ill-prepared to create one.

1 Q: How would describe your relationship with MMF?
2
3 A: Insecure. There's a real lack of direction from them. I can make this hotel, I mean this hotel can be whatever they want it to be. If they want a corner inn, I can give them a corner inn. If they want a Hyatt-Regency, I can do it. But no one gives me that answer. Just tell me what you want me to do. But there is no answer to that. I know how to reach the goal. That's my job. I enjoy that.

10 Q: Has your role changed here?
11
12 A: Yes. At first my role was narrow. I just administered policy. I'd report to the Hotel Committee once a week and everything was fine. I just administered. Now, a new policy has to be done. What was wrong with the other one? Obviously something must be wrong or they wouldn't have changed things.

19 Q: Why are you uncomfortable with this?
20
21 A: I don't trust Dan Gass. He just came in here. He doesn't know the history of this development. He doesn't know how this place got here. This process will uncover that the people here have not been supported well. There's a lot wrong here. He won't see the negatives were here before I got here and he won't see the progress we've made to clear it up. I don't trust this organization. They banned the hotel committee while Alley was on vacation. If a guy I trust can't trust the organization to treat him right, how can I trust them? How do I know they won't can me when I'm on vacation? I still don't know why they were taken out.

(September 1984)
When asked to describe the relationship with MMF, Fomans' very first trigger is negative. He describes it as "insecure." The meaning of insecure seems to be explicated in the next few utterances, associated with a sense of "lack of direction," an absence of a definite signal that would trigger clear action in him. Apparently, the opposite—"security"—would occur if someone were to "answer," to clearly define what kind of hotel, regardless of class or style. His security is dependent on MMF defining clearly what they expect. He seems to lack a model of competence and mastery that would guide him in forming a plan and developing a goal.

This notion becomes clearer in the next utterance. When asked about a change in role, he associates the interruption of a former comfortable role, as an indication that something must have been wrong that warranted a change in policy. Because a new reporting structure is implemented, he extrapolates that there must have been something wrong with the very relationship which he found most right. The meaning of his one word answer, "insecure," begins to take on significance. Finally, he articulates an outright expression of distrust that has paranoia-like dimensions. His distrust for Dan Gass stems from a fear that many negatives will be uncovered and Dan Gass will not understand that the negatives were there before Fomans arrived and he in fact has improved things. His schema for distrust extends to include the entire organization. He provides an example of MMF "canning" the hotel committee while one member was on vacation. The last utterance brings the focus back on himself—if another was fired for no apparent reason, I can be fired also.
Besides Romans, others in the management group shared his sense of not having a clear sense of direction. The following quotes from three of the managers reflect this concern.

1. When we try to find out how they want the hotel run, it's not there. Is this hotel here just for MMF or should we go after conventions and things. They haven't said clearly. We've been talking for years. Our number one priority is supposed to be patients and families. We have meeting rooms that haven't been renovated in years. I need to know what type of facility this should be. Should we serve average people? Presidents? Royalty? Business community? They seem to be telling us lately we have to do all.

2. We're in the middle of two businesses here. The hotel business is a perishable commodity, sell now, fast moving, spontaneous business. The hospital is slower moving, methodical, research oriented. We try to find out how they want this hotel run--is this here just for MMF? What kind of hotel do they want us to be? Is this here just for MMF or should we go after convention business? They haven't said clearly.

3. I love the affiliation with MMF, the status of being with the leader in the industry. MMF is one of the best run organizations in the world. But there is a lack of direction from them. How do we attack the shortfall in the bottom line? We're in a loss. How much loss can they subsidize?

Again, these conversations were held even while the managers were meeting with Gass to devise a business plan for the hotel. The schema that appears to emerge is one of depreciation—a presentation of self as waiting while a more powerful other gives direction. There is little sense that they themselves can provide a direction for the hotel. There is a sense of self-in-limbo mixed with a sense of pride in the association with MMF. The manager in quote three states a sense of pride in being associated with MMF, but this is followed by a fear of loss of support—the awareness that MMF is subsidizing the hotel which is operating at a loss. His fear is stated, "How long with MMF tolerate this loss," might read, "How long will MMF tolerate us?"
View of Employees as Deficient

During this period, the management group had a rather negative view of employees and supervisors, many of whom were employed by MI before their arrival. They felt the frequent managerial transitions made for an unstable environment and employees were poorly trained to perform this work. Fomans describes his view of personnel when he became General Manager.

My initial assessment was very negative. Not one of my management team had been in their position for 18 months. They all have been "peter principled" for lack of time to search for more appropriate talent.

Tim Rils, the newly arrived F&B Director, echoed similar concerns about competence level of employees and also cited frequent transitions as troublesome.

The truth is we’re not real well staffed. I’m concerned about the lack of training and competence here. People just don’t know how to do their work. There’s a morale problem and a motivation problem. But they haven’t been treated fairly. There’s been promises made to them that haven’t been kept because there’s such frequent management turnover.

Perhaps it was fears like these that Fomans had in mind when Gass initiated an employee survey in the fall of 1984.

In June of 1984, Gass requested a Benefit, Compensation, and Job Audit from Frank Bloch, Director of Human Resources for MMF. Frank and one of his staff, Jim Knight, Director of Employee Relations, suggested that an employee survey be conducted and that someone from State University assist in the implementation. At this point I was brought on board. In July of 1984, Jim Knight and I met with Dan Gass and we agreed to conduct interviews and implement a survey. We met with the four top managers of the Medic Inn in August and put
forth our proposal. It was agreed that I would interview the thirty
managers and supervisors and do group interviews with thirty line
employees. From the interviews I would construct an instrument which
would be made available to all 260 employees.

When I began interviewing managers in August and September,
reactions to my presence was varied. I immediately sensed that the
management group felt self-conscious about their own perceived
shortcomings and relieved that they had an opportunity to "let things
off [their] chest." I became known as the "father-confessor," the
one who listened to everyone's troubles, and knew the dark secrets of
the organization. During meetings with the management team, they
would frequently ask me about all the complaints I was hearing from
the employees. They made a point to let me know that they knew that
employees had not been treated very well and were unhappy. There had
been frequent managerial changes and many promises had been made to
employees that were never fulfilled, especially concerning pay and
benefits.

I felt from the beginning that Karl Fomans was resistant to the
process and rather cold to me. In conversations with Fomans, it
became apparent that he did not trust the OD intervention. Finally,
I asked him directly if there was anything about the OD process he
distrusted.

Dan Gass requested this process. This is not a process that I
requested. There was an audit of the hotel done at Dan's
request. They came to find something wrong and tell him about
it and they weren't even going to tell me about it. When I told
Dan this, he had no idea what my problem was with the audit.

Fomans feared that the data I collected would uncover many negatives
and be used against him by Gass or by MMF.
As this early point in the process, Jim Knight and I discussed what appeared to be a major dilemma: the Hotel Director was suspicious that any negative data we collected would be given to his boss, Dan Gass, and used against him. Our contract was with Gass and up to this point, we viewed him as our major client. Since it appeared that as Director of Hotel Operations Fomans was more involved in the day-to-day hotel operations, we decided to stop the interviewing process and negotiate to change the terms of our contract so that Fomans would become our main client. Dan Gass agreed to this change and agreed to no longer attend any meetings we would have with the management group. The feedback of the data would go directly to Fomans and the other three in the management group. I had numerous conversations with Fomans in which I assured him that only he would receive the data and that he, not Dan Gass, would be the major client. He slowly began to trust me, but continued to express suspicion and resistance to the process, a theme I will return to later.

The survey included 18 scales, covering such topic areas as members' identification with the organization, employees' relationship with management, and members' views regarding rules and procedures.

One major theme reflected a sense of organizational inferiority in regard to The Medic Inn's relationship to MMF. While the managers felt proud to be associated with The Metro Medic Foundation, they also felt ignored and overlooked by the Foundation. There was one phrase I heard repeatedly that reflected the frustration over the
lack of direction that The Medic Inn felt: "What kind of hotel do they want us to be?"

We're in the middle of two businesses here. The hotel business is a perishable commodity, sell now, fast moving, methodical, research oriented. We try to find out how they want this hotel run--is this here just for MMF? What kind of hotel do they want us to be? Is this here just for MMF or should we go after convention business? They haven't said clearly.

The survey was administered in November/December. Separate statistics were compiled for the manager/supervisor group (n = 31) and line employees (n = 126). Items were accumulated around 18 a priori scales which reflected the major themes I had heard in the interviews. Interview quotes were included to support the scales. Statistical tests included means, percentages, and standard deviations. T-tests were done to determine if there were significant differences between groups. Pearson r-correlations were also run to study the strength of relationship between scales.

The survey revealed that respondents' identification with the organization was the highest mean in the survey (overall x = 1.72; std. = .614). This scale measured the extent to which people feel proud to be an employee of MI, proud to be associated with MMF, want MI to have a good reputation, and value the importance of satisfying guests. T-tests revealed a statistical difference (t = 3.61; p = .001) between managers/supervisors responses (x = 1.43; std. = .473) and employees (x = 1.81; std. = 6.27). Yet what is perhaps most striking here is the anticipated responses of the managers, Ric and Tim, who worked most directly with operations, anticipated that employees and managers would score much lower when indicating a sense of identification with MI. Both Ric and Tim
anticipated a mean of 3.0 for managers and 4.0 for employees. The actual mean was a considerably higher 1.4 for managers/supervisors and 1.8 for employees.

When asked to measure sense of personal impact, effectiveness, and contribution to the organization, the overall mean score was also one of the highest (x = 1.870; std. = .592). Both employees (x = 1.83; std. = 5.74) and managers (x = 1.87; std. = .592) noted this rather high on the scale. Yet again, the four top managers anticipated that respondents would not consider themselves as impactful or effective (see Table 1). Significantly both operations managers predicted a mean of 4.0 for managers, which signifies on this scale that managers would report they feel very little impact and effectiveness in their contributions to MI. They predicted that employees would report an average mean of 5.0, which would mean they feel they would score “not at all” when asked about their sense of impact and effectiveness.

A somewhat similar discrepancy appears regarding the scale which asks respondents about their desire to be more impactful and would like the chance to improve things at MI. Three of the four top managers predicted that employees would on the average respond “very little” when asked if they want to be more impactful (x = 4.01). In fact the actual response for employees was considerably higher (x = 1.60; std. = .719), showing on average employees responded between “to a great extent” and “quite a bit” when asked if they desire to be more impactful.

There were other noted discrepancies in the managers’ anticipation of employees’ attitudes, but these scales stood out as
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the most significant. Again, if we follow the hermeneutic philosophy that all knowledge is prejudicial and based on an anticipatory stance, we can see that a few of the top managers are prepared to see employees and managers as considerably unattached to the organization, as feeling alienated, disaffected, and unmotivated to change their condition. One would suspect that they have developed an interpretive schema that prepares them to notice the deficiencies in employee actions. In point of fact the discourse that followed the presentation of these findings revealed just that.

Presentation of Survey and Managers' Denial

As the table in the appendix indicates, 85% of the respondents indicated that their work is an important contribution to The Medic Inn; 90% have a desire to be more impactfull and effective in their jobs. This was not congruent with managers' expectations. Initial responses were indicated by their surprise.

1 Festus: I can't believe they think they're doing a good job.

2 Tim: There must be a supervisor problem if they think this is good enough.

4 Ric: I know this can't be right. I just can't believe that they truly feel this. They don't care. They don't care about the jons, how filthy they are. How dirty the floors are.

8 Tim: The other day I had this girl who was so rude to a customer. You mean to tell me that they want to be more effective in their jobs and want the chance to advance? They don't even know how to treat customers.

14 Karl: How can they say they're proud of the organization? They don't know the goals. They don't know what they're supposed to do in their jobs.
17 Tim: I can't understand how they think they're doing good work and they're not.

19 Ric: How can they say this is a good place to work? They don't care about how they do their jobs. They don't even keep their restrooms clean.

22 Tim: All these good things, but I can't get the spark to motivate them to satisfy the guests. They must not know they're doin' a bad job. We need to tell them what we expect of them.

(October 1984, #1)

As this discourse reveals, this group was unprepared to see employees as proud of their work or desiring to be more effective. This discourse is more a series of monologues than a dialogue. Members were almost talking out loud to themselves, a common phenomena when one meets obstacles (Vygotsky, 1962). There is no shortage of evidence to support the schema of employees as untrained and incompetent. Details come easily to consciousness. Ric cites as evidence the dirty condition of the jons, and the dirty floors; Tim recalls an example of a waitress being rude to a customer; Karl makes an assertion about employee ignorance of goals; Tim concludes that they simply lack awareness of how bad their work really is and insinuates they need to be taught and trained more properly. Recalling the perseverance effect of schemas, this group holds onto their judgments of employees. Even though the survey data is inconsistent with their judgments, they recall details from the original impression and reinforce this recall in each other as they continue to converse. The irony is striking. Although employees seem to have expressed a sense of pride and willingness to expand responsibility, these directors close their discourse with language that has almost a punishing tone. They conclude not that this is an opportunity to
"tap into" employee potential, but that there must be a supervisor problem if employees think that their work is adequate.

As the group met on a weekly basis, resistance to the data continued for the next two meetings. Their disbelief became increasingly hardened. The validity of the statistics were challenged and at one point, they concluded that the sampling was biased.

Karl: These numbers are wrong. 160 employees took the survey, but the 100 apathetic employees who did not take the survey are so apathetic they didn't show up.

Ric: It's much more negative than these numbers say.

The group continued to deny that employees should feel pride in the organization, and at one point, one of the directors put it most bluntly: "You don't get it. These employees are black trash. You can go out on the street and find a replacement at any minute. They come and go. There's no requirements."

They were challenging the form of the data—hard quantitative, numbers, seemingly indisputable and subject to no interpretation. After three long meetings, the group was still engaged in arguing the validity of the data. At the next meeting, I decided to try and convert the "findings" into another form, a form that would invite interpretation. I translated the data into 14 short, "wish" statements and I asked them to assume that each of these statements were true. This was an attempt to activate "as if," fictional thinking, to suspend the disbelief in the counter-intuitive numerical data that triggered continued resistance, and to simply imagine that these subjunctive statements were true:

1. Employees are proud to be associated with Metro Medic Foundation.
2. Employees want The Medic Inn to have a good reputation.
3. Employees want guests to be satisfied and impressed.
4. Employees feel that their work can have impact on the organization.
5. Employees would like the chance to improve things here.
6. They would like the chance to be promoted.
7. Employees like it when they can talk openly to their supervisors and management.
8. They would like to be appreciated.
9. They would like to see more consistency in The Medic Inn policies.
10. Employees would like to know the reasons behind management decisions.
11. They would like to know more about what is expected of them.
12. They would like a clearer understanding of rules and procedures.
13. They would like fair pay and better benefits.
14. They hope for clear communication and direction from management.

Following Bruner (1987), subjunctive statements are more likely to trigger connotative meanings than literal, logical statements. The quantitative data continued to trigger resistance, so it was hypothesized that these "wish" statements would be more effective in triggering the imagining of possible worlds.

**Managers' Struggle to Engage in Expansive, Subjunctive Thought**

After posting these 14 statements, the following discourse ensued.
Frank (Consultant): Instead of fighting over numbers, let's imagine that these statements were true. I translated the data into 14 sentences. I would suggest we just pretend these are what employees are saying they want. And if it is true, what can we do about it? What actions can you take?

Karl F.: But they're not true. It's absolute bull shit.

(He stands up and walks to the flip chart with his pen and draws three big overlapping circles and points to each one as he talks.)

You have here the 50% or so who took the survey. Over here you have all the ones who didn't show up from the day shift to take the survey. And this here's the absentees, the night shift. You can base conclusions.

Frank: But what if they are true? Let's assume --

Karl: You can't assume.

Frank: Then what action would you take based on these statements.

Karl: None.

Frank: Okay. Do nothing. (I write "do nothing" on the chart.) How about others? What actions might you take if it were true, for example, that employees are proud to be associated with this place?

Ric: Use the logo in more places. (Pause). Publish more promotional material about MMF.

(October 1984, No. 2)

I cite this passage as a cognitive breakthrough, as a moment when this group was able to imagine possible action beyond the interpretive schema of employees they had held onto. As this dialogue continued, the group went on to imagine 79 possible action steps, ranging from new reward programs for employees to managing a better relationship with MMF. Perhaps as they became more engaged with
imagining a different context, they could let go of previous schema of employees as incompetent and unmotivated. They prioritized possible actions into a list. The score on the left indicates the weighted priority:

12 Define mission.
9 Have in-house training programs.
9 Begin job evaluation programs.
8 Teach employees to react immediately.
5 Recognize outstanding employees.
3 Professionally prepared orientations for employees.
3 Trace causes of guest complaints.
3 Use review periods to view how employees react to guests.
3 Form task forces with employees to discuss issues.
3 Write job descriptions and document expectations.
1 Increase benefits.
1 Formal performance appraisal system.

This prioritized list of possible actions reveals something about the purpose-imbued horizon of potentialities (Heidegger, 1962) that this group could imagine, the forestructure of understanding that informs possible action. The first priority for the directors is to define the mission, a concern consistent with the themes outlined earlier. But what is most striking is the view of possible actions towards employees. Eight of the 11 remaining actions imagined reveal a monologic view of action in which I see myself as full of wisdom and the others as empty and waiting to be filled with my wisdom. Such suggestions as training employees, evaluating
employees, orienting employees, reflect this ontological stance. I will elaborate on this point momentarily.

Middle Managers' Debilitating Views of Employees

Eventually, the directors agreed to hold meetings to feedback data to managers and then employees. A series of five meetings were held. One of the committees that were formed from this process was the sanitation committee. Discussions revealed that managers and employees were concerned that not enough attention was paid to the cleanliness of the hotel. A group of managers and employees began to meet to discuss solutions to these issues. I would like to cite a segment of the discourse at one of these meetings to demonstrate the kind of thinking that members engaged in.

1 Bob: I saw trash on the floor near the lobby and I watched two people walk right by it. Finally I went and picked it up myself.

4 Fred: They take clothes and throw them on the floor.

5 Tim: I think most of it is happening at night. People leave cups half-filled all around with cigarette butts. There’s no supervision at night.

9 Fred: They need trained supervision.

10 Mike: I know the way management probably thinks-- why give them anything, they’ll just destroy it? Why give them a cafeteria or clean restrooms? They just dirty them.

14 Ric: Maybe this group should meet every month and closely inspect an area and rate it. Then publish it in one of the monthly newspapers.

(January 1985)

In the exchange, we see that negative details regarding the nature of the problem begin to trigger more negative details. Bob mentions
seeing trash on the floor, which apparently triggers Fred and Tim to recall corroborating evidence when they witnessed clothes and half-filled cups on the floor. This schema of employees-as-dirty begins to accumulate evidence. The highlighting of such evidence begs for a causal explanation and Tim offers one: employees lack supervision at night. The range of possible action is constrained by this conversation. Given the concrete details and explanations elicited thus far, one can only imagine a certain range of solutions for these "dirty" employees who leave "messes" around. Again, Fred's solution is to train supervisors to direct employees. Mike offers a metacognitive insight, an insight into the conditions that lead to managerial perceptions, one that appreciates the cyclical nature of the attribution trap: because employees appear dirty and irresponsible, management feels they shouldn't be given anything that they could be careless with and destroy. Ric offers an action solution that flows from the interpretations: each area can be inspected and rated, and evaluated publicly in the newspaper.

As this example shows, group discourse proceeds as a series of triggers that then delimit a range of possible solutions. Because most of the concrete examples cited to trigger the interpretive schema are negative, the solutions imagined are punitive. In a sense, the schematic diagram for the discourse looks something like this:

**Concrete Actions Cited:** trash, dirt, associated with employees.

**Causal Explanation:** employees are careless and walk right by.
ANTICIPATED EFFECTS OF ACTION: if we give them things, they will ruin them.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS/SOLUTIONS: train supervisors to direct them; publish offenders’ names in paper.

Give the evolution of this horizon of possible meaning, the group is creating pre-understandings and forestructures which will guide them to pre-select details that will reinforce a debilitating perception of employees. Hopefully, it is becoming clearer how interaction and discourse precede individual cognition by defining a possible context within which to select perceptions.

Frustrations with Working as a Group

Because of Dan Gass’ request to enlist the directors’ assistance in creating a business plan, and the continuing decisions regarding how to feedback data from the survey, the directors were required for the first time to meet and decide as a group. Never having to deliberate and make decisions that require negotiation, they frequently get stuck and frustrated and don’t hold each other’s perspectives very well. The ability to create an idea, consider it, and build on it is lacking at this point. They frequently engage in withdrawal behavior—escaping into humor and cynicism, or frustration and absence. I would like to cite one meeting as an example of the limited range of idea-building that the group is capable of. This meeting was scheduled to discuss the continuation of the feedback process that had begun a few weeks earlier. Two of the four members arrive 15 minutes late to Karl’s office. When all four finally
arrive, they begin to discuss whether or not to create a steering committee to continue the feedback process and the formation of task forces.

1 Tim: So we were talking about a steering committee.
2 They voted themselves out of office I heard.
3 Festus: The chairman copped an attitude. Do we need a steering committee?
4 Ric: The last meeting we had was for two hours to decide whether to continue feedback or not.
5 Karl: Then on March 1, we went back to them.
6 Ric: We agreed the number one thing was to get a mission, to get direction. Do we have that?
7 Tim: We have movement.
8 Festus: He (points to Karl) keeps these sheets in the bathroom. He uses one sheet a day.
9 Karl: We came up with a list of priorities on February 13. Do we want to continue to work on them?
10 Tim: We should and the rest of the movement can continue in committees.
11 Tim: By the way the newspaper committee wants to take photos of the four of us. Everybody wear a decent tie.
12 Karl: Basically, there wasn’t a lot of energy in the feedback group. Florence is tired of committees.
13 Festus: What are we attempting to steer?
14 Karl: The whole process.
15 Ric: We have a feedback committee. Aren’t they in charge of the feedback process?
16 Tim: With five committees in motion now, I thought the steering committee would initiate another five.
17 Ric: I thought we’d come back to the group.
18 Festus: What would be the purpose of the steering committee then?
Karl: Progress reports every Friday. Just be a resource available.

Festus: I thought we had a chairman handling the projects.

Karl: Finding decisions. Maybe we don’t need a steering committee.

Tim: Maybe not. When the group is finished with projects, just report back.

Festus: On the question of budgets, what can and can’t we do.

Karl: Here we are. It’s our budget.

Festus: I’m hit with questions about what’s in our budget. The newsletter we hadn’t budgeted for.

Karl: How’s that committee gonna get funded?

Ric: There are certain things on this list that need to get answered. Some of these can be handled by a group. It’s going to take a long time.

Festus: What’s your suggestion?

Ric: Pick someone to work on these. Get a consultant.

Karl: You have to define what you need to tell them, what needs to get done.

Festus: It should be up to the group. We asked them what was important and now we’re getting a consultant to decide without asking them.

Karl: We’re hiring a 20 hour consultant from HR. He’ll do anything we want him to do.

Tim: Maybe not do everything we want.

Karl: Maybe not, but he can get started on some of these things.

Festus: Well, let’s combine their list and our list. Tell them an outside consultant is available. Tell them we have a consultant. Ask them their thoughts about what should be first to look at? Do I hear any yeahs? [No response]

That proposal hasn’t passed so it must be no. We need a new proposal.
66  Tim:  Fuck this.
67  Festus:  Is anybody listening?  What did I say Tim?
68  Tim:  I don't know.  Did you say anything important?
69  Festus:  We're lacking a strong chairman.  We have three
different viewpoints and no one to bring it
together.  We're lacking someone saying, "Yes,
that's a good idea, but we have to do it this way."

(February 1985)

Although the discussion continues, I would like to interrupt
with a few observations.  The meeting starts off with three cynical
comments questioning the purpose of having these discussions.  Even
Ric's comment which is the first to try to give historical placement
for the discussion, is tinged with a sense of cynicism, referring to
a two hour meeting to decide whether to continue feedback processes.
The question that guides the discussion strikes at the very purpose
of their meeting.  The question of how to include other managers in
the planning process and in making decisions about relevant projects,
is a question of boundary definition.  Questions of purpose quickly
arise, a continual groping:  "What are we attempting to steer?  . . .
Who should decide?  . . .  What would be the purpose of a steering
committee?  . . .  Shouldn't we have a chairman managing the process?"
These kinds of questions require a patience and suspension of prema-
ture closure and this is just what the group lacks.  While these
gropings require a seeking and consideration of multiple viewpoints,
these members are asking them as if they expect an answer, as if
someone is there who is going to give a pre-defined answer.  The
ensuing frustration demonstrates the nature of the search.  In this
sense, it can be said to be monologic.
There is a desire to get clarity of purpose, yet each person has a different concept of the purpose for the meetings and doesn't stop to modify his view by what the others say. Everyone is looking for a privileged author yet are unwilling to consider co-authorship. Ideas tentatively articulated and waiting for another to complete and validate, fall and are not responded to. In this sense the horizon of possible meanings is shrinking rather than expanding.

It is probably no accident that the topic of discussion is management of group discussions. It seems a symptom that they themselves have no script or schema for understanding how ideas evolve in groups. Suggestions begin to turn around the idea of managing the groups. Suggestions are monologic and push to closure prematurely. Questions of budget are raised. Ric suggests that a consultant be hired to manage the process, but immediately this triggers questions of purpose again. Festus objects that they can't hire a consultant to manage the committee's ideas because not all the ideas have surfaced yet. There is continued discussion about the feasibility of a consultant, yet no discussion about the premise of what a consultant would do. Finally, Festus proposes a compromise solution that involves both hiring a consultant and continuing to surface ideas from the group. Then he asks for consent. His method of asking for consensus is to call for a vote. Again, it appears to be premature closure on the discussion. Also, voting is a monological mode of discovering others' intents, since it allows for only two options— for or against. He receives no response, presumably because members are not yet ready to consent to this proposal. Communicative efforts quickly deteriorate as members acknowledge the
failure to perform meaning together. The final burst of frustration leads to a wish for a leader to make a decision.

The group has no schema for understanding group process. Ideas are tentatively proposed, but novelty is high and there is no forestructure of knowledge to grasp this notion of negotiating, dialoguing, searching for consent. Two factors stand out. First, there is no explicit discussion of the premises and assumptions that require this meeting. Also, although members appear to be dialoguing with each other, this interaction is predominantly monologic. Members apply the same assumptions to their activity in the group as they would to a single autocratic leader, waiting for an answer. The content of the discussion seems to reflect this. The script that seems to be emerging is that a steering committee needs to be formed to manage and control any discussions among employees and managers.

The discussion that continues reveals some of the frustration members feel and verifies the contention that they lack a "model" to understand this novel activity of groups making decisions.

1 Karl: This is all bull shit that we're doing.
2 Festus: It's a new problem. One year ago we didn't have committee decisions.
3 Festus: A year ago it was different. You'd bring us together to decide what to do.
4 Karl: A year ago my boss started to insist on group decision making among the four of us.
5 Festus: The final decision one year ago was Karl's.
6 Tim: Ain't that way no more.
7 Karl: I'm confused. We're confused about what the owner really wants. If we don't deliver his product, I'm out on the street. And I'm scared. A year ago I
had the leadership skills to make decisions. Now it's a group decision.

Festus: What can we do?

Karl: Just pick what kind of leadership style we go through—theory X or theory Y. We can go back to theory X, go back to a vertical organization chart and just decide for our own group. It used to be no one was on the hotel committee except me. We didn’t have to deal with a business plan of a group. I don’t have the techniques to deal with group decisions. I can deal with a straight leadership role.

Festus: Under the old theory X system, if we were to buy a business, we'd decide what kind of business we want to be in, and then just tell them to get it. But no one tells us. Now we have to meet as a group and everyone has veto power.

Karl: Under the old system, Ric would say, "I need to buy a bus for this reason." He could just go and buy it.

Festus: A year ago we'd have a proposal. It wasn't debated over and over. We slow down when we do this group process. It would be better if you were just a dictator.

Tim: I've been listening. It's 11:30. What did we accomplish? Nothing.

Ric: I think action walks and bull shit talks.

Karl: Okay, I'm the boss. This meeting is over.

(February 1985)

This conversation reflects the frustration members feel over a lack of a model that would guide them in understanding group decision making. They acknowledge that this experience is novelty, that they have no history, no experience in negotiating and using these negotiations as guides to future action. The popular labels "theory X" and "theory y" are the only linguistic handles that they have to grasp their experience.
The term "theory x" begins to be used as the label to denote autocratic, traditional management, the system they were used to operating under before they were required to operate as a group.

I'd like to include this section by drawing a few conclusions about the interpretive scheme of the group during this period.

(1) The thinking process of the group is predominantly critical rather than appreciative.

Kolb (1986) makes a distinction between critical knowledge and apprehension, knowledge which seeks to suspend judgment. As Gadamer (1979) pointed out, knowledge without judgement and prejudice is impossible. But authentic hermeneutic awareness is a dialogical understanding of deliberate intentional effort, one in which the subject anticipates achieving a new understanding of the object. In such an encounter with the object, the subject seeks to open her senses to what is new, expecting that the object is comprehensible. Gadamer's distinction of authentic hermeneutic understanding is similar to Kolb's (1986) sense of apprehension. Comprehensive understanding is a critical act and requires reflection and analysis. Such an objective posturing regards intuition and perception with suspicion. Unanticipated, surprising experiences and perceptions are to be regarded with partial skepticism, to be tested against past, personal knowledge. Apprehension is here-and-now perception. It is what Polanyi (1958) meant by tacit knowledge, intuitive knowledge not yet in an articulate, explicit form. It is marked not by a stance of critical distance, but by wonderment and immediacy of the senses.

Clearly this group at this point is in a state of critical, analytic thinking, greeting this new situation not with wonderment
and anticipation of something knowable, but with suspicion almost to the point of cynicism. The situation that confronts them is high in novelty. It appears they do not directly "apprehend" the situation with uncritical wonderment. Nor do they have an agreed upon name or model built up from previous experiences that could guide them in their efforts to satisfactorily "comprehend" what it means to work as a group towards creating a business plan for the hotel. Their discourse reinforces a symbolic consideration of routes of action that is critical and constricted (and constricting). They clearly do not perceive the novelty with wonderment and apprehension, open to the possibility that this challenge is comprehensible, as in Gadamer's (1979) notion of dialogical understanding. Their interpretive stance is critical and suspicious, as they continue to "read" signals as threats.

(2) The group had low tolerance for idea consideration and information complexity.

When engaged in discourse about how to devise possible actions, the group is impatient with suspension of finality and pushes for early closure on information processing. The proposals of new ideas are given limited consideration and information gathering is constricted. So, for example, when an idea is proposed by a member, there is an early push for a vote to achieve closure and finality on a consideration. Little value is placed on the search for consensus (Srivastva & Barrett, 1986) by surfacing multiple perceptions. What is valued is finality and univocality of understanding. This is manifest in expressions of frustration when answers are not provided, when proposed solutions do not engender agreement but spur further
interpretations. Multivocal interpretations are viewed as competing rather than enhancing and something to be eliminated.

(3) **Communicative action is predominantly strategic.**

Habermas (1981) notes that the original mode of language use is toward the reaching of understanding. Communicative action in the group is strategic (Habermas, 1981), that is, there is an orientation towards achieving success rather than reaching understanding. Communicative acts geared toward reaching understanding can only occur in a context that actively supports the uninhibited emergence of new understanding, the persistent triggering of possibility, and the anticipatory belief that the situation confronted is a comprehensible, possible future.

This is what Habermas had in mind when his notion of the "ideal speech situation" (Habermas, 1981). The ideal speech situation is one in which speech is geared toward its original and primary aim—reaching understanding. In such a situation members suspend judgement and strategic motives and subject themselves to the logic of discourse, and the willingness to achieve a rationally grounded agreement. Members are free to test the validity grounds of utterances. In this sense, this is a peculiarly unreal situation of institutionally unbound speech acts which rely on "recognizable and sincere willingness of the speaker" to enter an engagement and accept its obligations.

Communicative action in this group, however, is chiefly strategic in that speakers tend to take an orientation of successful persuasion. Speech acts are instrumental acts, spoken for purposes
other than the explicit meaning of what is said. Members do not assume, in their discourse, that others know what they are doing and saying, that others intentionally hold beliefs and pursue articulate goals, that others are capable of supporting their intentions with articulate reasons. Later they view each others' utterances with open suspicion. In that sense motives other than the desire to suspend judgement and achieve understanding intrude on discourse.

(4) Members are engaged in strategic self-presentations that include self-handicapping strategies and negative depictions of others.

There is a natural human tendency to arrange the circumstances of one's behavior to protect one's concept of one's self as competent. When one is faced with a situation that is perceived to be beyond one's competency and outside of one's mastery, there may be a tendency to engage in self-handicapping strategies to protect one's esteem (Baumeister, 1987). Self-handicapping involves presenting one's self or one's situation as unmasterable, intentionally presenting one's incompetence in facing a challenging situation, as if to say, "This situation is so complex, anyone would do poorly." Such strategies serve to lower others' expectations of one's performance and thus protect one's public esteem because anything except sub-par performance is a surprise.

The members of this group continually cite the negative conditions surrounding them—the unrealistic demands of MMF, the ignorance of Dan Gass, the incompetence of employees, etc. These attributions taken together, appear to present a debilitating ecological context and are strategic efforts to protect their sense of self-worth.
(5) **Members lack conceptual categories that would lead to the imagination of possible action.** The over-constriction on action that they experience threatens their sense of self-worth.

Negative cognitions, that is cognitions that fail to imagine possible routes of action, repeatedly get reproduced in discourse. This interpretive tendency appears to be contagious. That is, anxiety is contagious. Simply put, they lack conceptual categories, clarifying concepts that would clarify their situation, to make their internal representations match the outer world of things. Lacking a name or a concept that would allow the group to cognitively grasp the world and navigate through it with some adeptness, their range of action is over constricted. Their self-concepts are similarly constricted, as they lack a self-script to cognitively grasp their own creative contributions toward shaping the world. They lack experiences of creative contributions that involve them in owning events in the world. Similarly, their projections about employees, demonstrated in their anticipated responses of employees on the survey, is that they too are alienated.

Marx's theory of alienation is relevant here, for it was Marx who recognized that alienation is the incapacity to see the fruits of one's labor in a world that appears not to be of human authorship. Man needs an object to transact with in the world and the failure to develop such transactional powers is a failure to develop active powers, the power to operate on the world, to **make something.** In this sense the opposite of alienation, **self-worth,** is the experience of seeing one's own authorship in the world, **even when others don't.** In the case of this group, they not only don't see their authorship, but others see it for them. Dan Gass remained puzzled at the group's
silence and passivity when invited to engage in planning. A sense of self-worth means the human animal has a cognitive grasp of her co-authorship in the world, can form a script which imagines active control and personal investment. Man has a need for a sense of fulfillment, a need to believe that life has a deep and unfolding meaningfulness. As Fourier (in Becker, 1968) contended, man needs conviction. It is man who imparts meanings and significance on an otherwise neutral, strange world (Becker, 1968).

Without a horizon of purpose—imbued objects in which they can see their own purpose-making, there is a lack of self-worth in this group in that the range of satisfying behaviors is constricted. As Beck wrote of this phenomena:

Man needs to feel good about himself when he can address himself to a dependable range of objects for his satisfactions, and when he has firm command of the rules or behaviors for negotiating with those objects (Becker, 1968, p. 157).

In order to move about in a world of things, man must be able to label them verbally in order to feel a sense of control, of purpose-creation. The dilemma is, of course, when words are not available, there is no way to cognitively frame the problem. With no label, no cognitive frame, there are no dependable behaviors. Again Becker's definition of depression is relevant here. Depression occurs when the individual slows down, operating uncritically in a narrow range of objects. It is a cognitive problem because the individual lacks schemas and ways to frame problems with an appropriate critical vocabulary and gives up in defeat. "Depression," he writes, "is a problem of behavioral stupidity" (Becker, 1968, p. 162).
Under such conditions, pessimism, negative cognition is contagious. Optimism, as Hocking noted (Becker, 1986, p. 165) is not possible unless man can grasp the world as a unity and view the flow of history from a cognitively commanding perspective. Optimism and conviction require that man develop imaginatively guiding concepts.

Fomans' own words were indicative of the problem of cognitive grasp, of some internal model of mastery, when he said, "I just don't know how to do this. I have no skills to lead in a Theory Y fashion." The label "Theory Y" was a word from popular management literature, something the Japanese did, but not something relevant to this group. It was the closest he could come to giving a name to the novel demands that pulled him.

(6) **Speech is predominantly monologic and egocentric, as members have difficulty considering other perspectives.**

During group meetings, discourse was not characterized by members' holding each other's perspectives and responding in a dialogical fashion (Srivastva & Barrett, 1988). Interaction was for the most part monologic and disconnected and some meetings seemed to reflect Piaget's (1923) notion of egocentric speech. Children engage in egocentric speech around the ages of 4-6. It is chiefly "speech for oneself," and reflects a stage of pre-operational thought. Frequently members engaged in rigidity of thought, often in the form of centration, the tendency to attend to or think about one salient feature of an object or a topic and ignore other features. In conversations, members demonstrated a hesitancy to hold each other's view imaginatively for very long periods. This is related, also, to the tendency to stop information seeking in an effort to achieve
closure on a problem. This is the essence of monologic thought--the push for unilateral mandate or decision rather than valuing the emergence of multiple perspectives.
CHAPTER V

"A SPLIT HOME WITH NO LEADER"

FEBRUARY 1985 - FEBRUARY 1986

The "feedback" sessions and brainstorming sessions with employees continued into February 1985. The five committees that were formed from these sessions continued to meet weekly. The recognition committee received the most support and of all the committees is the only one that continues to the present day.

Continued Passivity and Incredulity

Weekly meetings to put together a business plan continued. Although Gass intermittently would reassure Fomans that the Board of Trustees would financially support the plan to align MI with the MMF image and serve luxury guests as well as patients, Fomans continued to express disbelief in the possibility such a project was feasible. Fomans even expressed a fear that he would be fired. This conversation took place on February 10, 1985 following a frustrating meeting with the group.

1  Fomans: MMF has not given us a vision.

2 Q. But the Board of Trustees is about to approve a business plan for MI.

4 Fomans: I don’t trust it. It’s the boss’s plan. He keeps calling to get new numbers. That shows how insecure it is. It’s a game he keeps re-writing.

7 Q. What will the Board have to do to prove to you that they accept the business plan that says they will eat
the loss of MI and allow you to move on with busi-
ness?

Fomans: Nothing. It will just be a cost decision and they'll
keep spending it until someday they'll say -- 'This
has gotten out of hand' -- and I'll be gone.

(February 1985)

This posture of suspicion and disbelief persevered. It was
around this time that Tim Rils introduced a concept that invited
members to understand what kind of hotel MMF was calling for. Recall
that it was in the summer of 1984 that Rils moved to Metroland from
North Carolina to assume the position of Assistant Director of Hotel
Operations. After a number of years in various Food and Beverage
positions, he had been consulting to hotels and restaurants. In fact,
when the idea of beginning to upgrade the top floor of MI was first
proposed, Rils was hired as a consultant for the project.

Introduction of the Term "4 Star"

Rils was not as disenchanted with the business plan meetings as
the other directors, although he acknowledged their frustrations.
Perhaps he did not express as much disbelief in MMF's message (as
articulated by Gass) because he had a very short history with MMF.
He was not there through the repeated managerial changes, through the
hiring and termination of Keller Corporation as the hotel management
company. He did not have a strong relationship with the hotel
committee and therefore did not experience anxiety around the
termination of a trusting relationship like Fomans did.

Further, Rils had had experience in working in upper-class
hotel complexes. He had been a director of a four-star property and
had consulted to other properties that were just beginning operations.

It was around this period that Rils began to "translate" the mandate he heard from Gass and the business plan meetings into a familiar language. He introduced the concept of "four-star property." Again, Gass readily admitted that he had no background in the hotel business. He needed this group of directors to help write a viable business plan, to provide the "nuts and bolts" of the mission. Thus, when Rils proposed that the MI seek to become a four-star property, there was no immediate objection. I say "immediate" because eventually competing interpretations were to surface. But the idea of "four star" was the first attempt to propose a concept that would guide the directors' understanding of what was being asked of them, in hotel language.

Literally, the granting of stars refers to a rating label bestowed by travel services when they publish rankings hotels and restaurants around the country." Agents working for travel services, such as Mobile Guide, visit the properties and inspect the physical facilities, locations, service, etc. The label "four star" is the highest rating granted and applies only to the most elegant service facilities.

As the planning meetings continued, members (especially Festus, Fomans, Rils, and Gass) began to use the label "four star service" to refer to the image of what was being proposed. Rils had provided a forestructure of understanding, a model to help understand novelty. Slowly, others began to use the term. Even though other managers did not have the experience of working in a four-star restaurant, they
began to use the term, in a sense to "rent" the word that began to
take on conceptual meaning as new connotations resonated. I say
"rent" the term because they did not fully understand what Mobile
means by four star, but the term grasped towards a possible image.
In fact, it is interesting that as talk of commitment to a "four
star" goal was discussed later, the phrase "buy into" was usually
closely associated with it. So the metaphor of renting before buying
is not inappropriate. Following Vygotsky (1962), new knowledge is
tool-mediated and the mediating tool is language.

Members' Readiness to Accept 4 Star Concept

By February 1985, Rils was content in his interpretation of
Gass' and MMF's intents. What was crucial here was the transfor-
mation in belief. He was the first of the group to believe that MMF
was serious about supporting a plan that others were convinced was
doomed. Again, this recalls the close association between belief and
knowledge. His generation of an interpretation to understand the
plan, manifest in putting forth a concept to attempt to fit the
business plan, is predicated on the belief that MMF's gestures are
authentic. Again, recall Gadamer's notion of authentic dialogical
understanding as regarding the anticipation of comprehension. It is
first an act of belief. As Polanyi writes, "Belief is the source of
all knowledge," (Polanyi, 1958, p. 266). On February 20, 1985, Tim
Rils had this to say,

I'm excited. What they're saying they want is four star ser-
vice, they want to make this a high class placed. I'm com-
mitted to making that happen. I plan to start talking about
reconstructing our restaurant service, our room service will be
increased.
The developing optimism and expansive thinking in Rils's remarks are evident in his imaginative construction of possible new action, new endeavors. Keep in mind, this conversation was just a few days after the one with Fomans in which he expressed a fear of being fired. The presence or lack of belief in the other's authenticity has tremendous consequences for one's cognitive horizon of possible acting and therefore one's self worth. When one believes in another's authenticity, one's own horizon and image-projecting capacity expands.

The possibility of new action depends on a subtle change in belief which then allows for an appreciative apprehension of tacit dimensions previously unnoticed. When this change in beliefs is accompanied by a sense of destiny, conviction and passion ensue (see Fourier in Becker, 1968). Thus conviction and passion are indispensable to the development of new knowledge and the initiation of radically new action. To continue, this belief and sense of destiny requires the anticipation of a like-minded community that resonates with the vision. With the introduction of the new beliefs and new actions, one imaginatively anticipates consequences on others who will benefit (or suffer from, or participate in) this new course. Beliefs and convictions require an other(s). Therefore it was not surprising when Rils's language began to catch on. The theme of destiny—an imagined vibrant future—is crucial to the contagion of facilitating concepts. This makes for an alluring idea, a mental virus of sorts. I will return to this point momentarily.

In May of 1985, the Board of Trustees approved the business plan. The plan called for not only creating an up-scale property, but also building lower rent, efficiency units across the street from
MMF. New construction began on the lobby and the top two floors (16th and 17th) in May. The lobby was tripled in size, new elegant walls and ceilings were built, expensive furniture—couches, oak tables replaced a few torn couches. A glass enclosed fireplace was built in the middle of the lobby. Chandeliers replaced the old lighting system. A grand piano graced the middle of the room and every evening from 5-7 p.m. a jazz duo (piano and bass) performed for guests while an elegant "high tea" was served.

A similar reconstruction began on the 16th and 17th floors. Rooms were converted into elegant suites, including two bedrooms, two bathrooms, one small lobby, a kitchenette, and one large dining room per suite. Oak bookshelves were built into the walls. Oak tables, chairs and bed frames with thick carpet and matching drapes gave the suites an air of royalty.

The Board of Trustees' approval to finance the reconstruction at a cost of $3.5 million and the physical transformation of the old MI into a more elegant facility was still not enough to convince everyone. At this point I would like to outline the different interpretations that evolved regarding the idea of "four star."

In essence, Tim and the managers in F&B were moved by this notion of four star hotel. It must be added that within the first three months, Rils recruited two managers who he had previously worked with to help create four star service. So their explicit marching orders were to help create a four star hotel. There was a considerable degree of excitement about the perceived changes in the hotel. This dim awareness of the possibility of a transformation was triggered not only by seeing the physical reconstruction of the
hotel, but also by the language. For these members, the words "four star" became a code that reverberated with excitement and a sense of possibility. It was a facilitating concept that pulled them to reframe many acts in terms of a sense of destiny, infused with a dim awareness of a utopia.

Thus, in the summer of 1985, many managers mostly from the F&B department, spoke with passion regarding the changes they were witnessing, evidenced in the excitement in their language. One F&B manager reported:

I thought it was all talk, but they know what they want and they’re doing it. They’re really making the 17th floor a penthouse. I really want to make this a beautiful place now. Maybe we can have a glass elevator and classy stuff like that.

(June 1985)

Others echo similar sentiments:

Really this place has become beautiful. It’s a nice place to work. I feel I’ve been treated special. This organization is trying to be first class.

The personnel we’re hiring here is really starting to change. Much more profession. They’re investing money in their appearance. Things are on the upswing.

Actually, I don’t want to be a four star hotel. I want to be better. I want to be a five star hotel.

(June 1985)

The cognitive-ecology of this hotel was ripe with a readiness to form this image of four starness, the equivalent of excellence that MMF attained in the medical industry. The dim awareness of the possible image is expressed in metaphorical language, comparing the MI to MMF. The following Sivastra and Barrett (1988) metaphor expresses dim ideas that are not yet clear enough to express in
denotative language. The language here is testimony to the members' struggle with novelty.

(1) I'd like to see MI become as renowned in the hotel field as MMF is in the medical field. This place can really have status. We can cater to the medical community. We can be a showcase for Metroland.

(2) We will make this the best hotel in Metroland. We will be in the area of hotels what MMF is in the medical side.

For the managers in the F&B department, the concept of a four star hotel began to allow people to imagine the possibility of meaningful action, an antidote to the previous sense of constriction and stuckness. The image of excellence "matched" the excellent image of MMF—the medical organization with which they were so closely aligned. This "sudden" talk of excellence offset feelings of organizational inferiority in regards to MMF. Cognitively, there was a readiness to form an image of excellence that would match the ecological surroundings.

There are moments within a social systems, when members' experience of having their expectations surpassed, that belief in what is possible becomes unlimited. There is a sense of unlimited expansiveness in this and other remarks, the sense that once ignited, this effusive belief in what is possible, at least for a moment, knows no limits. Even a goal of four star is inadequate.

Search for Calculus for Action to Realize Image

Accompanying this sense of excitement, however, was a sense of unclarity about what it means to be a four star, what new actions are called for to make this happen. There was no calculus to follow the metaphor. Clearly, what was occurring during the summer of 1985, was
that members were beginning to define a concept, to collectively form an image. It began with a dim awareness on a horizon of possibility, as these quotes indicated. As people began to cognitively search for a calculus for action, they had no model, no explicit knowledge.

In the last six months, this place has really changed. It looks a lot better. But the definition of this four star is not clear. They want things to be better, but there's no formula. There's more excitement about being the best hotel, but I'm not exactly sure how we're going to do it. But I'm excited. I know we can be the best hotel around.

(July 1985)

He is convinced by physical evidence that something is changing in the hotel, there is acknowledgement in the excitement, the desire to improve, to be a four star, high quality hotel, but there is a lack of clarity about behavioral acts, about what can be done differently to make it a four star. As he puts it, he "lacks a formula." The sense of "not exactly being sure how to do it" is followed quickly by the excitement of the possibility that it will happen, that it will become excellent.

These cognitive searches for new action involve elementary steps of clarity. Early in the life of this idea, therefore, much discourse evolved around examples where four starness did not exist. Discourse swung between a effusive excitement in possibility, and negative examples, that is citing disappointing incidents that almost had a punishing tone. This theme would become even more pronounced later.

When people spoke of the excitement and allure of becoming a four star hotel, many eventually were drawn to call attention to the many areas in which the hotel was not four star. A concept gains
clarity by calling attention to its opposite, by noting non-concept incidences.

(1) We have a great physical plant. But we’ll be all dressed up with no place to go. We have to get the employee side up to par. People need to believe in four star. I’m excited we have a start.

Q. What keeps you working here?

A. Planning for the future. The potential for this hotel keeps me excited. There’s a potential that this hotel can really shine in Metroland. I want to see it become four star!

(2) I really love this place. We really want to make this the best hotel in Metroland. Of course we need to be professional. It won’t happen if the bell staff doesn’t improve. It’s not right to see them leaning on the desk, half-dressed. You don’t ask if the guests want their luggage picked up—you just go and get it.

(July 1985)

They acknowledged a high degree of uncertainty in regards to how to create a four star hotel. While holding onto the belief in the possibility of a positive, open, malleable future, they begin to struggle with a critical, problem orientation, citing shortcomings and difficulties.

By August, no noticeable changes had begun. The restaurants were refurbished and redecorated. The kitchen and food service was enhanced and the menu began to reflect a higher level of food service. Plans were made to begin building a four star restaurant on the property. Restaurant managers began initiating training programs for waiters and waitresses.
Where the Image Did Not "Catch On"

As previously mentioned, not all directors and their respective departments, responded with the same level of enthusiasm, the same belief in the possibility of the image of excellence. In fact, Rils was for at least this period from February 1985 to February 1986, the most enthusiastic actor. Meers' thinking was much more cautious. He had been working at MI for two and a half years, prior to which he had worked in a road-side hotel. He had never worked in a four star property. Also, Ric had never fully understood why Tim was hired as Director of F&B and did not report to him directly. This is usually the case in hotel management structures. Therefore, although he never directly attributed his slowness to this (in fact, he never acknowledged his slowness), this competitive situation almost surely played a part in the future power struggles. His lack of expressed enthusiasm during this period was noticed by almost every significant figure who worked at MI. Eventually, his slowness in this movement would become legendary. In August of 1985, after the Board approved the Business Plan, Dan Gass had this to say:

There's been a change in the group, a remarkable change. Tim's group really seems to be catching on. But I don't know about Ric. He doesn't seem to be getting it. He just sits there in meetings and says nothing. It looks like the physical side is done. It looks beautiful—consistent with MMF's image. I think even they are surprised. The image is completely different. Now the personnel needs to be four star too. F&B plans seem clear. They're really taking off. They're molding it into a four star service. I'm concerned about the lodging side. Ric doesn't seem to have the same vision. He seems limited. His managers don't seem to be as concerned with upgrading the quality.

When asked about the changes that were occurring at MI, Ric repeatedly cited evidence why MI could not become four star. He
cited the present low to middle income patient population as evidence that a four star hotel would not meet their needs. Similarly, he repeatedly cited the present employee population and their lack of skill and training, as evidence that four star service could not happen here. He notes small details that need to be attended, and feels anxious that they are being overlooked. His preoccupation with concrete, stubborn details keeps him from forming an abstract concept of 4 starness.

A lot of people think you just become four star over-
night. But it takes time. You can’t just rush into it.
Changing things takes a long time. There’s only one way to do
it I know of—the rote method. Daily dosages of “this is what
you have to do” all the way down the line. It takes consistent
effort. Like the employee entrance and the corridor look like
hell. How can they leave it like that? The back dock, the
lobby, there’s stuff on the floor. It takes a long time for
people to behave differently. We build a nice new beautiful
ballroom and there’s a piece of chicken on the floor from
yesterday’s banquet. I expect that kind of stuff to happen for
a long time.

Q. What’s the last year been like?

A. It’s chaos. We’re moving way too quickly. It’s like
Disney World. Now Disney World is a four star operation.
West Lake Park is only a two star. It’s not something
that happens overnight. There’s a lot of thought, a lot
of dreams, meetings, discussions, training, recruiting,
needed to create Disneyland. It probably took 20 years.

Q. What’s happening too fast?

A. One and a half years ago our clientele ranged from princes
to paupers, with an emphasis on serving the paupers. Then
there was a shift. Our main guest was still a pauper, but
we’re trying to be a two or three star operation. It’s
difficult to explain, the main emphasis seemed to become
emphasizing service, not the bottom line. But this trans-
formation is a problem. You don’t get to be four star in
twelve months. Like these renovations and lobby expan-
sions. There’s Disney World and there’s other amusement
parks like King Park and West Lake. They all pay atten-
tion to a different amount of detail. In Disney World
nothing gets overlooked. To do a major renovation in five
months—how much time do you have to think about details?
Where should the speakers be? Do we need receptacles in certain places? All those things get overlooked. Now we have a package that isn't finished. With the appropriate time we could have done something about the details. We all want to do the right thing to make this four star, but because everything's happening so quickly, there's four or five people running around with their own ideas, trying to implement their own things. The left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. There's a duplication of effort, details being overlooked. This could make a major difference in the big picture.

(August 1985)

Competing interpretations Emerge:
"The Split"

By October of 1985, it was becoming clear that there were two different interpretations emerging in regard to MI’s future and two different prescriptions for action. Managers from both departments began to cite examples of divisive, frozen action. Eventually the perceived “split” went beyond just Ric and Tim and infiltrated down to their managers.

During the period of “gestation,” a few of the F&B managers had conceived a few new ideas which would require support and cooperation from the Rooms division. Ric, however, was slow to respond. For example, one of the F&B managers who worked on weekends noticed that many guest complaints had no “final manager” to whom they could be directed. After witnessing this a few times, he proposed a Manager on Duty program, in which the managers would rotate and serve as the Resident Manager on various weekends. The hotel where he previously worked had successfully instituted such a program. Ric was perceived as not responsive to the idea. This is testimony to the social cognitive nature of awareness. Among F&B managers, even those who had little or no direct contact with Ric, this script of “Ric as
"slow" and "Ric as a block" was proliferating. A few of the F&B managers cited this and other examples as evidence of a split:

(1) We had this idea to initiate a Manager on Duty program. It means someone is here 24 hours a day, looking over things. But it got no support from Ric. There's other things too. His Bell Stand is sloppy, the front desk is sloppy. I don't know what's going on, but he seems to be holding things back. It seems like he won't support it if it's someone else's idea and not his.

(2) I'd like to see more cooperation between the two departments (Rooms and F&B). The top four get into inter-warfare and it interferes with decision making process.

Q. Do you have an example?

A. The Manager on Duty program. We didn't have manager on duty here on weekends. There was a proposal to start this program to have managers on duty. The impetus for it came from Tim and the middle managers. Ric just hasn't shown any interest. There's definitely a problem. There's a split between Rooms and F&B. The split goes all the way down. I can't go over to the front desk to talk to Joan. I have a hard time mentioning things to her.

Q. Well what needs to happen?

A. I'd like to see less rivalry between Rooms and F&B. There needs to be a commitment to make this the best hotel in the business.

Among F&B managers, evidence seemed to quickly accumulate against Ric. It was more than ironic, I think, that most of the F&B managers echoed Tim's feelings for Ric, citing similar examples and sometimes using the same language. In September, Tim began to make attributions about Ric's lack of quality standards, saying at one point that he "he doesn't even belong in the hotel business."

You have to set up standards. Ric's standards of what a hotel should be and my standards are completely different. Once he said to me, "The most important things to me are the employees and the guest complaints." For me, you try to have the staff caring so much that there are no complaints. You anticipate the guests' needs. His standards are different. His people at the front desk are half in, half out of uniform. That's some
standard. How will this place be four star like that? I’ve written him off. I don’t even want his home phone number.

By the end of October, among F&B managers the "split" began to be attributed to a personality conflict between Ric and Tim. Again, accounts of Ric as "the one who procrastinates" proliferated.

(1) There’s a division between Ric and Tim. Tim says a thing and Ric will turn around and say something different. Like this Playhouse thing. It’s a great idea. It’s the kind of business we need to generate to become four star. The actors will use our hotel and we’ll get free advertising at a low cost. The next day after we talked about it at a meeting, Ric says, "I don’t like it." Why? Because I think it wasn’t his idea and Tim was pushing it.

(2) Ric and Tim have a problem with each other. Tim has the drive to become four star. Ric doesn’t. He procrastinates. We were supposed to order glasses and Ric ripped up the purchase order. We decided to get equipment for the new cafeteria and nothing’s happened. Ric said he’s waiting for the price to go down. Typical Ric.

By October and November, there began to be a sense of turfism among departments. Managers from F&B spoke of an over-sensitivity to boundaries to Rooms managers, areas. The perceived "split" began to expand beyond Ric and Tim.

(1) There’s a real lack of definition of lines of authority. There’s a split between the two departments. On decisions I can’t get consensus. It’s not just the top, it’s the middle group too. If I see something in Joan’s department, I can’t go talk to her about it.

(2) It feels like three out of the four of us have a good team effort toward a goal. But not Ric. He’s not picking up on the team idea. He’s a kickback to the old dictator school. I want him to be part of our team. But lately I avoid him. He’s unapproachable. I try to say things and he feels like I’m picking on him.

(3) Ric’s people are touchy too. Felicia is totally unapproachable. She abuses people. Roy (one of Tim’s managers) went to tell her something about her area and she yelled at him in public. She told him to go rotate on it.
A few of the managers in Ric's department especially Felicia, the head of housekeeping, were seen as unapproachable. Stories were circulated that when an F&B manager would approach her with a concern, or a request, she would shut them off.

I wanted to put a picture of the new 17th floor in the newspaper so the employees could see it. A picture of Felicia and the housekeepers up there. She said no--no one was allowed up there because they'd dirty it.

As this sense of "split" continued and stories of indecisiveness continued, members began to complain that there was a lack of clear leadership. Members began to wonder why there appeared to be a leadership vacuum.

(1) I wish we had some leadership around here. The top four get into inter-warfare and it interferes with the decision-making process. I suggested this Masters in Organizational Development program. The impetus for that came from the middle managers, not the top. There's a vacuum. Ric hasn't shown any interest at all.

(2) We have two bosses instead of one--Ric and Tim. I wish there was more cooperation between the two side of the house.

(3) There needs to be a leader. Like this Playhouse thing. No one would make a decision.

**Leadership Vacuum**

Managers began to attribute blame to Fomans for a lack of clear signals.

(1) I'm confused by the way Fomans acts. It's hard to know if he's really involved or not. You scratch your head and wonder, "Who's the boss around here anyway. Can't someone make decisions?"

(2) This group needs a referee--somebody with the guts to say "you're out of line." I respect Karl. But a lot of the problems the last one and half years are because of his indecision. He won't correct things. For example, this personality conflict between Ric and Tim. That should have been resolved a long time ago.
During this period, Fomans' main concern was with management style. How this came about requires some explanation. What "pulled" Fomans was the idea of a participative systems of decision making. The idea of becoming four star, with the help of MMF subsidy did not inspire optimism in him. In fact he would continue for at least two more years to express doubts and fears about the venture, specifically the fear that MMF would eventually stop subsidizing MI and he would lose this job. So, in October of 1985, Fomans had this to say:

I'm not on board with the Business Plan.

Q. Why not?

A. I've never read the plan. I helped put it together but this is Dan Gass's perception of what should happen to Beacon Square. We pretended with him. We don't believe in it. There's no way his rationale will work. The only thing we made an effort on was the Mission Statement. There was consensus there.

Now this was four months after MMF had approved the $3.5 million subsidy and the reconstruction had begun. Although he had trouble believing in the business plan, he did begin to pick up some of the language and concepts, the idea that MI needed to service upper-class guests.

Our mission statement is not easily communicable. If I could only get my vision inside each employee's head. The Clinic patient and family are most important customers. The rest of our business is smaller. Right now we have a whole range of patients. We have to have the ability to serve kings even though kings aren't always here. Maybe we need to segregate units -- have just the top three floors as penthouses. We don't know yet.

Of course, in a certain sense, Fomans' relative passivity on the four star issue was not fatal given Tim Rils's enthusiasm for the image. He continued to initiate changes in the F&B area and Fomans
did not stop him. He sometimes complained to me that Rils went too fast, but he rarely if ever tried to halt his initiatives.

Excitement for Concept of "Team"

Where Fomans did have new-found enthusiasm, however, was in the area of consensus decision making and the concept of "team." This came from a number of sources. As indicated previously, he felt inadequate in dealing with what he called "theory Y" management. When Dan Gass initiated planning sessions and invited all of Fomans' direct reports and asked them to think together about planning a future, he realized that a qualitatively different kind of leadership was being called for, different from any previous training he had received. At first he expressed fear about a loss of power that verged on paranoia. He would repeatedly state his fear that Gass took over his job, that the group of directors are doing his job. In some meetings, he would sit silent for long periods (I am not referring to Business Plan meetings, but to Directors' meetings in which Gass was absent).

His anxiety probably peaked in April/May of 1985. On April 23, he said to me:

The way things are going with all this participation, maybe I don't fit here anymore. Maybe it's time for me to go. Part of me is just afraid to change. I'm out on a limb. I'm out on a limb with Kosar and with Gass. If Gass' plan fails, I fail. I'm not protected.

His metaphorical expression "out on a limb" reflects his sense of himself as suspended and groping, not grounded with a solid conceptual scheme.
Two things happened that spurred Fomans towards creating a constructive image, one that gave him a dim awareness that it is possible to adopt a different kind of managerial thinking based on consensus decision making. First, in the spring of 1985, Fomans' wife took a course in Organizational Psychology at State University. She would frequently come home and talk about her new learning regarding group process and empowerment. Fomans would read her books, express curiosity about the ideas. Occasionally his wife's professor would cite MMF as an example of a large system that operates on consensus and an egalitarian ideology. He would report to me a sense of curiosity about "how this place functions according to Theory Y all the time--it's too big for that." In May of 1985, Fomans reported to me:

Mary (his wife) told me yesterday about an exercise she did in class with logo blocks. They had to put this thing together, but there was no authority, no boss. They had to just keep talking to her. "This thing really works," she said, "this idea about groups really works." Maybe I should take the course next year because I'll be damned if I believe it works.

More frequently, he began to use the analogy of "team" to describe what was needed to make him more comfortable in his role. "If there was a team here," he contended, "there would be more mutual respect, more shared responsibility."

Another series of incidents contributed to Fomans' developing a mental image for how the group should operate. When the Board of Trustees approved Beacon Square's business plan (including MI's subsidy), Fomans was an eye witness to MMF's decision making process. He had a few conversations with Dr. Kosar (CEO) and other physician administrators that began to open his eyes to the possibility that
systems can achieve excellence and maintain efficiency by operating on a consensus basis.

How do those guys do it? They keep the place running and nobody really runs it. They do things in teams and they're still the best in their industry.

Fomans was temporarily "caught" between a state of belief and disbelief. The idea of a collective group of experts working together to plan/run an organization was intriguing but still seemed impossible. He could dimly imagine the doctors operating under such a logic, but when he applied the image to a world class medical center, it did not seem to fit. Images of clash and indecision came to mind.

After the Board approved the plan, Fomans had a few conversations with Dr. Kosar, the director of MMF, about the consensus management that the physicians operate on. This was one of his first eye-witness contacts with MMF decision making. Fomans was intrigued when Kosar told him that he (Kosar) makes no decisions, it is committees and groups that make decisions. Fomans was intrigued with the image of a circle of experts who have the power to make decisions through negotiation and through informal exchange. He began to form an image of a consensus management style as possible within MI. In September of 1985, Fomans first began to articulate an image of what kind of group he wanted at MI:

I'd like a formal and informal organization chart to look just like MMF. You have a pile of experts not attached to a hierarchical chart and when you need help from each other, you go and find them.

Finally, on June 11, 1985 I had a conversation with Fomans about his leadership dilemma. It was at this point, I think, that
the image of bringing team management to MI became compelling to him. In fact, it came to him pre-consciously, in a dream. In this conversation he was very energetic and animated, even though it was 2 p.m. and he had had little sleep.

I woke up at 3 in the morning last night. It came to me. We need to have a team here. It's like they have with the physicians. It's like a football team working together towards the goal. Each person runs on his own but together. We got to have a team because it beings mutual respect, shared responsibility, and self reliance. That's what I was thinking about. I got up and I looked up the word synergy. (He reads from notes he has written.) Synergistic. A system of two or more people that achieve more than any individual is capable. It requires group effort to accomplish the task. The group can achieve more than any of its members alone. I'm starting to realize, if you can't fit into this kind of group, you can't survive here. How can we communicate this to the organization?

Fomans' wife became so interested in these ideas that (with his urging) she enrolled in the Masters program in Organizational Development at State University. Although she was accepted, other commitments arose which kept her from interning the program. A few weeks before the program was to start, I suggested that he enroll in the program. After repeated discussions, he applied, was accepted, and enrolled in the program starting September 1985. His entry into the MCD program was a major intervention in his thinking.

The Evolution of Fomans' Sense of Group

By October/November, when the division between managers was beginning to occur, Fomans became increasingly convinced that a participative mode of management was called for. At this point he was increasingly frustrated, however, because as his sense for the need for building a team became more acute, the behavior of the managers was becoming increasingly un-team-like. He was discouraged
by the sense of turfism and negativity he was beginning to sense.

The dissonance between his desired image and members' actual behavior
would eventually expand to a frustrating level. Below are a few of
his thoughts on team management.

He decided to bring the group of four together for a mini-
retreat to discuss the future mission. Prior to the retreat, he
expressed a concern that Ric's mode of management is counter to his
evolving thinking:

(1) Currently, Ric is one of my big hurdles. He won't get
into my new mode. He wants to be a general manager. His
mode of thinking is Theory X, efficient, for-profit. If
we decide to make this a profit center then we'll all have
to be convinced by him and change to Theory X. But that's
not the kind of management style I want in the MI. He's
good at efficient, cost thinking, so I hope he signs up.
He's important to the team.

His sense of the managers at MI is one of competing experts.

This is directly contrary to what he anticipates when he imagines

MMF's system of experts negotiating and seeking consensus:

We don't need a traditional GM. The four of us could fill the
GM void. Whenever employees saw any of us and needed us we
could all serve. I want the turf to go away. There's this
sense that I will interfere with somebody else and it causes
turf problems. Tim's an expert in one area and it causes
problems with Ric.

He is clear, in his thinking what it is in Ric's approach that
is contrary to his evolving image. Ric's authoritative approach and
need for control don't fit:

I need to find out what he's really interested in. He said he
wants to be a traditional GM. He wants to be in control. I
told him it won't work. I told him maybe he wants to change his
mode and join up. He may opt to leave. Or he may change our
perception of reality. If we get past that, we'll really be
off to something.
Immediately prior to the retreat, Fomans is discouraged because he sees non-participative behavior in both Ric and Tim:

We need help getting this team signed up. These guys don’t trust each other. There’s a rift between Ric and Tim. None of these guys trust each other. They’re both very vocal to me about each other. Each says the other guy’s causing it. There’s also a rift between me and Tim. I haven’t been able to get Tim to deal with the team. He’s not a good team player. He dismisses ideas from others if it’s in his area of expertise. He instantly argues with them.

Throughout all this, however, his definition for what the “team” should look like is very fuzzy. It is in the early stages of concept development (Piaget, 1923) in which he is dimly aware of what the object could look like but at this point predominantly notices instances that do not fit the concept. Up to this point, he is unable to clearly articulate to himself or to others, what changes need to occur.

We need to hear what employees say. We have to find a way for them to say things and be heard.

The First Retreat for the "Top 4"

It was becoming increasingly obvious that some collective meeting or planning had to occur between the Top 4 directors. At Fomans’ urging, they decided to have a two-day “retreat” at a local resort. A word on the significance of retreats is in order. This is the hospitality industry and a great deal of effort is put forth to maintain face and present a pleasant and affable persona to guests as well as fellow employees. Compliments and approbations are the primary source of reinforcement among employees. Members rarely had explicit conversations in which they expressed negative feelings or disappointment with each other. When negative affect was expressed
directly, it was frequently accompanied by disciplinary action, such as termination. Instead, much feelings were expressed indirectly, usually through sarcasm. So in other words, the expression of negative feelings or disappointment rarely occurred in the context of negotiation or relationship-building.

At one of the meetings of the "Top 4," they agreed that "a meeting of the minds" was necessary. Three of the four agreed relatively quickly. Ric, however, was reluctant, a point I will return to momentarily.

1 Karl: We need to get our act together. We need to decide if we're going to be a team.

3 Tim: I agree. We haven't been reading off the same page. I want to see commitment.

5 Karl: We have planning to do. People are looking to us.

6 Festus: It would be good for us to get away from all this business here and be completely honest with each other.

(September 1985, #1)

Note that Fomans begins to use the word "team," yet it is mentioned in an indeterminate context, implying the "team" is not yet there, but "we need to decide if we are going to be a team." Others eventually would begin to "rent" this word and project their own meanings onto it.

There is a sense of urgency in members' utterances. Tim's response to the "team" concept is to use it as a test of commitment, the beginning of an emerging definition that will equate team membership with a demonstration of commitment. Tim's statement that he wants "to see commitment" is probably read by members as an implication that somewhere there is no commitment. No one seems to respond
directly to him. That this comment is aimed towards Ric is probably
evident to everyone in the room, including Ric, whose response is
passivity and silence.

Ric did not have the same expression of urgency for a retreat.
He expressed frustration with the lack of coordination and the lack
of clear directions, but was unenthusiastic about the idea for a
retreat. He said to me in a private interview after the meeting
cited above:

So we're supposed to meet. The idea of the four of us sitting
in a room and going over specific things about what's frustrat-
ing us—I don’t want to be involved. That's not why I came to
work here—to do some Theory Z experiment. I came here to run
a hotel—to train employees. There's nothing wrong with being
a team, that's not the way I've been trained. The team has too
many coaches. On a football team there's only one coach.

Once again, Ric expressed resistance. He too has an image of what
the managerial response should be. He yearns for clear, authcri-
tative leadership. His statement about "not wanting to do some
Theory Z experiment" is a cynical swipe at others' efforts, and
indirectly at Karl's emerging image. His emerging image of what
"team" means is bureaucratic as evident in his metaphor of a football
team, a hierarchical order in which players are given clear direc-
tions from one coach. He was concerned that changes were happening
too fast, that details were being overlooked. His thinking is
reminiscent of Fomans' thinking when first confronted by Gass a year
earlier to do a business plan--a sense of waiting to be told what to
do and resentful that no one is providing clear direction. He frames
the meeting as "some Theory Z experiment" for which he has no sense
of enactive mastery. His reasoning for resisting change is rational.
He has no shortage of evidence to cite—all the details that need to
be attended to: the speakers, the lighting system, the evidence that there is a lack of coordination. "Why are we having a meeting," he said, "when the employee dock is still dirty?" His thinking is very concrete. He notices numerous breakdowns and mismanagement. To him, these details and demands are too much of a pull.

In September of 1985, the four directors and two consultants attended a two-day retreat. The first day of the meeting members immediately began to discuss the prospect of a four star hotel.

1 Festus: We've been given a blank check.

2 Karl: We get money way too easy. No one's ever rejected anything we've asked for. Doesn't that bother anybody? Am I the only one who's bothered by it?

3 Ric: I agree. I'm just waiting for the hammer to fall.

4 Tim: Who gave Kosar (CEO of MMF) just what he asked for on the 17th floor.

5 Karl: Is anybody but me nervous that our operating projections in the business plan haven't been tested yet?

6 Ric: I am.

7 Festus: I am. I'm only a support person, but if you guys are nervous, then I'm nervous.

8 Karl: Can we deliver a four star product?

9 Festus: We better be able to. We put the Business Plan before the Board of Governors as a united front.

10 Ric: I'm afraid they're going to wake up and discover this thing can't work like this. There's no way. They're gonna pull the plug on us.

(September 1985, #2)

Karl begins the discussion by expressing his reservations and fears. His concern that "no one has rejected anything" implies a sense of impending doom, that money and freedom of action granted unilaterally is unnatural, that soon this must stop and perhaps they
will begin to reject. Ric immediately resonates with Karl's anxiety. His metaphor is stark and obdurate: waiting for the hammer to fall. Such a stance of waiting for punishment imposes a constriction on free, unfettered action. Following Goleman (1986), under conditions of threat and anxiety, cognitive processing is constricted as the organism protects itself by pre-selecting details to be read as threats. What is important to note about the persistence of this fear is the confirmation Ric and Karl give each other. In interaction, their schemas of fear get reproduced and affirmed.

Karl continues to trigger such notions by repeated queries of anxiety: "Is anybody but me nervous? . . . Can we deliver a four star product?" He is the leader of this group, yet at this point rather than providing a guiding image of light, he triggers concern and uncertainty. No one responds to Tim's statement of clarity. "We gave Kosar just what he asked for." This is an utterance of confidence, of fulfilled expectation, yet it stands suspended as others cue in to anxiety. Ric's final statement is a stark negation, an image that calls forth the withdrawal of life ("They're gonna pull the plug on us.").

This was the first "direct" discourse they had in regard to their differing interpretations. Members feel insecurity that borders on guilt. There is a sense that they need to do something to prove themselves worthy. All four of them harbor a "fear of being found out" and ironically this theme unites Ric and Tim, the two who disagree most profoundly in regard to the four star prospect.
Attempt to Push Group into Expansive,
Subjunctive Thought

At this point one of the consultants suggests that members begin to talk about what they value about working at MI.

Consultant: Why don’t you just assume for now that MMF has given you a blank check? Assume they’ll support whatever you decide to do. MMF has a tradition of supporting excellence and experimenting as a value. So is there anything special that you value about your jobs, about being here?

Tim: I like two things. The security of being with a famous organization like MMF. Plus I get the chance to make this a four star. To build a first class place.

Karl: I value the opportunity to put this thing together. To start almost from scratch.

Ric: I like the security of being around MMF. I like the benefits and the security. I like the values. The honesty. The humanistic concerns. They really stand for the individual’s well-being. I have frustrations, especially about the fast pace of moving toward four star. Things are going too fast around the Mission Plan. I just can’t justify what’s in it. We should sit down and talk. How are we gonna do this? Go step by step. It’s a long process. We’re doing a lot of surface level judging. We need to take time before we decide where things go.

Karl: Can we attempt to minimize the dependency on MMF so they don’t--

Tim: We have to. We have to turn this place around into a four star place that stands on its own financially. It’s important to me. When I’m around my friends in the business, I’m embarrassed about this. They figure "big deal you get an open pocket book and you still can’t make it happen." It’s important to my career.

Ric: But how do we serve princes and paupers at the same time? The midwest farmer comes here while his wife’s having surgery. How do you justify giving him a King’s suite?
Festus: Our mission is to serve MMF--to support the mission of MMF.

(September 1986, #3)

The images that begin to emerge in this discourse are more optimistic and hold forth the possibility of new action. At this point in the group's life, however, it takes a deliberate effort by the consultant to direct attention away from obstacles and negative cognitive processing and to deliberately engage in affirmative, valuing thought. **Affirmative, valuing thought is necessary before any new action-enhancing concepts can be formed.** The consultant is reaching into the group's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1962), to help them to reach beyond their negative groping, to form words and develop concepts that will enhance their understanding toward the formation of new knowledge.

At first, a few members are "willing to be led" into the zone of proximal development. Tim and Karl begin to muse about the opportunity and the challenge that greets them. Ric also mentions a phenomena he values and characteristically, it is not the dynamic challenge or opportunity, but a more stable phenomena--he values the security. Soon, his schema of concern over velocity is triggered again. Following Bruner (1987), the group cannot sustain subjunctive thought for very long periods.

As Ric returns to his concern that things are moving too fast, his expressed frustrations trigger Karl's frustrations about dependency. Notice the difference in Tim's and Ric's language. Tim expresses his vision in strident uncompromising language. The concept of "perceived" four star is absent. Ric brings up his
objections—based on the patient/guest population he presently sees, he cannot justify building a four star hotel. Again, his thinking is concrete and present-time focused. His words reflect his negative cognitive processing. No one directly responds to his objection. There is a polar dimension to members' thinking at this point that continually introduces tension into the discourse. The concepts members propose tend to be bi-polar and exclusionary. For example, Ric's sense of the hotel is that it can "either serve princes or paupers." Tim discusses the hotel as if it will become a four star property on a "schlucky corner place." Such unresolved, extreme case thinking is one result of monologic interaction in which the other's view is not taken in and considered (Srivastva & Barrett, 1988).

Eventually, their discourse returns to the discussion of values. Notice how they alternate between discussing communication with employees and communication between each other. The talk of values is "contagious." It is difficult for them to discuss how members should relate to one another without reflecting on how they them-
selves are relating to one another.

1 Ric: Treat the employees like guests. Then they'll make a contribution.
2
3 Tim: Teach the employees what a four star is and listen to what they have to say.
4
5 Ric: Give them training orientations. It'll take time.
6
7 Karl: How we treat the employee is how the employee treats the guest.
8

10 Karl: The four of us need to get together.

11 Tim: We need trainable employees. Tell them what we expect.
Festus: We need more organized meetings.

Karl: Yes. The four of us need to be organized in our discussions. We need to treat each other better. We don't treat each other well. Listen better and be less sarcastic with each other.

Tim: The need to continually train, to communicate our expectations, communicate our mission.

Festus: Get people involved in creating programs.

Ric: Maybe we need to create a timetable. We've done the physical things. Now we're dealing with the people side. It will take time.

Tim: We all want this four star. It's time to communicate less and correct the problem now.

Ric: We can start treating them with a lot of smiles, a lot of thank yous, glad to see you. They'll treat the guests that way.

FOF: Our meetings are frustrating sometimes.

They go on and on, everybody has their own ideas and we end up in chaos, with no decisions. Everybody wants just their own ideas.

Ric: We don't share goals, we don't share values, what we are as a group.

Karl: We're four divergent personalities.

(September 1986, #4)

One of the characteristics of positive cognition and valuing thought is its expansive quality. Once members begin to publicly express positive, valuing thought that resonates with others' readiness to see such latent qualities, a widening of domains is likely to be triggered. A similar phenomena was discussed by Srivastva and Barrett (1988). When positive cognition in the form of a generative metaphor was proposed, members' readiness to see positive qualities in other, related domains was triggered. Once triggered to notice
positive possibilities, the domain of awareness begins to expand, and not uncommonly expands to self-reflection. Notice the alternating quality of triggered topics in their discussion:

**TOPIC FOCUS, READINESS:** What action **is** in your control?

**Topic 1:** We need to treat the **employees** well.

**Topic 2:** We need to talk to **each other** better.

**Topic 3:** Proposition (causally connecting thought): If we treat **employees** well, they will treat **guests** well.

**Topic 4:** If we talk to **each other** well (more organized meetings), we will share goals, understanding, become a **group**.

The concept of "employees" is an opportunity to project their own on-going concerns. Ric advocates giving them training and orientations and knows that "it will take time." He proposes to create a timetable for training employees. Tim emphasizes the need to teach employees what a four star is, assuming that they currently do not know. Karl returns to the group members themselves, finding ways to better talk to each other. What is interesting, however, is that while all four have different frameworks of meaning, they converge on the topic of communication to employees.

The remainder of the meeting was spent discussing how to communicate to employees at the next level. They did not resolve their different interpretations or even acknowledge the scope of differences. They converged around the idea of communicating ideas of excellence to others in the organization.

It is important to notice where these differing parties agree on a topic, for this becomes the anchoring image that allows members to sustain interaction in the future. The group is converging around
the concept of "employees." Their language and metaphors reflect a sense that employees are empty, waiting to be filled with knowledge. Their utterances have a transaction quality: we must give them knowledge, we must give them training, we must give them our expectations, give them smiles, pats on the back. The assumption is if we give them these things, they will give them to the guest.

It was decided that some extended meeting, perhaps a "retreat" like the one they experienced, should be held for the next level of managers. Before this meeting, however, it was decided that they should write some kind of mission statement to communicate to the group. In addition to that the "Top 4" agreed to meet bi-weekly for one-half day meetings. In November 1985, they met for four hours to discuss a mission statement. Most of the energy was focused around the choice of the words "four star." Tim obviously was fairly insistent on explicitly stating such. Ric had reservations about the feasibility of such a plan. Karl was concerned that the four star model does not adequately fit such a special hotel associated with a medical facility. Since it is in part, a healing facility, it would not make sense to offer some of the resort-oriented facilities that most four star hotels offer. Finally, after considerable debate, they decided on a Mission Statement that essentially brought the Medic Inn "into the same league" as MMF. The choice of words was deliberately consonant with discussion of MMF's perceived mission:

The Medic Inn is to be the example of excellence in the hospitality industry, by seeking constant improvements in our food and lodging services.
The Decision to Involve Middle Managers in Retreat

The directors decided it was time to communicate with the next level of managers. As they continued to talk about values and how they would like to see interaction between employees, as well as between employees and guests, they agreed it would be beneficial to arrange a "retreat" that would include the managers in the planning process. At first, Ric was hesitant to include others for fear the directors would appear "unprofessional."

One idea that was continuously proposed was that the reason there is growing dissension among employees was that they did not know what an excellent hotel is. While Tim was the first to raise this issue and would do so repeatedly, the others concurred. They all agreed that many of the managers and all of the employees had no work experience in a four star. They began to devise ways to plant within managers' heads an image of what an excellent hotel is. It was within this context that it was proposed to hold a management retreat at a four star hotel.

After some research, Tim proposed that the group of 16 go to the Tremont Hotel in Chicago. As the group of four focused on "bringing the middle managers in," there was little outward sense of conflict. Meetings proceeded rather smoothly. This was, in fact, the first major decision that this group was to make autonomously. After estimating the cost of the trip, they wondered how to "sell" the idea to Dan Gass. After one long meeting, they decided to present the idea to Gass as a unit. All four of them would
participate. Romans would later say that this was a turning point for him.

We had a united front. He sat there and listened and said he'd never heard of anything like this before, but he said he'd go for it.

Turfism and Fear Among Middle-Level Managers

While the directors were feeling united, the managers experienced a spectrum of reactions and anticipations to the Chicago retreat. Most managers throughout the hotel welcomed the chance to overcome the turfism that had marked their group. However, there was considerable reservation as well.

Managers in the Rooms Department were hesitant to participate. Clearly, they felt that something was already beginning to happen without them. Felicia, the head housekeeper, continually expressed the fear of intruding on others' turf.

Other hotels have common goals. Not this one. I see guests here who need another cup of coffee and I can't give it to them because I'm not part of F&B. I'll offend them. I've learned to accept that we're just the back of the house.

If we can't solve problems here in the hotel, then what good will three days in Chicago do? This four star hotel in Chicago--it's a management company with a budget. They don't have free reign like us. So what can we learn from them? When people say a retreat, what's that supposed to mean--going off to meditate?

I don't really want to go. I have no input to change things. I've learned to accept that we're just the back of the house. We're not really part of the hotel. I asked my assistant to go for me and she cried, "I can't talk to them. They're better than I am." There's immature things. Like they did this staff dinner. I was crushed I wasn't asked to be part of it. Every department gets to do something for it. They're involved. Don't they think we know how to dress up? It would be nice to be asked. It would be nice if one of them sometime would ask one of my assistants to lunch. We're just the back of the house.
They have instilled some pride in the hotel, but I'm not part of it. I just do my job.

The front desk manager expressed a hesitancy to attend the retreat because of fear of being attacked.

I'm leery about going on this retreat. I'd rather not go. There's antagonism against me personally. If the retreat doesn't work, I'll leave the hotel. There's a negative attitude from Ric down to us. We need to get everyone working together. There's no trust between us. There's no one I can confide in.

It appears that from their perspective, others are expanding and they are being left out. Their hyperbolic language reveals fantasies of abandonment. Felicia's tone of sarcasm, passivity, and stubbornness resonates with Ric's tone. This is not surprising. Ric is her boss. It is further evidence that individuals process information as members of a group.

Managers in F&B Department also felt the tension of turf. They continually raised the issue of becoming four star (unlike Rooms managers). Their language, like Tim's, was strident and ambitious.

We need to decide on the goal and go for it. We need to be a team and go for four star no matter what. I feel lots of turfism here. I sometimes don't do something that needs to be done because someone will get pissed off. "What are you doing in my area?" We are all so territorial. Why can't we use our expertise and set up goals for each other and help each other. For example, I see the way the bell stand is run--it looks terrible. I can't go over and tell Joan about it and offer advice. It's a personal affront to her. She doesn't know what it's supposed to look like.

The F&B manager's attribution that one of the Rooms managers lacks knowledge is a variation of the same attribution Tim makes towards Ric.

The rationale for the retreat at the Tremont is given in greater detail elsewhere (Barrett & Cooperrider, 1988). I will touch
briefly on a few of the activities. It was arranged in advance that
the 20 members from MI would meet their counterparts at the Tremont
and have time to discuss how the hotel maintains four star status.
It was encouraged that they attempt to learn everything they could
about the hotel. They not only interviewed staff, but as guests in
the hotel, they were encouraged to note as many features as possible.
In fact, they collected numerous details in regard to how service was
delivered, how their beds were made, how rooms were kept, how food
was delivered. They also became acquainted with the Tremont’s
training programs for employees.

Fomans began his Tremont retreat with the following address:
Back in 1981, I started out alone. I was appointed “acting”
genral manager in the midst of a crisis. Keller told me to
“turn this place around and save the management contract.”
Little did they know that I would “save” the contract, but not
for them.

I began to build a team of people to do it. You have to remem-
ber that:

I am lazy!
I hate to work!
I love to dream!

So the easiest way to do it is to have someone else (a team) do
it.

We promoted a few people from inside and we hired some others.
Spent a lot of time aligning tasks and people. I looked for a
“fit”/personal “chemistry”/some sort of “magic” in the people
that were hired.

This was all done in a very traditional organization with a lot
of rules, and procedure. A typical benevolent dictatorship
with all of the trappings: organizational charts, etc.

Along comes Dan Gass and Bill Kosar with their “group practice”
of medicine. Kosar really believes that a “group” of people
can actually do something other than sit around and gossip.
Maybe we’ll try a little of this group stuff.

Along comes Frank with his “questionnaire”!
You should have heard the "discussion" that the four boys had:

"This was horrible--not only are we not getting things done, but we're blowing a lot of time 'discussing' this garbage."

I thought to myself: "Dr. Kosar isn't dumb!" and at the same time Frank is trying to seduce me. "Believe me! It won't hurt! Just try it; you'll like it!"

What the hell--off to school to learn what he's talking about. Frank wins--off the four of us go to Easthaven. We will talk more about it tomorrow--but I'm sure all of you noticed a change when we got back.

From Easthaven to Chicago was a very short step. We decided then that we would have a retreat the next level of management.

One of the things I want you to learn while you are here, is that you should shoulder the risks for your employees. Speaking of risks--

This little venture (Chicago) isn't the smallest risk we've ever taken.

Consider: The physicians at MMF had to cut their budgets by 4% this year.

When they go on retreat, it's only to a hotel.

Even if we succeed here, the "rumors" of our party in Chicago won't go away--the doubting Thomas's will never believe.

We must remember what we are saying to all those others that are holding down the fort for us--if we don't make these few days count for something, we don't need to go back!

Please partake of this learning opportunity. You will be exposed to a lot of information in the next few days. You will get out of it only as much as you put into it. Allow me to end my comments with a few words from one of the people that made a lasting impression in my youth--a British liaison officer to the middle east--popularly known as "Lawrence of Arabia":

All men dream; but not equally.  
Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds  
Awake to find that it was vanity;  
But the dreamers of day are dangerous men,  
That they may act their dreams with open eyes to make it possible.
I invite you to come along with me and dream in the light of day!

T.E. Lawrence

He reinterprets the past events leading up to the retreat in a positive light, how he became intrigued with the idea of team, how he felt frustrated. As he spoke his voice fluttered and as he read the poem, he began to look up. The members, seated around a large table, spontaneously began to applaud.

This is a significant departure from his deficiency thinking in regard to his plight at MI. There is no mention in this address of any anxiety about profit/loss, any anger towards MMF. He is introducing a new "coherent self" to use Mead's terms before the organization and his language resonated throughout the four day workshop. The words "teamwork" and "becoming a team" were repeatedly used in conversations. When noticing the Tremont staff in operation, frequent references were made to how well they functioned "as a team."

On the last day of the retreat, a debate was held. Members were asked to cognitively provide evidence--pro or con--whether or not MI could work toward excellence as a team. Every viewpoint was given articulation. All of the negative evidence that members had been so aware of--evidence of slowness, turfism, the poor location of the hotel, the incidents regarding whether or not to market the hotel, the lack of attendance at meetings previously agreed to, the lack of cleanliness, etc.--all of these negative cognitions were given public voice. Also, when the "pro" side spoke, a deliberate effort was made to cognitively attend to the possibility that the group could function as a team. The seven members of the "pro" team
provided concrete evidence of teamwork engaged to achieve excellence—the construction of the 17th floor, the decision to come to the Chicago retreat, the increased number of positive comment cards, the increased occupation, the continuing success of the Recognition Committee giving out monthly employee awards. Members explicitly articulated the expansive logic that had been in operation only tacitly for many. For example, one offered as evidence:

When we decided as a team and as a group that we were going to put in something for the guests, some of us talked about just having tea, we never just talked about having coffee served up there with styrofoam cups, all of a sudden what we wanted, what we have is High Tea. Something that’s recognized as High Tea, silver service, china, we didn’t take second best, we took High Tea.

So, for example, one of the managers on the "con" side countered with the "High Tea" citing:

High Tea was a zip in revenue. It wasn’t popular until we gave it away. Give-aways—that’s our answer to everything.

Finally, on the last day, members began to envision what kind of changes would be initiated at MI, based on their learnings. They generated many creative ideas. It was felt that this was only the beginning of a strategic plan that must be continued with the entire group. Members agreed to meet bi-monthly to continue the plan.

I’d like to conclude this section by drawing a few conclusions about the interpretive schema of the group during this period:

1) Members began to experiment with affirmative thinking and valuing.

With the introduction of the term "4 star" to translate MIMF’s plans into an intelligible concept, some members, especially F&B managers, began to engage in affirmative, possibility thinking. The
4 star concept initially released connotations for members, most of whom had never worked in a 4 star, expanding their imaginative construct for what is possible at MI. The initial transformation occurred at the level of belief, that is belief in what is possible. A calculus-knowledge for appropriate action did not yet exist. The existence of believe makes possible the readiness for new knowledge.

Similarly the group of four struggled with affirmative thinking. In their retreat in September 1985, they began with the habitual, deficiency, self-deprecating thinking, speaking of fears that MMF would withdraw financial support. Finally, after a deliberate direction from the consultant, members began to articulate what they value as essential in organizational life. This experiment in affirmative thinking led them to a discussion of employees. The discussion of employee performance was the one topic around which all four of the group could converge. It was this belief in the necessity to "educate" employees that set the stage for the idea to hold a "retreat" to include the next group of managers. One of the effects of a focus on values and affirmative thinking is inclusion behavior. When members being to discuss values, there is a contamination effect, a desire to include others.

This discussion of values was initiated by a deliberate intervention by the consultant to encourage the group to engage in fictional, "as if," thinking. He asked the group to temporarily assume that the debilitating possibilities they harbored (the withdrawal of support from MMF) did not exist ("imagine that MMF will support anything you do"). When members consent to this fictional
thinking, they engage in more expansive thinking. They temporarily suspend negative cognitions of each other.

When members begin to suspend negative cognitions of each other, their thinking becomes more holistic, they begin to think about the organization as a whole.

(2) Members begin to articulate words and to form conceptual categories that facilitate an understanding of novelty.

(a) The term "4 star."

Meaning is not something "inside the head" or something found in a dictionary; rather meaning develops through word usage (Wittgenstein, 1968). According to Wittgenstein (1968), "systems of words develop through related systems of words that have family resemblances." Vygotsky (1962), in the same vein, made a crucial distinction between sense and meaning. Following Bruner (1987), others’ words when introduced in the zone of proximal development, are like "prosthetic devices," providing a lens to help see a seemingly stubborn, non-liable world.

Members were not clear about the new demands that the owners were making on them. The call to upgrade services and to seek business outside of the MMF patient population, did not intuitively correspond to years of experience as a low to middle class facility serving patients. When Tim introduced the concept "4 star," it was an invitation to translate, to provide an image of what the hotel could become.

Pockets of the organization immediately resonated with the words and began to form an image of possibility. The image was reinforced by a few concrete changes in the hotel, as the lobby and
other areas were reconstructed. However, the image of 4 star triggered different connotations for different members. For middle managers, especially those in F&B, the image triggered enthusiastic sentiment and a spirit of achievement. For Tim himself, the concept went beyond mere image to a calculus for action. Specific action steps were taken, such as the hiring of managers with 4 star experience. Within a few months, he begins to notice numerous details of deficiency, evidence of how the hotel is not become 4 star.

For Ric, the image and the action he saw others taking, triggered negative cognitive processing. His thinking was guarded, suspicious, and concrete. He remained preoccupied by the tyranny of detail, the specific details that need attention, reflected in his statements, "How can we have a meeting when the back dock is a mess?" Members in his reporting group (Rooms Department) felt initial curiosity and excitement the concept of 4 star, but lacking cognitive reinforcement, this tended to fade. The differing enthusiasms for the concept began to trigger turfnism and competition among the two departments.

For Karl, also, the image of 4 starness tended to trigger fear that the owner will "pull the plug" and not fund the project. He continued to experiment with the words, but could not bring himself to form a conviction.

So, for Karl and Ric, feelings of hesitancy to act on 4 starness, bordered on a sense of guilt, a sense that MMF will cut financial resources, like God refusing grace, at any moment. The fears and anxiety that each held kept them from forming a calculus for
action. Their lack of belief kept them from generating inferences
for action.

This sense of guilt and unworthiness that consistently gets
triggered by Karl and occasionally by Ric when the subject of "4
star" is mentioned, is an act of withdrawal, a hesitancy to become a
locus of autonomous meaning. The fear and anxiety that they feel is
the result of a high investment in the dictates of others. In a
sense it is a refusal to make choices, to force a response. An
exaggerated sense of fear and guilt can be seen as a desire to remain
passive, to give up on the struggle for choice, to shrink from
responsible, reasonable action. Sartre wrote that emotions are a
means aiming toward an end, a system that rejects behavior that one
does not want to maintain. Sadness, for example, eliminates the
obligation to seek new ways to act. When we are sad, the universe
appears to no longer require anything of us. Waldman (1971) had a
similar phenomena in mind, when he wrote:

> Emotions are purposeful creations designed to facilitate one's
> retreat from obligation and responsibility. . . . The aimlessness of
today may be a plan [italics mine] to cope with the
> pessimism with which I see the future. (Waldman, 1971, pp. 54-
> 55)

Thus the term "4 star" stirred enthusiasm and a need for decisive
action for some, while for others, it triggered hesitancy, with-
drawal, and anxiety.

(b) The concept of "team"

Karl was intrigued by the possibility of consensus management
at MMF and begins to form an image of "team." The labels Theory
X/Theory Y are no longer in use. As we saw in the last section,
these "foreign" (Japanese) labels from the popular management
literature were the only concepts available to understand the novel group meetings. The fact that they associate the terms with a foreign country makes it easier to deprecate the concepts and reinforced the notion of irrelevance. This "Theory Y" experiment is something for different others to try, it is not applicable to us. Now Fomans' emerging image of "team" involves a few more connotations, even though the image does not yet generate a calculus for action. After an experience of dissonance and surprise at the prospect of MMF's management procedures and conversations with Dr. Kosar, he begins to imagine a "circle of experts" working together. The image is tentative and crystalline as he is confronted with disconfirming evidence of turfism and competition among managers. He begins to face a dilemma in his thinking process. While he begins to form a positive, facilitating image, events in the world seem to defy its realization in reality. Following Maslow (1962), the human organism has a "life force," a forward groping quality that persists in wanting to know, to grasp. It is tempered by a "fear of knowing," a hesitancy to expand awareness of disconfirmation. Heidegger's notion of anticipatory thinking (1962) also touches on this human quality. What we are watching is Karl struggling to "hold" the world in his image without destroying the delicate image. He hesitates to act on contrary evidence, that is, he refuses to eliminate the forces that threaten his emerging image of "team." For example, he refuses to directly chastise or fire Tim or Ric. And yet, he refuses to abandon the possibility of a "team."

The concept of "team" for Tim has a different set of connotations. He seems to associate it with a chance to test for
commitment, to close off membership to those who do not have commitment. For Ric, the concept of "team" stirs metaphors of chaos, of a football team gone awry, made up entirely of coaches and no players.

(c) The concept of "employee."

The concept of "employee" triggers a conversion of connotations for the four members, especially Ric and Tim. The proposition that appears to be at the root of Ric's discourse is that employees need to be trained, to be taught how to behave and this will take a long time. For Tim, the belief appears to be that employees must be taught how to become 4 star employees. It was a discussion of values that initiated the topic of "employees," and it was around this topic that an agreement was reached to hold the Chicago retreat.

(3) The interactive mode between members was still predominantly monologic. There were few queries into the pre-suppositions behind each others' thoughts. For the most part, ideas are left unanswered and diverse ideas left unresolved. Many validity claims are not believed, but neither are they openly challenged.

One indication of the lack of resolution of diverse ideas if the preponderance of extreme case thinking. Claims tend to be marked by extreme case scenarios. Tim, for example, posits that MI will either become 4 star or a "schlucky corner Holiday Inn." Ric posits that MI can either serve princes or paupers but in the present scenario, "the paupers will have no where to go." No on challengers these scenarios and they are left to influence just as they stand.

(4) For the most part, communicative action continues to be strategic, aimed toward achieving success. Efforts are made to
create communicative action aimed toward reaching understanding. The decision to hold a "retreat" to discuss members' ideas is an effort in this regard. Also the decision to include the middle managers in the planning process, to familiarize them with a "4 star" hotel, is an effort to achieve understanding.

(5) Thinking remains for the most part concrete, logical, and paradigmatic.
CHAPTER VI
MARCH 1986 - FEBRUARY 1987:
CONTRACTION: LACK OF DIRECTION
AND DISBURSEMENT OF GROUP

They left Chicago fairly optimistic about the prospects of achieving excellence through teamwork. They agreed to bi-monthly meetings and semi-annual retreats.

Before long, however, dissension resumed. Members complained that no one provided structure or direction and that the meetings were slow and arduous. If people began to wander off the subject, no one pulled them back in. Members began to complain about a lack of vision, a lack of a common goal. One meeting was set up in which members were to present to each other what they see as goals in their own departments. The meeting was a fiasco and several arguments broke out. Felicia, for example began to talk about training her staff and cutting costs as goals. When Roy, a Food and Beverage Manager, began to talk about setting 4 star standards for the entire hotel, Felicia challenged him: "Are you saying I can’t set my own standards, that I don’t know how to train my own people?" Several other exchanges erupted and throughout all this, Fomans was non-directive except for one semi-facilitating question: "Do we still have energy to set goals around here?" References were continually
made to the Chicago "team-work" agreement, often in a context of punishing each other.

Finally, the group decided to hire a strategic planning consultant to help them develop goals as a group. He held two all-day sessions with the 20 members, asking them to creatively brainstorm possible future action for the hotel. Discord was high throughout both sessions. During the second session, when groups "broke out" to brainstorm, Felicia did not actively join another group. After some time she had to be invited into one of the groups. At the end of the second day groups reported their ideas. While F&B managers proposed expansive, costly ideas, a few rooms managers either reacted passively or questioned the assumptions. Members of F&B, for example, proposed a frozen foods service and a catering service. Ideas about marketing the hotel were proposed. In the middle of the report-outs, however, Felicia began to interrupt and protest. "How can you talk about catering when we can't even fill the hotel?" A few moments later, she protested, "If we become an excellent hotel, how are we going to double-sheet the beds? Who's gonna do that? Are you gonna hire 100 more maids?" F&B managers began to argue with her and each other. Members complained that it was impossible to keep to a topic without such interruptions. Others members of the Rooms Department joined Felicia's protest. No one, members explained, could bring the group back to the topic. Later Fomans would blame the facilitator. "He just didn't know how to keep us on track. We tried to talk about vision and people kept bringing up picky things. He just let us wander around." Finally, after a full day of "planning" and arguing, a few members of the group protested to the
four directors that the meetings were a waste of time and they should
decide on a vision and then come back and inform them. It was a very
discouraging moment, especially for Fomans. I asked Fomans why he
did not take charge. "I want the group as a unit to take action," he
said, "to come up with ideas." When I protested that early in a
group's life leadership is important, he admitted, "I want to be more
comfortable with the vision before I push for it." Still at this
point when he notices turbulence and protests, he hesitates to put
forth a belief. When he hears members protest about the risk of
investing money in the hotel, it is enough to restimulate his own
reservations and he becomes quiet and non-directive. And members in
the meantime feel lost, they do not know what direction to take or
from where it is coming. In this sense Felicia is the leader. Her
public protest generates no clear answer that is a strong as hers and
her dissent is enough to end the group meetings.

Fomans continued to call for a group process, although again he
began to express some doubt:

We need to have 250 leaders with a vision. It's the only way
to do it. Get everybody. Get everybody in that mode--every-
body clear about the direction necessary. And everybody have a
lot of respect for each other's piece. Are people capable of
doing it?

Later, some attributed the negative energy of one person to the
dissipation of the entire group. As one manager explained:

The group of 16 meetings have ceased because the split between
F&B and Rooms was making meetings painful. Felicia was caustic
in the way she treated fellow employees. That happens and the
energy of the group dissipates, because there's no feeling of
togetherness.
Sense of Unity Crumbles and Split Re-emerges

Among the four directors, the split between Tim and Ric became increasingly pronounced. Eventually it became more public and others began to more openly take sides. Tim’s insistence on 4 star status never faltered. He proposed to the Board of Governors to build a new 4 star restaurant, which they approved. He initiated reconstruction of the coffee house and built a European-style Bistro. The seventeenth floor executive suites were put under his direction and offered 24 hour full butler services.

Ric became notorious among F&B managers for his refusal to spend money to upgrade his department. Tim and others in F&B continually cited the lack of professional service and the poorly trained front desk personnel. Even in casual conversations with an F&B manager, I would overhear, “Well what do you expect, that’s the front desk?” F&B managers began to notice in increasing detail many deficiencies, from the hours they work, to whether their shoes are shined. The Bell Services was cited as having poor, shattered uniforms. Finally, one incident brought out the difference between the two logics. The pavement was potted and in need of repair. The maintenance manager, at Ric’s direction, had the holes and pots filled, but did not refinish the entire surface. Apparently when Tim saw the spotted pavement, he “blew his top.” He went to Fomans, Festus and others and complained. “That’s not 4 star. A 4 star hotel wouldn’t do that.” The next day, Festus confronted Ric about the pavement and in Festus’ words, “Ric blasted me and told me it was none of my business.”
Testing the Waters and Preparing for Confrontation

Feeling the pressure from the middle managers' group, in the summer of 1986 Fomans again proposed that the group of four have a retreat. The following meeting was held on July 18, 1986. Ric was one-half hour late, as the other three directors began to talk about the prospect of a retreat.

1 Festus: So when is the retreat? We need to set common goals.

2 Karl: Nothing's changed since the last one.

3 Tim: I agree.

4 Festus: There's a new problem, a new style of management.

5 Karl: That's an old problem.

6 Tim: There's even more of a separation between the two sides of the house [silence].

9 Tim: Before we establish common goals, I want to hear personal commitments. I don't feel them, see them, hear them. I wonder how deep they are with Ric. I hear them from you and Karl, but I don't know where Ric is. I'm where I was last year with him. I'm not ready to write him off yet but—but how can we formulate a team? I want more group process. But I want to say to him, "You're not pulling your own weight."

18 Karl: Are we comfortable enough that we can talk about expectations we have of each other?

19 Tim: We have to or else we're affecting the growth of this company.

22 [Festus begins to talk about the difference between goals and expectations and the need to do performance reviews.]

25 Festus: I want to get back--do we want to talk about objectives and tasks before we meet the goal?

27 Karl: We're talking about goals and commitment to the organization.
Tim: Don’t we have to commit to each other first before we develop goals? I don’t think we’ll be able to get to the goals because we’ll have the same problems as last year.

Festus: Certain things, certain completion of tasks are falling down.

Tim: But we all have the same values. It’s different levels of enthusiasm. We get hyped up and then burn out. The enthusiasm has caused incomple-tions.

Karl: Stick-to-itness.

Tim: Yup. That’s it.

Festus: There’s a failure to complete tasks that causes irritation. We’re all nice guys, but when we don’t complete the task well, its cause heartache.

We fail to communicate to each other in front of each other, like I won’t do in front of you, Karl. Like when you fail to be direct and keep facili-tating. I don’t say anything and it just irritates me. Some of the things between Ric and Tim just build up and festers. We just let it go until the next retreat.

It goes back to—we don’t have a common goal.

Tim: The managers don’t see it in us.

Festus: The Rooms Department is clean, low budget, fair service. But F&B I see pressure to think above that. With that type of pressure of split, I can see reason for friction. You spend $7,400 for flowers while he skims on the black top. Maybe we have to discuss a common goal. Ric is very conscious about money, more than I would be. I say keep spending ’til you get your hand slapped. He works more like—"at Harley we did it this way." He’s being economical.

Karl: I see that he keeps us from going nuts because we spend money too quick.

Festus: He even said that. “Rooms has to be careful spending money while F&B spends our profit.”
But I'm the one who worries about how we treat the guest.

He's frustrated about all the money we spend here. We got into it when we were going to buy the new phone system. He was just going to repair the old one. I told him we should put in a push button phone system. He believes we should just look at the potential for profit.

Do any of us ignore that?

Some of us spend like it. There's some things we do to Ric that aren't warranted. He has little contact with the head honchos at MMF. Tim does. You see Kosar. They say, "Tim you're doing a helluva job." I wouldn't fucking stand for it. He should insist on being a full partner.

Do you think he wants to be?

Yes.

What prevents it?

He's laid back. He doesn't make decisions right away. He looks at alternatives. We need to come to a consensus about what the Rooms Department goal really is.

I don't know what it is.

I don't know what Beacon Square or Medic Inn is supposed to be doing.

Why don't we define it for ourselves and then go back and tell them what MI is supposed to be. We have to set some goals.

Our people are asking us to do that.

It leaves too much discretion to individual managers. We need another Mission Statement that's more definitive. Ric is frustrated because he doesn't know what to make of this hotel. I think Ric is waiting for someone to tell him what kind of hotel MI is supposed to be.

It won't do any good to talk about goals unless we're candid with each other.

(January 1986)
When the proposal for a retreat is made, Karl opens with a dark tone, a pronouncement that nothing in the group has changed since the last retreat. His remark sets the tone for the entire meeting.

When Festus attempts to define the "new management problem" that triggers the need for a meeting, Karl relabels his words: "That's an old problem." Tim frames the problem with a description that belies evaluation: "There's even more of a separation between the two sides of the house." This definition of the problem as a separation into two parts provides ground from which other concepts emerge. Once a categorical split is proposed, hierarchy is not far behind. Tim then implies such a hierarchy when he raises the issue of commitment and in Ric's absence questions whether Ric is fully committed to the hotel. Language can support an actor's attempt to overthrow the ideas of others. Before these other members, Tim rehearses telling Ric, "You're not pulling your own weight." The ensuing responses of Festus and Karl can be seen as attempts to cover for Ric, to offset the power disequilibrium which Tim has set in motion.

Karl does not respond to Tim's remarks about separation or about Ric directly, but questions whether the group is ready to tell each other such things directly. Given his evolving image of "team" as a circle of experts who negotiate and confront each other, perhaps his statement is an attempt to validate the public articulation of discontent. Perhaps this is what "teams" do.

The ensuing discourse is the beginning of a definition of the upcoming retreat and an attempt by Tim to degrade Ric's status. Karl begins to propose that such direct expressions occur at the next
retreat. Festus attempts (again) to create an agenda for the group to talk about goals and objectives, a much more impersonal and harmless agenda. Tim again pulls back and reframes the retreat as a place to talk about commitment. There is consensus by all three that task completion and follow-through are a problem, but Tim posits causality: the reason for task incompleation (a behavioral manifestation) is lack of enthusiasm and commitment (an internal state). Again, the problem of task incompleation may be prominent throughout the hotel, but the association with lack of enthusiasm is an implicit association with Ric. Tim recasts the scripts of task incompleation put forth by Karl and Festus in a loop with Ric.

Perhaps Festus and Karl begin to intuit the power dynamics, the subtle status degradation of an absent member, unable to speak for himself. Festus begins to provide the presuppositions behind the two different operating logics. This is the first public attempt to provide legitimacy for both operating logics. Most discourse about this topic is exclusionary. It is interesting that the effort appears to be an attempt to provide equilibrium, to offset Tim’s condemnation. Karl also provides indirect support for the absent Ric: "He keeps us from going nuts sometimes because we spend money too quick." When Karl articulates a logic as to why Ric is to be included, Tim counters this designation in the ensuing dialogue.

Festus follows Karl’s recasting of Ric as a protection from overspending by “speaking for” Ric and challenging Tim’s spending practices. In this way an absent member is a useful tool for all parties. Not only does Tim use this occasion to demonstrate his commitment, but Festus and Karl use the occasion to question Tim’s
spending practices and transferring the responsibility for such
protests to Ric. By doing so, pleasantness and courtesy are main-
tained. Although what is happening here is a conceptual, ideolog-
ical battle, the "warring parties" never directly challenge or
confront one another.

Tim counters Festus' claim with another dichotomy: "I'm the
one who worries about how we treat the guest." The evolving script
posits that Ric does not care about how guests are treated. Festus
returns to provide presuppositions behind Ric's logic and proposes
that no consensus exists for what the Rooms Department goal should
be. This is a return to an earlier proposed script that the upcoming
retreat be an occasion to clarify goals. Tim concurs, saying, "I
don't know what it really is." Again we see a gesture of withdrawal
from knowledge and responsibility. Given Tim's recasting of Ric, his
depiction of Ric's unclarity is qualitatively different than Festus'.
Tim's most likely evaluation, perhaps depicting Ric's actions as
non-sensible, and an inference that he (Tim) has access to his own
logic. In another gesture of withdrawal, Karl responded with a
larger appeal to ignorance. He does not chastise Ric for not knowing
what the goals are, or for that matter, for lacking commitment and
enthusiasm as Ton claimed. Rather, he himself makes a statement of
withdrawal through ignorance. Karl withdraws from Tim's attempt to
converge the attributions of "problems" on Ric by saying that he
himself is unclear about goals. Again, it is a passive denial of
Tim's construction. His closing statement, however, leaves room for
Tim to deliver it to Ric anyway.
On Tim's part, this is discourse to achieve the effect of blaming Ric for problems while creating a strategic self-presentation. Tim is telling a story of himself as committed, as worrying about guest services, as clear about his goals and where he is headed, as one who completes tasks. He is also putting forth a story of Ric as one who lacks all of those characteristics. Along the way, he receives some indirect support from Festus and Karl. They do not question his reframing of the hotel problems as a "separation of two sides of the house." There is agreement that task incompletion is an irritating problem. This ground then becomes the springboard for Tim to depict himself as enthusiastic and caring for the guest. This is testimony to the contention among deconstructionists that the privileged pole in an opposition is dependent on the subordinate pole for its identity and emphasis. As Ric looks bad, Tim looks better. Also, Tim receives permission to confront Ric with this information, evidenced by Karl's final statement.

Karl, on his part, manages to fashion a script of withdrawal for himself. He does not explicitly take side with anyone, repeating that members should be candid with one another, while his own degree of candidness and disclosure is questionable. He lends credence to the notion that the next retreat is an occasion to discuss disappointments. He advocates bringing members together to talk about the future, while he himself disavows any notion of clarity about the future.
In August 1986, the four directors met at a local resort for a two-day retreat. In advance of the meeting, the members seemed prepared to talk openly about areas of agreement and disagreement.

Karl said,

I’m sure this won’t be as friendly as the last one. It’s time to decide who’s on this team. It’s time to get tough and everybody say what’s on their minds.

Even Ric felt that this retreat was needed: “It’s time to get our act together.”

As the meeting began, each member agreed there was a division in the hotel and this retreat was the occasion to clear up this division. Repeated references were made to the Chicago Group and the middle managers’ frustration with the directors’ confusion. In a sense, the directors were responding to the imaginary voice of the “Chicago group” by calling for this retreat. The middle managers had called them to task and they approached this retreat as if it were their duty to achieve clarity.

Each member agreed in advance to present to the others in some form the thinking behind their own vision of MI’s future. The following excerpt of discourse was preceded by a challenge from Festus to the spending practices of F&B. Therefore, Tim’s first comment may be read as a defense.

1  Tim: F&B will never contribute to debt service, but we should eventually pull a profit. It is necessary to have a world class hotel and food service to support the world class MMF.

5  Ric: I agree, it must be a great facility. I agree with Tim’s commitment to provide the best service and facility that the guest can afford. But
that's the dichotomy. What can the guest afford? The patients and guests we get can't afford 4 star. Maybe we should develop the new small property to be the luxury hotel.

12 Tim: The owners already said it's the MI.

13 Karl: The owners said we have to serve everybody. They didn't say it had to be the MI. They said we have to serve everyone from luxury to low end.

16 Festus: Didn't we put it in writing that it would be the MI that would be the luxury hotel?

18 Karl: But we told them. They didn't tell us.

20 Ric: We told them it would cost them $1 million to put in a luxury service.

21 Karl: If I had my hotel hat on, I wouldn't reconstruct the seventeenth floor for luxury service. I'd just build a new, smaller one. But if I have may director's hat on, as part of MMF, I'd say, just build in a luxury service in the MI.

26 Ric: The guests can't afford $65 room rates. We're excluding them. We're building another 100 room facility for people across the street that's totally disconnected from MMF. And that's where most of our patient-guests will want to go. We'll have to increase it from 100 to 200 rooms.

32 Festus: The dollar cost will prohibit most of the current guests.

34 Ric: We need an upscale support facility, a hotel and restaurant. The doctors need it for their egos or to do entertaining or whatever. The greatest need is for lunches, secondarily for dinner. Maybe later, if it takes off, for dinner too. Because of the push from our international guests, there's need for upscale room/domestic service. There's also a need for an upscale property for corporate business in Metroland too. There's a potential market there. But where should that be? My father used to say, "location, location, location." The association with the Clinic name is a deterrent to Corporate Metroland. For just medical business, it's an attraction. The new structure would be removed from the Clinic to a degree. It's less conducive to patient business. It would be conducive to a 4 star property. Since
it hasn’t been built, it’s an advantage in terms
of size. We can make it any way we want.

Tim: We’ve already started. It’s too late to turn
around.

Ric: There’s less of a potential for the high end
having to be subsidized.

Tim: It makes sense in hindsight. But it’s too late.

Ric: We know there’s already a large market for the low
to middle price people. We won’t lose anything.

Karl: It makes some sense in hindsight.

Tim: Yeah I can see your point, but it’s already been
started.

Karl: Wait a minute. What prevents us from doing it?

Tim: It would be suicide to go back and reverse. We’d
look like a bunch of idiots.

[Silence]

Karl: Why couldn’t we go back?

Tim: Our egos are on the line here. How could they
trust us again if we switch? We told them we’d
turn this place around.

[Silence]

Tim: Ric, in your career, have you ever seen it? Have
you ever had to turn a hotel around yourself?

Ric: My personal integrity and responsibility are on
the line here. We’re encouraging the owner to
pour money into an operation that’s not going to
return anything.

Festus: How important is the bottom line?

Ric: It’s very important. I haven’t heard from MMF
that they need a 4 star.

Tim: That’s what I heard. Those were my marching
orders, to make the MI a 4 star.

Karl: I’m sorry, but no one ever said it would be 4
star.
85 Tim: Well now's a find time to be telling me that.
86 Tim: It makes good business sense. Is the new hotel to
87 be for profit?
88 Karl: It hasn't been clear.
89 Ric: I don't know.
90 Karl: If there's a profit, it will only be for 1 or 2
91 percent.

(August 1986)

Tim begins by providing a logic for the spending practices in
F&B by associating it with a higher order calling. He associates the
need for world class food service to support a world class medical
facility. Ric concurs with Tim's notion of upgrading the facilities,
but begins to recast it in the light of quest affordability. He
begins to fashion a script in which current guests cannot afford 4
star service and proposes that the new hotel to be built, since it is
to have smaller capacity, should be the 4 star hotel. Tim attempts
to undo Ric's proposal by labelling it as "too late." His inter-
pretation of the owners' explanation is that the MI should be the
luxury hotel. Karl, the leader of the group contradicts Tim's
interpretation with his own. The owners did not say it had to be MI.
Karl implies that any understanding that currently exists can be
rewritten. He then grants legitimacy to both scripts. The leader of
this group does not show privilege to either side of the interpretive
disagreement.

Ric provides more logic and evidence for his script for making
the new hotel the luxury service. Tim continually attempts to abort
movement on the proposal by framing it as "too late." After three
such claims, Tim concedes, "yeah I can see your point, but it's
already been started." Given that Tim has been operating on the assumption for one year that HI should be 4 star, his refusal to grant voice to Ric's interpretation may be a matter of self-protection. Ric and Tim are engaged in an interpretive power struggle. Again, up to this point in this meeting, the leader of the group has not legitimized any interpretation.

Karl refuses to have Ric's script closed off. He deliberately attempts to reopen the entire question, no doubt in response to Tim's attempts to attain a privileged reading. When Karl queries the feasibility of changing course, Tim degrades the possibility, associating such a move with mirroring idiot behavior. He appeals to a higher truth of validity and credibility. The long silences punctuating these exchanges are significant. This is the first direct, explicit articulation of opposing concepts. This is the first time that members are articulating their interpretive differences.

This direct exchange does not go far, however. Tim and Karl do not stay engaged around their different scripts. Tim dramatically changes the tone by indirectly attacking Ric's capability. Questions presume possible answers. When Tim asks, "Ric, in your career have you ever seen it? Have you ever had to turn a hotel around yourself?" he already has a negative answer projected. The timing of this turn is propitious. It is a withdrawal from Karl's attempt to open the discourse to include Ric's proposal. It is a use of language to wield power, to attack Ric's credibility, to call attention away from a difficult topic, the acceptance of which would challenge the legitimacy of Tim's actions. That Tim makes this query
in public, before other members of the group, is further testimony to the power dynamics at work here. He is attempting to form a script in which Ric is seen as incapable of creating a luxury hotel. It is an effort to discredit him in the eyes of others. Again, the conflict is diluted. The exchange is redirected by Festus' question. The structure of this discourse—the legitimacy of queries from any direction—tends to disallow discord and personality attacks.

The next four lines of dialogue are dramatic. Ric and Tim state their different interpretations and Karl directly challenges Tim's interpretation. Tim is taken aback by the leader's unambiguous pronouncement: "I'm sorry but no one ever said it would be 4 star." This comes almost two years after the planning meetings under question. This is one of the only times Karl aborted Tim's attempts to present himself as the privileged reader. Again, the directness of Karl's pronouncement may be a power-equilibrium move, a "slap on the hand" following Tim's attack on Ric's credibility. This is new behavior for Karl. This is the second time in this meeting that he has attempted to offset Tim's interpretive closure. What we are witnessing is a linguistic power struggle, an effort to thwart Tim from claiming interpretive privilege.

Perhaps aware of his uncharacteristic stance, Karl is moved to explain his new thinking.

1 Karl: As you know, there's been a credibility gap for me for the last couple years, since Alley and Wolfe left. Until a few weeks ago I didn't believe either. I was with you Ric. I finally believed it three weeks ago when I was in a Board meeting with the Trustees. I had the chance to tell them that they're nuts. I told them my doubts—that we'd lose lots of money. A couple of them said, "Listen to Karl. He's telling you it's not going
to work. Why are you doing it?" Kosar just said, "because we need it for our Clinic patients." And that was it. They passed it and moved on.

(August 1986, continued)

This appears to be an explanation for a new belief stirred in Karl. It also appears to be a gesture to join with Ric's negative thinking in regard to 4 star. However, his story is recasting doubt, it is a story of transformation. There is a meta-story here. The story he is telling is about his former self, who had a lot of doubts about the Board's proposal. But he approached the Board and publicly expressed his doubts and other resonated with him. Having had the opportunity to discharge these doubts, he was converted. He began to believe that the Board would back the proposal. In the here and now of the retreat, Ric has had the opportunity to discharge doubts and perhaps like the self Karl depicted in this story, will have an occasion to transform his beliefs. The story is a gesture to further identify with Ric's doubts and fears.

Karl went on to present his vision for MI.

Karl: For me, I don't know which facility should be which—which should be high end. The MI is a flexible building because of its location. It doesn't have to be a perfect 4 star lobby—the current building. It can't be a 5 star. I can picture it being a low-end property.

And the restaurant doesn't have to be where the abbey is. I can't see bringing people from the University with sick patients—to go out for an evening of dining.

My vision is about management and people. That's where my interest is. I don't want to supervise. I don't want to follow up details to get perfection. I want to do bigger and better things. Someone else has got to do the details. Four years ago I thought you always have to have a supervisor on the job. Whip them up and then they
salute. I think it's a waste to spend money on
supervision like that.

In this hotel business I'm comfortable with either
direction. Either scenario we talked about we
could do. The luxury property could be in the
current building or in the new building. Let's
just not piss this down the drain.

Festus: That's all?
Karl: That's all.
Tim: Karl, I don't understand what you said--espec-
ially at the beginning. You said you didn't see
the need for a perfect lobby--the difficulty of
bringing University people through the lobby--
this property doesn't need to be 4 star.

Karl: The Abbey is necessary for the Board of Governors
and the Trustees. Would we be better off build-
ing it somewhere else? That's what I'm saying.

Ric: That's the problem. Gass put it through. It's
been approved and I'm not sure it's been thought
through.

Festus: You want an opportunity to air your thoughts and
discuss openly.

Ric: These thoughts have just occurred to me and we're
already building it.

(August 1986, continued)

How, in this discourse, can we explain Festus' remark, "That's all?"
Karl begins talking about his vision, he discounts the disagreement
that had been the focus of discussion. It doesn't matter to him
which hotel is 4 star. He fashions an entirely different script for
himself. What excites him is the idea of group management. Karl
buildings another narrative about how he came to finally believe in
group management. Again, he appears to grant legitimacy to both
Tim's and Ric's reading.
Tim and Festus respond with puzzlement and disappointment in Karl's presentation. They expected Karl to clarify the 4 star muddle. Specifically Tim expected Karl to support his reading of the 4 star script. They felt it was inappropriate response for a leader, given their desire to have the "two different drummer" problem clarified. If Tim and Ric were marching to two different drummers, surely Karl, the drum major, would clear it up. Their repeated requests for clarification speak to their confusion. However, the degree of their disappointment is not articulated. Like most conflict in this group, it goes underground.

Next, Tim proceeds to present his vision of MI:

1 Tim: When I came here two and a half years ago, I heard from MMF that it was my job to create 4 star service, to provide service for guests from high end to low end. I want to provide four levels of food service. I want to build the high class restaurant and make it the best restaurant in Metroland. And the European style Bistro with a European bar. I want to upgrade the coffee house. And then build a Denny's style restaurant across the street with the new hotel.

11 About two and a half years ago I came up here--I moved my family from North Carolina to build a 4 star service. That's the drummer I've been marching to. Doctor Kosar and Evans said that's what they wanted. But I've never been in a situation like this before. I've been in a street fight with you Ric for two years. I can't believe you and Karl didn't buy off on the owners--what they said. I bought off on it two and a half years ago. It's like liar's poker--I got booked in first--I'm angry.

22 Ric: I'm pissed we're building a $2 million hotel that can't be used by most of our guests. We're talking about charging them a dinner rate that's the same as a room rate. It will create excitement for those who can afford it.

27 Tim: You have that at every hotel--how large is that segment.
Ric: The new restaurant will exclude a whole group of people who we now serve. These poor people come up here--some farmer who's wife has cancer or heart surgery. He can't afford that $30 meal every night. What do we have for him?

Karl: Are we going to still have that $12.95 meal--dinner--for the kind of guest Ric's talking about?

[Long discussion about $12.95 dinners.]

Tim: Ric, I lay awake in bed at night thinking about the guest--what the guest received--how he'd treated the minute he walks in the door. I look at the Bell Stand--where the guest is greeted--and I just can't understand it. Why do you let that shabby staff happen? I don't understand why you let that shabby staff. Where are their god damn uniforms? The guest sees that--they look like shit--it's the first thing he sees. I worry about those kind of things. I see that and I don't think you care. I don't see commitment from you. The Bellmen have white socks on--their pants aren’t pressed.

[Silence.]

And how long has it been since you've given your employees reviews? I don't understand why you put up with Felicia. She sandbags us. Her mood is awful and she stops things.

Ric: I have trouble with Felicia--I admit that. But she's not treated well here. She doesn't find out about things until it's too late.

There is something jarring when one's interpretation of reality is challenged--when one is forced to acknowledge that others see the world differently. When Tim presents his vision, he insists that he interpreted WWF's signals unambiguously right from the beginning. His choice of words are no doubt fashioned by the discourse he heard before. His plans for the future are much more explicit and specific.

He then backs up to explain like Karl did before him, the historical conditions that brought him to his present stance. He
explains his arrival two and a half years ago from North Carolina, the effort to move his entire family. He expresses disbelief that Ric and Karl did not hear the owners' request the way he did.

Ric's narrative of a farmer forced to pay $30 for a meal is another attempt to frame Tim's reading of 4 star as inappropriate. Karl picks up on Ric's scenario and his query can be read as an implicit support of Ric's concern and indirect challenge to Tim's plan.

Tim then embarks on the scenario to degrade Ric. (This is the scenario that he had earlier predicted he would challenge Ric's degree of commitment.) He presents himself as a man of effort and detail, a prelude to a negative depiction of Ric's effort. He lists a series of details in which Ric's department is not operating at a 4 star level.

Again, this "attack" would only be legitimate if it had been agreed that MI would be 4 star. From the previous discourse, we know that not everyone has given consent to this. Nevertheless, Tim again asserts his stance as a privileged reader by making these claims. Further, no one takes exception to any of his claims. Neither Karl nor Festus question the legitimacy of Tim's query. This too is a testimony to the power of language. Tim asserts that his scenario of MMF's requesting a 4 star hotel is the privileged reading. By contrasting himself with Ric, he fashions a script for himself as the only one who cares for the quest, who attends to details, in short, the only one who can bring this hotel to luxury status.
The next morning they began with the question, "Where should the 4 star be?" Festus went to the flipchart and wrote the question on the board. Tim and Ric repeated their views and then Karl spoke:

1 Karl: I slept on it and thought about it. What Ric says makes a lot of sense. But MWF wanted 4 star service begun two years ago and there was no other hotel to put it in so we began to upgrade the MI. It may not be the best, logical option, but we’re not really in the hotel business. The 4 star service in the MI would not really be a waste. We will need to market it more once the new hotel is built. But it won’t be a waste—and the new restaurant won’t be a waste either. The docs want a high service restaurant—we’ll give ‘em one.

12 Tim: I agree.

13 Festus: I agree.

14 Tim: I’ve had time to sleep on it. I wish Ric you had had the idea two years earlier.

16 Festus: I guess we’re not here to make a profit—that’s becoming clear.

18 Karl: Ric, I know what it is. You can’t do anything until you have the confidence and I haven’t had it because I didn’t know what the owner really wanted. When they pulled Alley out two years ago and put Gass in, I was lost. It took me two years to learn what the owner really wanted—that Alley’s path was wrong—that we don’t have to be in the old profit mode.

26 Consultant: Then perhaps your uncertain thinking is partly responsible for the different interpretations these guys came away with—that’s why Tim and Ric heard different drummers. Ric was reading your ambivalence and confusion.

31 Karl: I know. But I myself wasn’t convinced until two weeks ago. Until I would stand up there and tell the Board the truth—that it made no sense—that this hotel won’t make money—and Kosar (the CEO) said we need it anyway. They approved the money anyway. I though “okay—here goes—I guess Gass was right.”
Ric: I'm beginning to realize that this isn't a hotel. I haven't worked for a crazy owner yet. This might be the first one.

(August 1986, continued)

After a late night of gambling and mild drinking, the four went to bed. They returned to the same suite at 10:00 a.m. where this discussion occurred.

Karl, the group leader, begins by framing the dilemma: Ric's proposal is sound and if the decision were based on logical-paradigmatic norms, his idea would be the sensible action to take. He then, however, frames the opposite scenario, the day-to-day scenario that MI has lived in for the last two years. He retells the historical narrative in such a way that past "illogical" action makes sense, as does the present decision. Clearly, he feels a pull to explain his past actions. He knows that others are expecting a certain kind of leadership from him. His phrase, "it may not be the best, logical option" demonstrates that he has heard Ric's objection, that he is, in his own internal speech and thought, answering Ric's concerns. Setting up this tension, however, leads him to a new, reframing insight: "We are not really in the hotel business." This is a new conceptual frame. It demonstrates that when it is concepts that oppose each other and live on in members' heads, rather than the person as adversary, new knowledge and insight is possible. This entire reframing of the business by Karl is only possible because of the continual articulation of opposing scripts. This conceptual difference had been going on for two years:

Theme: Tim's reading of MMF's signals: turn the hotel into a luxury, 4 star hotel.
Counter-theme: MMF will not continue to fund MI, guests will not pay for luxury service. According to traditional, market-driven hotel norms, this hotel will fail (articulated by Ric and Karl upon occasion).

Reframing/responding to both themes: We are not in the hotel business. Traditional market-driven norms do not apply and therefore this action is not a waste.

There is another meta-theme here, however. Why should Karl be urged to once again report this "conversion" story to the group? Recall that the four embarked on this "retreat" after being called to task by the middle managers who protested that the top four themselves were confused about the hotel plan. They chastised the group, withdrew from the process and mandated them to "get their act together." This is not only the way the middle managers articulated it, but also the way the group of four heard them. They continually referred to the Chicago group's demands, the separation of the hotel, as if they had a responsibility to act anew.

Recall also that the day prior to this meeting Festus and Tim were disappointed in Karl's lack of response and lack of decisiveness. He repeatedly refused to make a decisive reading in regard to the 4 star difference. No doubt, he feels the pull, perhaps reluctantly, to issue clear preference. The previous night he stated twice that he had no preference where the 4 star should be. Today he opens the morning meeting with a preference.

There is another possible meta-theme in this scenario. Karl is the leader of the group. Tim has been acting like a leader for some time. He has fashioned himself as the expert to bring the hotel to 4 star status. He has been the one who chastises Ric's poor performance, an action usually reserved for leaders. Perhaps Karl has been
attempting to hold back Tim’s power surge by refusing to issue
directives that would verify Tim’s reading. Karl opens the meeting
with a clear pronouncement, having withheld his sanction until this
moment.

Karl attempts to negate Ric’s polar conception of what is
possible. Recall that Ric painted a picture of irrational waste and
overspending. Karl recasts Ric’s scenario and repeats three times
that the new facilities will not be a waste. The norms of market-
hotel logic might make the action seem wasteful, but Karl has recast
the scenario.

Karl gives further credence to the transforming nature of his
thinking. He again goes back to recast history, to present a script
of transformation, how he came to believe, the moment his anxiety was
relieved, when he himself stood before the Board and publicly articu-
lated his fears. This change in belief resembles a religious conver-
sion script. Karl reports that he had the opportunity to speak the
unspeakable, to publicly articulate his fears and misgivings. He was
not dismissed. In fact he was heard. What was framed as the most
fearful possibility is dethroned. Again, there is a meta-narrative
here, for he is attempting to give credence to Ric’s concerns, to
hold Ric’s perspective as credible under these circumstances. Given
that the group has just reached a decision that can be read as a win-
lose in which Ric has lost, Karl is deliberately offsetting the loss
of legitimacy that usually accompanies a sense of defeat. He is
recasting the entire decision process in accordance with his evolving
image of “team.” He also is probably anticipating Tim’s efforts to
degrade Ric's status. Perhaps without confronting Tim directly, he is pronouncing that everyone should be included in this discussion.

It is not clear that Karl's efforts have persuaded anyone. Ric's final comment implying that the owner is crazy, indicates that he is still reading action from his logical market-driven frame. In spite of Karl's invitation to view the action from a new frame, Ric continues to cast their behavior as "crazy." According to Karl's script, a crucial change in belief must occur, one resembling a religious conversion script. Apparently, Ric has not, as of yet, experienced this conversion.

Post-Retreat Reflection

After the retreat, when the four returned to work, members were keenly aware that something significant had happened. In a sense, all four of them were startled. Each had experienced frustration of a preferred expectation. Each began to reflect, to reconsider history, to attempt to come to an understanding of how these differences had persisted. Perhaps they had each operated for a few years under the illusion that his assumptions were shared by others. When the middle managers felt the contradictions of the basic assumptions and called them to task, they were forced to surface the different presuppositions behind their logic. In separate discussions with the group, each member was moved to retell their story of how they came to the beliefs they held. Each cited evidence that confirmed their beliefs and then ended the story with incredulity that others were "not on the same page," as Ric put it.
Tim was visibly shocked at the retreat when Karl turned to him and said, "I’m sorry, but no one ever said the Medic Inn had to be 4 star." After the retreat, Tim’s frustration with Ric began to shift to Karl. He tried to grapple with the dissonance:

Ric’s been thinking this way all along because he’s been misled. So what am I supposed to think now? Get mad at my boss? Get mad at Karl? How could he say those things? How could he suggest the 4 star hotel doesn’t have to be the Medic Inn? Well what building was he thinking of? There is no other building. I’m worried about his mental health. He said things I know aren’t true. I protect Karl. I take care of him. I’m worried about him.

He dismisses Karl’s statement as an aberration and implies that Karl is not mentally stable. Also, Tim dismissed Ric’s presentation of his vision: “I can’t believe we wasted one whole day on that.” Tim has been acting on an exclusive reading and will not consider its opposite.

Tim must have recruited Festus, whose interpretation of the events was almost identical to Tim’s. He too shifted his anger to Karl and made attributions about Karl’s mental state. Schemas and beliefs are created and reproduced in groups and subgroups:

Tim and I went on a few walks during the retreat. We talked about Karl. He frightens me. His lack of vision, his inability to discuss vision. We need him to tell us what MMF wants out of us. Someone has to lead. We need Karl to pull the chain so we don’t go on for years with two different drummers. His lack of vision explains why we’ve been going on like this for two years. Karl’s remark to Tim that his perceived vision of 4 star didn’t mean it had to be Medic Inn. I don’t know how he can say that. Tim said who he got his marching orders from and what they were. If he was incorrect, he should have been told two years ago. Tim felt he was lied to. I’m concerned about Karl’s depression. He doesn’t like to be disagreed with. We thought he knew what he was doing. I guess the most important thing I learned was there’s no magic mission out there, it has to be developed. We can’t expect Karl to tell us. We have to develop the details. We’re not a regular hotel for profit. We’re an image maker.
So among Festus and Tim, there was a reinterpretation of Karl’s actions over the previous two and a half years, questioning the logic of his judgments. They began to criticize the decision to attend school and other manifestations of his leadership style. Festus complained about Karl’s indecisiveness:

I’m tired of what he’s doing in meetings. Asking questions, ‘What do we want to do now?’ It’s time to stop facilitating and start leading. This group management thing is not working.

Indeed, other middle managers at F&B began to subtly shift their anger for Ric towards Karl. They began to attribute the arbitrary slowness to Karl’s indecision and lack of clarity. “The guy doesn’t take a stand on anything.”

In the weeks following this retreat, shock and frustration were close to the surface for each of the four. They realized that their basic definitions for possible action were diverse and conflicting. Recall that the trigger for calling the retreat had been the middle managers’ sense that the top four were confused and not “operating off the same page.” That group had become frustrated with the confusion and indecisiveness. According to Tim, “They gave us a mandate. They said, ‘This is too confusing. You guys go decide what you want then come back and tell us.’” In fact, as a result of this retreat, the top four discovered that the indecisiveness and resistance to achieve consensus was due to their own different basic assumptions. Much of their discourse in the weeks following this retreat, were reflective efforts to understand, as Ric put it, “how we ever got to this point.” The four had to begin to come to terms with the realization that they were construing M&M signals differently and that they had sought to avoid expressing these responses
explicitly. In fact, their efforts to avoid conflict with each other created the unresolved issues that later surfaced among the middle managers.

Tim reflected back to his arrival and revealed that he had begun his new position with the assumption that his mandate was to create four star service and construct a full service seventeenth floor. He expanded the tenor of this mandate to include other ventures—a new restaurant, a four star catering service, a frozen food service. Ric had remained concerned about the "ordinary" middle and lower class guests and resisted full commitment to the four star plan. For two years Karl had seemed relatively silent in regard to committing to the four star ideal. His anxiety was repeatedly triggered, first by Gass and more recently by Ric's concerns.

Although he never stopped Tim from moving forward on the seventeenth floor and the new restaurant, he never sustained commitment to the idea. In fact, even in this retreat, he tried to avoid it.

In the weeks following the retreat, Karl reported that he felt isolated from the others. He reported hoping that others learned something from the experience.

I hope Ric got the message that he's far from the center. I hope he got an insight into his past behavior, that he's going too slow.

However, he continued to acknowledge his own participation in creating this very problem—Ric's disengagement. Karl admitted again that one of the reasons Ric was "off the mark" was because of his own ambivalence about the mission of MI. He admitted that Ric was "reading my reservations."
I know I had a role in it. It was because of my internal struggle that there were two different drummers. I wasn’t convinced MMF would support the idea and Ric believed it too.

Similarly, Karl hoped that Tim learned that he was not in complete agreement with his actions.

I hope Tim learned that he and I don’t always share the vision 100 percent. I’m not as quick to spend money as he is. Maybe Tim learned his way isn’t the only way. And I think Ric got tempered by the group. Three people were talking about X and he was Y. I know I need to be clear about when I don’t have the vision and not just sit there listening. I have to be clear.

Karl’s hope that Ric and Tim learned important lessons from the retreat may have been overly optimistic, at least for the first few weeks following the retreat. Ric reported feeling “shell-shocked.”

He continued to express resistance to the four star idea.

We have nice people in the hotel, but they need polish to get into four star thinking. It’s not an easy task. They all have to be trained. It may not be possible. I don’t know where I have to improve. If I’m the one causing all this difficulty, what do I have to change? I have to sign up to some program, to some commitment--What’s this shit? I’ve been here five years. How did I get to be the fish out of water?

The confusion expressed here (“Why do I have to change?” “How did I get to be the fish out of water?”) triggered Ric (and the others) to begin to re-visit history, to wonder how events transpired to the present state. Ric begins to recollect the story of Dave Gass’s entry, the creation of the Business Plan for the hotel. He recounts how frustrating it was--how he never had to create a Business Plan, always having received direction from the owner. He recalls that when Gass continued to talk about upgrading the services and put forth a new market plan, he (Gass) had asked Ric for numbers and projections. Ric recalls that the idea was so preposterous--creating a four star service and attempting to serve the
neighborhood—that he never took the effort seriously. And he had
assumed that others felt the same.

We went from a bunch of words to looking at the dollar impact, trying
to assign dollar values. How can you say how much money it will cost until
you do lots of research. But Gass said there was no time, he needed to present
it to the Board of Trustees in two months. So it got to be a joke. We just
filled in numbers. Let’s take rates to $90 at 80 percent occupancy. We had
18,000 possible scenarios. It was all a pipe dream. It got confusing. None of us
had confidence in the budgets we were presenting. Things happened too quickly.

We started by saying we want high quality service. Then we said we want first
class. Then for Gass’ benefit, we threw in the “perceived four star” rating to
get closer to a defined level. It was never our intent to go after a four star rating
because of the nature of this business. We went over that and over that. The
guest should “perceive” four star service, the same service as MIR offers. The
word “perceived” was important. It was all manufactured so Gass could present
it to the Board. Suddenly the dream has turned into a nightmare and Tim’s
yelling, “Where’s your commitment to make this a four star?” It’s so different
then it was when I first got here. We were a hotel. Just keep the guest satisfied
and eliminate mistakes. Now, even if the guest can’t afford four star
service, we’ll still give it to him.

This reflection on past assumptions by all four members is triggered
by the startling awakening of their differences. Following Ricouer
(1974), new insight is accompanied by some crucial revisiting and
reframing of the past.

The Strategic Plan and The New Hotel

Construction of the new 100-room hotel was scheduled to begin
in May 1987. The group needed to meet to strategically plan this and
other projects. In February 1987 the top four plus Dave Gass met
with two State University consultants to begin discussion of the
strategic plan. Prior to the retreat, Karl began to express concern
about the future plan and create accounts of helplessness reminiscent
of three years earlier. Note how Ric’s language begins to appear in
Karl’s accounts. The worry and doom of Ric’s language has begun to influence Karl. Also, he creates a dichotomy between himself and Dave Gass.

The two different drummers aren’t the owners anymore. It’s the two different clienteles. It’s the fear of our ability to serve the lower and middle class guest. Dave Gass doesn’t have the concern for the same group of people Ric and I do [emphasis added].

A week later, he again expresses concern about the plan.

I worried about this plan. Shortly the new hotel must go from 100 to 200 rooms. We have strong feelings to do it all at once instead of coming back one year later. The difficulty is, it empties this hotel. Dave insists you can control occupancy by rate; but then you’d raise the rate too high for middle clientele.

We need to put together a Business Plan about how to operate the business over the next five years. But it should be driven by the owner....How will we measure the success of this company? Is it for profit?

Clearly, Ric’s concerns triggered Karl’s fear. This is an example of extrapolation in social knowledge (Reiss, 1981), and in this case, in the direction of fear. Karl does not reproduce Tim’s account of reassurance and confidence in the hotel’s future as four star. It is Ric’s account of concern for the middle and lower class guests that he cites.

February 1987 Planning Meeting

The meeting began with each of the four putting forth on poster board what changes and developments they would like to see in their respective areas. As members began to discuss the collective ideas, discussion soon turned to possibility of four star movement in the Rooms division.

1 Festus: We can be four star from the F&B side, but the
2 Rooms side has to catch up. Is it possible to
3 have just F&B rated four star?
Tim: We can’t do it, we can’t be four star unless there’s a change in Rooms. It’s got to be upgraded.

Consultant: It sounds like there is dissatisfaction with your area Ric. In fact it sounds like your area is in jeopardy.

(Silence--4 seconds).

Tim: Well I know for me, I want this place to be four star. Are you committed to making MI four star Ric?

Ric: I’m committed to this organization.

Tim: But are you committed to making it four star?

Ric: I’m committed to upgrading this organization. Whether we go all the way, or how far we go, or whether we get there right away. We have guests who can’t afford the service. We need to keep them in mind.

Tim: But Ric, you’ve got to improve service delivery at such an overwhelming level that the guests’ dissatisfaction over the cost goes away.

Festus: The higher the cost to the guest, then the four star service should provide surplus value over that cost.

Tim: Do you want to give surplus value? Are you committed to that?

(Silence – 4 seconds)

Ric: Yes, but it takes a long time to get there, to give that level of service where the guests have no complaints.

Tim: I came here thinking it was going to be a four star organization. I’ve been taking F&B and running with it solo.

Karl: We provide excess service here. Service beyond what the guest pays for. But there is a need to provide for the lower patient population. Ric’s right. I’m not convinced a new 100 room facility will do that.
Festus: You said we provide excess service here Karl. Are you happy with the service level in Rooms?

Karl: Professionally I'm not satisfied with the level of service here. No.

Dave: Well, how important is it to you all?

Tim: It's very important this place become four star. If we don't do that, I'll leave. That's why I came here. I moved my family here.

Karl: This is my professional goal. If we don't make this a four star, I'm going to leave. Professionally it is essential to me. I'll either do it here or somewhere else.

Tim: Ric, I've heard you state your goal before--"I just don't want any guest complaints." That's not enough. That's not wanting enough. You have to want to be the best in the world, you have to eat it, sleep it, drink it. Are you ready for that?

(Silence - 5 seconds)

Consultant: What do you think Ric?

Ric: I've said before I'm committed to this organization.

Consultant: It sounds like the group is wondering whether Ric fits on this team. What do you think Festus?

Festus: I don't see that Ric has the passion.

Consultant: Tim?

Tim: I see a lot of good qualities, a lot of nice presence with the guest, but I don't see the hunger in you Ric.

Consultant: Dave?

Dave: I see lots of changes in F&B since Tim came in, but I don't see that Ric wants to respond to that. Maybe Ric feels more at home in a two star or three star hotel. Maybe the new hotel is the right place.

Consultant: Karl?
(Silence - 4 seconds)

Karl: You know I've seen the spark in Dave and Tim and Festus. But I haven't found yours yet Ric. I haven't seen any passionate commitment out of you. Maybe we're doing you a disservice. I've done you a disservice. You've been responding to my insecurity about the patient-guest population. Maybe the new hotel is the right place for you.

Consultant: Ric:

(Silence - 5 seconds)

Ric: I don't know what to say.

Karl: What do you guys think about Ric just taking over the new hotel?

Tim: That might be the best way to go. You have a good way with guests Ric.

Festus: You have a knack for taking care of the low to middle class guest. That might be a better fit.

Karl: What do you think Ric?

Ric: I'm a little shell-shocked. I need to think about it.

Dave: That's understandable. I'm a little shell-shocked too.

(February 1987)

A crucial interpretive shift has occurred. The members unequivocally have concluded that F&B department can become four star and the Rooms cannot under present leadership. This interpretive turn occurred before the meeting began, as Festus' first question reveals. This is the first direct public accounting of this dichotomy, however. Tim's account of "Rooms as holding back the hotel" has become accepted by Festus and Karl. The divestiture of Ric's status is a foregone conclusion. Tim is ready to hear Ric's
affirmative answers as negations in disguise. The account of commit-
ment that he creates and the version he creates of Ric at this
meeting are the crucial triggers that convince others. In the
meantime, the question of whether or not MI should become four star
has been indirectly settled.

This meeting was a crucial turning point for the group. First,
Tim establishes that it is necessary that the Rooms department
achieve four star status in order for the hotel to attain four star.
The attempt to dichotomize is ignored. Now the focus must become the
Rooms department, as the consultant notices. The discourse at this
point has pre-defined that Rooms will become the focus. Tim begins
to move in with direct probes. He asks Ric if he is committed to
making the organization four star. Notice that the question is no
longer whether four star is desirable. It is only four months since
the Agne Marine retreat, but the agenda has changed. The question is
now directed to the internal state of Ric—his intention and commit-
ment, rather than whether four star is feasible. Ric answers in the
affirmative with a qualification. Tim, however, has heard this
qualification before. This is, for him, a negative answer disguised
as an affirmation. The question itself delimits possible responses
and presupposes that whatever Ric’s answer, it is inadequate. Before
he continues the probe, he reframes Ric’s concerns in a way that
almost dismisses them: guest dissatisfaction with cost will dis-
appear because service will be delivered at an overwhelming level.
Festus adds credence to the notion of “surplus value.” Tim now
borrows Festus’ words and probes Ric; again the criteria of
commitment is cited: “Do you want to give surplus value? Are you
committed to that?' Once again, Ric responds affirmatively with a disclaimer: "It takes a long time."

Tim must be processing this disclaimer as a negation, for he departs from direct probes of Ric and tells a short narrative, meant to be evidence of his commitment. A distinction is being made here between genuine commitment (Tim's) and Ric's commitment. Karl picks up the strain of the two emerging definitions and attempts to speak to both sides. Excess service is needed, he claims, but he is also concerned about guest satisfaction. Karl's association of guest satisfaction with wanting to purchase rooms in a cheaper hotel is an acknowledgement of Ric's concerns and a rejection of Tim's previous claim that excess services will alleviate guests' concerns. Karl does not frame his concerns explicitly this way. He avoids the conflict that would ensue if he were to call attention to this. His response might be read as a refusal to take a stand and therefore inadequate in a discussion about genuine commitment. Perhaps Festus notices this unclarity and probes Karl directly. Karl's response is his first public acknowledgement of dissatisfaction with the service level in Rooms.

Tim and Karl are suddenly moved to make dramatic statements about their intentions to create four star. How did the previous discourse predict this? Again, given that the previous discourse had begun to place the concept of commitment as the defining thread, these dramatic pledges are further evidence of an emotional inflation, a demonstration of what genuine commitment entails. Passionate display is the price of membership. Again, these comments permanently lay to rest the question of whether or not four star
rating will be attained. Again, Tim probes Ric directly and challenges his inner drive. He repeats Ric’s previous words in an evaluative, degrading context by structurally contrasting them with his.

The context has been created for members to make evaluative statements about Ric’s commitment level. One by one, at the consultant’s urging, they dismiss Ric’s sense of commitment. Karl once again ends with a disclaimer, another statement of self-blame, and an imagined solution: perhaps Ric can run the new hotel.

The structure of the discourse shaped the construction of new meaning. Members directly probed each other and redefined contexts in their responses. When Tim asked questions of Ric like, “Do you want to give surplus value? Are you committed to that?” such questions already presume a negative answer. Even moments when Karl acknowledges Ric’s point in a way that deflates the logic in Tim’s definition of “surplus value,” he is probed with a question that requires a display of commitment, not a clarification of reasoning. The category of “passionate commitment” has been defined as the requirement for leadership and decisive action. Also, a distinction between words and genuine passion is established.

What makes the status degradation of Ric complete, is the creation of an open slot for Ric in the new hotel. It provided a solution for Karl’s dilemma—he could satisfy the mounting consensus (spearheaded by Tim) to dismiss Ric. At the same time, Karl’s expressed desire to keep everyone and his own hesitancy to take a strong explicit stand against Ric had seemed like insoluble dilemmas.
The new position provided a feasible solution. He could dismiss Ric without dismissing him.
CHAPTER VII
MARCH 1987 - JUNE 1988:
SEPARATION BETWEEN ROOMS AND F&B

With Ric's "dismissal" as Rooms manager, a slot needed to be filled. Tim made it known that he was interested in directing Rooms. Karl, however, had misgivings. Tim had been expressing strong protests against Ric's leadership for over a year. While privately, Karl often expressed concern about Tim's degrading tactics, he had never attempted to stop him. He had also come to repeat many of Tim's complaints about Ric.

At this point, Karl had misgivings in regards to Tim's desire to take over Rooms. He began to privately express interpretive repertoires of "Tim as aggressor" and "Tim as taking over," and expressing distaste for his tactics. Similarly, he began to depict himself as the "temporary savior and team builders" in Rooms.

1 Karl: Tim wants to take it over. I don't know if I can trust his management style, he'll just wreak havoc among those people. And they've never really had a chance to become a team.

2 Q: So who should take over?

3 Karl: I'm thinking I should take over until we hire someone. We have to bring someone in, he'll have to learn the culture and everything. In the meantime I may be able to slide over into Ric's slot.

(March 1987)
Karl takes over Rooms

As Karl took over as director of Rooms, his management style was markedly different from Ric's. First of all, the managers had never met as a group. Ric had complained that Felicia and a few others would turn meetings into complaint sessions. Karl began meeting with the group weekly to "begin to build a team because they've all been too separate." Ric had centralized all decisions, such as budget and personnel. Managers were used to having "purchase orders sit around on Ric's desk until he felt like moving." Karl gave the managers much more autonomy and refused to make purchase decisions. When a manager approached him with such questions in the first few months he would shrug his shoulders and say, "It is your area."

In the summer of 1987, Fomans complained that the Rooms department meetings were not progressing as he had hoped. He continued to push for group decision making, but members were not yet ready to act as an autonomous group.

They're not progressing the way I'd like to see. They've gone from total dominance to total autonomy from a leader. They're lost. They have as much discomfort with me. They need constant approval.

Nevertheless, he continued to meet weekly with the group and refused to act as what he called "a controlling manager."

Between the two departments, rumors of a "divided house" were more rampant than ever. What's important to note about this form of dissension is that the two groups had little reason to interact as groups. Other than a one-half hour staff meeting every Tuesday which included every department in the hotel and at which members
sequentially report out news, the members rarely interacted except to exchange information. In fact, interaction between individuals across departments was limited to a few members and the form of interaction was almost exclusively limited to the passing of information. For example the manager of the seventeenth floor Butler Service (an F&B manager) would inform the Front Desk manager (Rooms) about the arrival of a prestigious guest. The manager of Banquets (F&B) would inform the manager of Sales (Rooms) about pricing. Even these "simple" interactions, however, became charged and problematic.

"F&B as Favored Child"

There was continuous talk about the absence of communication between Rooms and F&B. The Root metaphor of "barrier" continued to emerge among members of Rooms department. Members spoke as if there was actually a physical barrier separating the two departments.

In the early Rooms meetings, much of the discussion centered around F&B. For those in the Rooms department, F&B was seen as "the favored child." There was a sense that they (Rooms) as a group were treated with less respect. Rumors about salary differentials began to proliferate. What is noteworthy here, as the following quotes exhibit, is not the presence of annoyance between managers--such conflicts are inevitable--but the pattern of attributing annoying events to the interdepartmental split and the special treatment granted to F&B.

(1) We really need better communication with F&B. Whatever F&B wants, we're supposed to jump and do it. A big line divides us. They think they should get whatever they want. They're the favored child on the block. When the chef in the kitchen wants something we should just jump! Now! I'm
a manager too. I have thirty people reporting to me. The Chef only has the kitchen people.

In the creative catering department, for example, Mike will demand things—he'll come with a whole list of things I should have done in the Ballroom. I told him—hey, I have a big department. I don't want to hear it.

But at least Rooms is getting some more respect. At least we meet together now. F&B has always met as a group. At least we're meeting now. They're so demanding, whatever happened to asking?

(2) F&B managers keep saying they are the ones who want four star. Like we're holding them back. Are we holding them back? I wish we would get this craziness over. We want four star too. We need to get together as one group.

Rooms Retreat

In March of 1988 the Rooms department had a crucial meeting in which they discussed their relationship with F&B. What was interesting about this discussion was the generative way in which the separation was treated. The groups began their discussion with deficiency tone, especially in regard to employees' incapacity and incompetence. As they began to expand their notion of what an employee is, they began to imagine novel solutions to old problems, including how to address the split with F&B.

The group began the meeting by talking about employees' unresponsiveness to guests. Numerous deficiency examples were cited and then the following discussion ensued:

1 Roy: It's important that employees see the world through the guests' eyes. What does the guest see and need?

2 Debbie: Need to put yourself in the guest's role. Maybe we can run focused groups with guests.

3 Carol: I wonder if they stop seeing guests as people.

4 Roy: Like they don't know how to assist guests who have requests, who have unusual needs, like a guest asking to have his car washed. They just don't
know how to respond. One time a guest wanted his
window open and the employee didn’t know how to do
it.

Joan: There’s a concierge there to respond to the guests
needs—but he’s not there all the time.

Karl: But why don’t the employees respond?

Debbie: They’re so inundated with things to do. They
worry about rules and things they shouldn’t do. A
guest wants something and they start thinking how
it’s against the rules to make an exception. The
other day, one of the security group wouldn’t
start a guest’s car for him.

Roy: They need training to overcome the impossible, to
do the impossible. They have to learn to do
what’s against the rule and just respond to the
guest. And let them know we’ll back them no
matter what. Get rid of that fear.

Carol: They have to see the world through the guests’
eyes.

Roy: They’re thinking is so limited—maybe we need to
treat them different—so they see themselves as
our partners, our associates.

Karl: Partners, yes. This is their hotel, their home.

Joan: We need to lead by example. Training alone won’t
do it.

Debbie: Right training alone won’t help them see they’re
an associate.

Mike: Maybe we should call them associates. Don’t even
call them employees—if we don’t want them to act
like employees.

Carol: We want them to make decisions, see the world
through the guests’ eyes whatever it takes.
That’s not a traditional employee.

Debbie: Stop treating them like employees and they’ll stop
acting like employees. Treat ‘em like associates.

Karl: Why not? Maybe even eliminate the department
title and just have their name and the title
“associate.”
Joan: They have to be creative thinkers--get things done. The concierge won't take lots of risks. She looks for someone else to do it. She needs confidence to act--stop acting like an employee.

Debbie: So if we stop treating her like an employee and treat her like a manager--or an associate--she can take risks.

Roy: Yes how can we inculcate that into employees' life here? The motivation to go ahead and take risks and act and not constantly be afraid and have to check with your boss. They want us to give them structure.

Carol: It's the judgment calls.

Debbie: That would be wild to start treatment them--start calling them associates. We need to give them all more freedom.

Karl: It's not just training them to act. It's a kind of thinking. We need to support their risk taking.

Debbie: They've seen us as giving them structure.

Mike: And rules.

Debbie: We need to support their growth and development.

Joan: They won't know what to do if we start calling them associates.

Karl: They'll learn. We need to all learn to think creatively and respondently.

Carol: It is possible to create that kind of climate--even by our conversation.

(March 1988)

What makes the last two utterances of this discourse possible? How could a meta-cognitive insight about the group's social constructions and capacity, emerge from this previously troubled group? The first crucial shift in framing comes when Roy suggests that in order to change the way employees treat the guests, they must see differently, empathetically. This elicits a response from Debbie in the
form of a solution that confirms Roy's new definition of the ideal employee. Carol also responds with an open query, "I wonder if they stop seeing the guests as people." Roy continues with an example of an employee not responding to a guest because of a failure to see. Karl's open question supports the ongoing query. Debbie concurs with Roy's definition by citing more examples. The accumulation of examples at this point allows Roy to put forth another definition—they need "to overcome the impossible," to disregard all rules and limits of possible action when it comes to satisfying the guest. He adds the notion that management should support these "out of the rule" actions. What is emerging is an account of employees as "overbounded by rules and unwilling to make creative choices as situations dictate." The very function usually responsible for creating rules to bound action is now being proposed to support actions that are outside of the rules. Notice how different this emerging view of employees is from the earlier discussion in 1985 in which punishment and firing were seen as desired actions.

Roy's re-statement of the idea—to get employees to act autonomously, to shed the burden of impossibility thinking—triggers another set of pre-suppositional statements. Another re-framing begins to occur when Joan puts forth a statement that seeks to explain why this preoccupation with "impossibility thinking" pervades employees: "Maybe it has something to do with the way we treat them." Others begin to pick up this notion of the managers' complicity in creating employees burdened by constricted thinking. Roy suggests a social-constructionist solution: If we see them differently, treat them like our associates or partners, they will
see themselves differently. Karl, Joan, and Debbie each resonate with the word "associate" and begin to add connotations to the metaphor. Finally Mike makes the suggestion that employees actually be called "associates." After this suggestion, Carol and Debbie still need to repeat a few of the basic presuppositions, using some of the words they’ve heard in this discourse, testing out the impact and consequence of these notions. Their words almost have a "thinking out loud" quality, still pondering, convincing themselves and others of recent thoughts. These remarks support the flow of discourse and emergence of new meaning, support the spiral of possible generative action because they support the release of possible connotations of the words. The repetition of the root assumption that began the discourse is presented in a new context, using different words, giving wider and richer meaning to the notion.

When Carol says, "We want them to make decisions, see the world through the guests eyes," there is a sense that although this concept was stated earlier, it now carries added meaning. It has evoked something larger. This phrase is now appearing in a new context and the sense of the words has changed (Vygotsky, 1962).

The last eight to ten utterances are a series of novel insights, actions only now are considered possible and explicable as a result of this discourse. There is a meta-cognitive quality to the insights. The rapid responses and turn-taking of insights almost begin to "explode" with resonance. (In fact, within one year, many of these suggestions were put into practice, including the reference to employees as "associates.") The last statement is a meta-cognitive insight par excellence: "It is possible to create the kind of
climate--even by our conversation." In fact, the discourse is an example of the very climate they are imagining is necessary for employee development. They have, here, treated each other as partners and associates and led each other to see old things in new ways. In a sense, as a collective, the group created for itself a "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1962), a cognitive scaffolding beyond their demonstrated capacity in which they can move into a potential capacity to see the world in a new, more complex way.

How can we explain Karl's statement: "It's not just training them to act. It's a kind of thinking. We need to support their risk taking"? It is the structure of the discourse that supports the emergence of novel insights and possible action. The conversation remains exploratory, with members openly speculating, not searching after final solutions. There is room for members to test out new proposals, to conduct mental trials and articulate them publicly without a need to defend, demonstrate, or prove. It was a discussion without attachment to results. The intermittent statement of the idea--to get employees to think autonomously--serves as a pivot to support the spiral of rich connotations and evocative meanings that emerge. Members repeat each others' words as if trying them out, allowing the meanings to emerge even as they are uttered. Once there is consensus on an idea, why do these notions need to be repeated? In some ways it looks like conversational regression. Throughout this discourse, phrases are tested out and repeated in different contexts: "see through the guests' eyes," "treat them like our associates," "get them to take risks." These words act like pivots
that ground the connotations of possible worlds. They need repetition because these words are not in fact the same words by the end of the discourse. With each utterance the same words are in fact new words, with different meaning.

Later in the same meeting, the group began to discuss their relationship with the F&B division. The anger towards the F&B managers was for the first time not the topic of the meeting. The expansive, facilitating cognitions of the previous discourse set the tone for the discussion of this 'hot' topic. Once again, the categories and concepts from the "associate" discourse provided a kind of lift to a higher ground. The group begins to generalize and transfer this new awareness to a different set of problems. Recall that prior to the meeting, the Rooms managers had developed an interpretive repertoire in which F&B managers were seen as arrogant, demanding, the "favored children" in the hotel. Now, however, the Rooms managers began to talk about the F&B group in a different light.

1 Roy: What are we gonna do about the divided house?
That's the next item on the agenda.

2 Joan: There's too much turfism between us and F&B.
We've become more of a group, but we still aren't a group with them.

3 Debbie: What can we do? There's almost no good communication. Nothing but walls.

4 Mike: They don't even talk to us. They're the favored child. They expect to get whatever they ask for.

5 Debbie: This is all one hotel. They are our partners too. They're our associates.

6 Roy: That's right.

7 Debbie: We have to collaborate with them.

8 Roy: That's right. They're our associates.
15  Joan: Maybe it makes sense to have that retreat we
16    talked about with the whole house. Bring all of
17    us together.

(March 1988, continued)

Once again, the construct of partnership begins to shine new
action possibilities on a group once seen as unapproachable and
negative. The group creates a new metaphor—"the whole house"—as an
ideal juxtaposition to the previous conflicted, debilitating meta-
phors of "divided house" with "favored children." Also, the notion
that "we've become more of a group" is introduced and uncontested,
inferring that members now have an experiential model for the experi-
ience of "groupness."

Later that month both management groups agreed to have a "joint
retreat" as they called it, a three day off-site at a nearby camp-
ground.

**F&B Managers' Continued Criticism**
**of Rooms Department**

Prior to the retreat, F&B managers expressed dissatisfaction
with the Rooms department. Essentially, they continued to interpret
the Rooms managers as blocking the progress toward becoming a four
star hotel. Below are the comments of F&B managers:

They have no vision. They have no idea of what a four star is.
they think they already are four star.

We have different images of what we should be. There's no
unified vision.

A few of the managers directly attributed the lack of direc-
tion to the poor hotel leadership, citing Karl's inability to provide
clear direction.
Really it all comes down to their leader. That’s why they’re lost. What is this group management thing anyway? You ask him a question and he doesn’t even answer.

F&B managers were suspicious about the upcoming retreat.

I don’t want to do some experiment in group management.

The June 1988 Retreat

The tone of the group the first two days of the retreat was markedly hostile. Frequent references were made to a lack of leadership and direction. When one individual would make a presentation, others would taunt and tease him. Each effort at leadership was met with challenge. Throughout the first day, the managers expressed frustration and apathy, disinterested with the retreat activity.

Members told jokes about the idea of group management, referred to the retreat as a waste of time and referred to the hotel as “the split house.” Many wondered aloud “if we’ll ever be a four star.” Most acrimonious, however, was talk of the lack of leadership and direction. The prevailing interpretive sense of the “group management” concept was that it was something Karl had in his head and was not accessible to anyone else. The metaphor was “group management is a mystery.”

The second day of the retreat, the managers formed three task forces to address central concerns: teamwork, professionalism, and communication. Two of the groups spent the afternoon working. However, in the communication group, an intense discussion broke out between Karl and Mike, one of the F&B managers. Mike had been one of the most dissatisfied of all the managers and he began to confront Karl about the “split house” problem and about the confusion
regarding "group management." He particularly let Karl know repeatedly that he was disappointed that Karl had been having less and less interaction with the F&B department. Karl explained why he had been withdrawn by describing the split with Tim as "a difference in management philosophies." Later that night, Mike reported the conversation to the entire group.

1 Mike: You know today I was talking to Karl, asking him about this group management thing. I still don't really have any idea what it means or what it should look like.
2       Karl never comes around anymore and when I asked him why, he said because he didn't want to sandbag anybody. He was respecting territory. Because Tim's style of management is different than his. I've come to the conclusion that there is no split house. The split is between Tim and Karl. Those are the guys who are disagreeing about things.
3
4 Tim: It's true what you say Mike. We've been avoiding each other, Karl and I.
5
6 Debbie: You mean the split house disagreement is really between you two?
7
8 Karl: Well, we have been avoiding each other. We have fundamentally different philosophies.
9
10 Frank: I have almost no interaction with Rooms people. I don't know what this two sides of the house business is about. I hear you guys talking about it all the time.
11
12 Joan: Well it's gotten better. There's not really much we have to do together--these two groups.
13
14 Roy: I've worked on both sides now and I know there's two different philosophies. The fundamentals are very different and it stems from the leaders.
15
16 Mike: That's what I'm saying. There's no split house. What we have is split leaders.
17
18 Frank: Well haven't you guys been talking to each other? Is that why we never see you Karl?
Karl: No, we haven't been talking. And yes, that's why I rarely step into that side.

Mike: The difference is about this group management thing.

Tim: Karl and I have not gotten together on understanding this group management idea. I don't understand it. I still don't understand it. And I am concerned with the service level of the hotel. I think about it all the time. Someone has to notice it. It bothers me. I don't see the movement. I get frustrated, but I don't know what I can do.

(June 1988, #1)

This discourse was a crucial re-framing for the group—the public agreement that the “split house” interpretation was in fact a conflict between the two leaders. The metaphor of “split house” was no longer central. The central concern became the conflicting interpretations of what “group management” consists of.

The tone of this public admission of a conflict seems incongruent. They are describing the root of a “split” that pre-occupied members for more than one whole year. Yet there is little hostility in the language, barely a trace of difference except in the general questions Tim poses in the last utterances. He describes his frustration and implies that the “group management” idea will offer no support toward the four star goal. Where previously he had accused Ric of “holding up the 4 star process,” he now appears to vent similar feelings not on Karl, but on Karl’s idea of group management.
The Discussion of "Group Management"

Finally, the third day of the retreat was the turning point for the group. The group decided, with Tim's and Karl's consent, that the two leaders should begin to meet more regularly, to discuss their differences, and report back to the group. As Tim said to the group:

What I'm hearing here is that the distance between Karl and I is hurting all of you. That's not good. Karl and I need to get together and get back to you. We need to be one team. I need to try to understand this group management thing.

Discussion again turned to the concept of "group management."

F&B members began to quiz Karl about the meaning of the concept.

Notice that the locus of the discussion becomes Karl and Tim's reservations are not mentioned.

1 Mike: So now what does it mean? Who decides?

2 Karl: We all do.

3 Mike: But when there's a decision to be made, who has the final say?

4 Karl: We all do.

5 Debbie: Mike, I'll tell you when I first came here I didn't understand this management style either. I thought it was crazy. I thought I was crazy. I didn't know what to do with Karl. I could never get a decision. Actually I think I drove him crazy.

6 Karl: You did.

7 Debbie: I kept going back to him asking him for clear answers and he'd keep sending me away. It's the most confused I've ever been on a job in my life. I was ready to quit. But I finally am figuring it out. Group management is checking things out with everybody. Constantly checking. Getting agreement. And you gotta do it yourself. When I used to work, it was the boss says something and that was it. Everybody fell in line.
22 Joan: You guys haven't worked with Karl like we have. We've become a tight group--except for Felicia--and we've gotten used to what Karl means by group management. It's a lot of responsibility.

26 Mike: It sounds crazy to me. One guy decides. There has to be a leader. I can't come and talk to you every time a decision or policy has to be made about something.

30 Roy: Why not?

31 Mike: Because that's not my job, that's why not. Who's gonna be the chef in the kitchen? Who's gonna do the work?

34 Frank: But it sounds like that is the work. That's what they're saying.

36 Tony: Mr. Rils always makes the final decision. We talk to each other in different departments. But Tim always decides. That's the way it should be.

39 Frank: But it sounds like Mr. Romans is saying we need to decide things as a unit.

(June 1988, #2)

In this discourse, the managers from the F&B department are struggling to understand the concept of group management which is being attributed to Karl. Mike continually poses dilemmas and asks questions that pre-supposes the existence of a hierarchical, authoritative decision structure. F&B managers, with Mike as probing spokesman, are searching for the voice of closure, the locus of the privileged authority who deems actions valid by virtue of having the "final say." Two of the Rooms managers (Joan and Debbie) offer narratives to Mike in an attempt to clarify "group management." Debbie's sympathetic admission to Mike that she too thought this system was crazy, is reminiscent of Karl's use of persuasion with Ric--persuasion by disclosure and identification of an earlier "troubled" self that has since "seen the light."
Their attempts at definition appear not to convince Mike. Tony, another F&B manager, refers to his experience, a similar model for decision making—their boss decides. Finally one F&B manager, Frank, tries to re-frame Mike’s and Tony’s accounts. His phrase—"we need to decide things as a unit"— triggers a number of concerns.

As members continued to grapple with this notion, the subject became the group itself and how members get along with one another. If there is a need to talk as a group and decide, they must have good relationships with each other. They began to indirectly talk about relationships that were difficult. And finally it became obvious that members were talking about the one most difficult member—Felicia.

1  Joan: Look, we’re talking about acting like a unit, but let's face it, a lot of us have trouble with Felicia. She’s not here and how are we going to bring her on board?

5  Jim: I’m not worried about bringing her on board. I have no interest in dealing with the woman. She is impossible. I have never known a person to be as rude and as unapproachable.

9  Roy: Felicia is tough, but her bark is bigger than her bit, she ---

11 Jim: Who needs the bark? Why should I put up with that misery? Why should I have to deal with that kind of pain for no reason?

14 Roy: Well what I was going to say was that she is loud and noisy at first, but she’s easy to win over.

16 Mike: I agree. I have a great relationship with her. She starts giving me shit and I give it right back. I don’t take anything from her and she knows it.

20 Joan: But Jim is saying why should we have to go to that trouble with anyone? She ruins meetings. Our best meetings happen when she’s not around. She stops everything and bites your head off.
Jim: Right. I've had my head bitten off for no reason. I ask for a simple request. I'll go check on the linens or something in the nicest way I can, and she starts ranting and raving--"Well, we're only the back of the house. You big shots should know about the linen. Nobody tells us anything." I simply avoid her. I want nothing to do with her. That's happened too many times.

Roy: I know what you're saying.

Joan: I agree. I avoid her too.

Mike: Well, what can we do? This is supposed to be group management. We should decide as a group, right Mr. Fomans?

Karl: Right. She has to work with all of us.

Joan: We should be able to decide to get rid of her then.

Consultant: I would just encourage you to treat her the way you yourself would like to be treated.

Jim: Something has to be done. The miserable woman is nothing less than uncivil.

Joan: We should at least confront her.

Mike M: Wait a minute. Are you saying that we can fire her if we wanted to?

Karl: If that's what the group decided.

Mike M: Wow.

(Lots of chatter.)

Mike: This is group management.

(June 1988, #3 continued)

Eventually the group elects two members to speak to Felicia, deliver a message expressing the group's concern and warning that more benevolent behavior is expected.

This discourse reveals the first time that the concept "group management" begins to resonate meaningfully for the members.
Members, for the first time, experience a concrete incident that they begin to label as "group management." Soon, the concept begins to catch others' imaginations.

1 Frank: You mean we can decide whether Felicia stays or not. We as a group can vote on that.

2 Karl: I don't know if voting is the best way but, yes, you can.

3 Mike: And can we decide things like each other's salaries? Can we give each other reviews and stuff like that?

4 Karl: I don't see why not. Who else could better decide how well each person is performing than those who have to work with them.

5 Frank: Wait a minute. You're saying we can give each other reviews and decide each others' salaries.

6 Karl: That's what the physicians do. Why can't we do it?

7 Jim: This is unusual.

(June 1988, #3 continued)

Members' expressions of disbelief at those notions is testimony to the expansive understanding that is occurring, the attempt to grasp novelty. The structure of the discourse is unlike any previous one on this retreat, up to this point marked by indirect comments regarding the lack of leadership and vision, frustration regarding the confusion of group management. Here, however, members are free to express frustration about what they perceive as the largest obstacle to the idea of participation—the most dysfunctional member. They begin to "check in" with Karl periodically, experimenting with possible actions—asking for sanction for various suggestions. As they experience no obstacles, no disaffirmation to any of
their queries, they begin to imagine more courses of action and begin to "test" the concept of group management.

These two "incidents" reflected in the two discourse excerpts were regarded by every member as the most telling, the most revealing incidents of the three-day retreat. They were regarded as the moments when members "finally started to understand group manage-
ment."

These F&B managers' comments were typical of many other accounts following the retreat:

(1) That was my first understanding of group functioning. That afternoon we talked about Felicia--people were real honest. There was no tendency to be polite. The evening of the second day--that discussion between Tim and Karl--the sense that the group has two parts faded away. It's the two of them, not the groups. It was good because we never have conflict. It never comes out in discussion.

(2) I was very candid in the discussion about Felicia. I was surprised I felt that comfortable.

(3) I was surprised and impressed with Karl's reactions to the discussions.

(4) I could feel free to say something. I could disclose anything I wanted.

(5) For the first time the group developed steps to take action. Something with muscle and bone. We can do some-
thing. It's the first time I got an idea of what group management is.

(6) If we could do that peer review--there's potential for the group to do something tangible. That would be something. The group can work on it. Karl doesn't have the last word.

At the first meeting following the retreat, the group dis-
cussed the issue of Felicia and the need to curb her rude behavior.

Following that discussion, the group returned to the discussion of "group management."

1 "ike:       Define group management, Mr. Fomans. You're on.
Karl: You got about a year?

Mike: That's the best --

Joan: Remember we were saying group consensus—we went around. I thought that was an interesting conver-
sation. When it came to group management—it was
during the meeting we were talking about group
management—it was interesting there were four or
five people in the kitchen and Carol said to us,
"What is your definition of group consensus?"
Because in essence group management is group
consensus—which to us made it clear why we come
up with different interpretations.

Frank: If the definition of group management really
matters to you, I think—what we decide what
process we want to use and then we can call it
whatever the hell you want to call it.

Mike: I have an example of it that worked very well this
week. I had a decision to make on an employee who
I wasn't sure whether I wanted or not. Nobody
said—we discussed it in our Tuesday meeting of
Food and Beverage—nobody said that's what you
should do. Nobody said, no you can't do that.
Therefore, I'm going to make the decision in the
next week or so. Now, had somebody said, "No
that's not fair. You cannot terminate that
employee," then I couldn't terminate that
employee.

SG: Well, what happens if you make a decision and you
find afterwards

Chef: Too late, they had their chance. The F&B people
had their chance to say a definite yes or no.

SG: The fact that nobody said anything either way.
Then they put it in your hands.

Chef: They trusted me as a group to make the right
decision.

Karl: You're oversimplifying that. Almost everyone in
the meeting offered their personal opinions and
insights and suggestions. They just said, "Mike,
we don't want to call the shot." It wasn't as if
the issue wasn't discussed.

Mike: We all discussed it. Oh yeh, everyone gave their
opinions.
Mike: So that was group management. Now I don't have to feel bad about—everyone at least agreed that my decision would be right.

Karl: They're willing to live with it. Ted and I had a conversation—we said basically the same thing. His definition was "I might not necessarily agree with the decision but I got my chance to have my say—but I can walk out of this meeting supporting you and not thoroughly agree with it." You guys in the kitchen want to elaborate on that?

Ted: One person had a real close answer. Was it Doug?

Joan: Were you in the kitchen with us?

Doug: No.

Joan: I think it was Matt.

Matt: Yeh.

(Silence)

Joan: Do you remember it?

Matt: Oh, you want my answer? My definition of group management is your voice would be heard. Whether or not it's taken into consideration or not—that's a different story but you have the option or the voice to say what you feel. And everybody says their opinions and we can consensus come together for a decision.

(Silence — 8 seconds)

Mike: Do we need to start putting down some written rules of group management? Like whether or not one black ball can make a decision—or keep one from being made?

Debbie: My interpretation was that if it's either all or nothing and that's the interpretation I had when I first came here cause I couldn't understand. Everything was gummied to death—talked and talked and talked and talked and no decision was ever made. Drove me crazy. So my definition of group management up here at that time was either everyone agreed or it didn't happen. That agreement level—that meant that each person would buy into it and a decision would be made.
Tim: I don't know if it's 100 percent consensus.
Democracy is not 100 percent consensus.

Debbie: Well, since that time I don't think it is either.

Tim: I think there's a helluva lot of negotiating that has to go on with the minority.

Ted: Isn't that what we said--when you don't have a consensus--if you go back to the drawing on the board--I think you could.

Tim: You could go through that because you're back to gumming it.

(July 1988)

In this discourse, the group is staking out a new forestructure of knowledge, a way to notice, to understand group management. There is a stumbling, "trying out" quality to the discussion. The group is developing a language to envisage possibility at a communal level. They are developing words that can later be internalized as thought, can become part of each member's internal dialogue. Members participate in this discussion of group management in a way entirely different than one month earlier when most comments were cynical and frustrated. There are developing a concept of group management that is not imprisoning and constricting. It is obvious that "group management" has been the topic of many informal conversations among members. These meetings are referred to throughout the discourse.

Mike continues to be the most outspoken of the F&B managers although certainly others resonate with him. Recall that Mike was convinced that rationally, an authority needs to make decisions and determine action. In this discourse, he is expanding his concept somewhat but his sense of participation is in terms of "negative liberty" (Berlin, 1969). That is, action is valid as long as no
authority deems it invalid. Action is free as long as it does not impinge on the moral boundaries delimited by some authority. Even Mike's version of his own experiment with group management is described in terms of negative liberty. Karl points out that Mike's description misses a crucial point—it is not that the group "did not say no" that is the important lesson, but that others had information they could discuss and offer insights. Karl attempts to re-frame the story in terms of "positive liberty" (Berlin, 1969). The group according to Karl, gave Mike freedom to act.

Other definitions are offered, including Matt's attribution that a group is "a place where your voice will be heard." These words evoke something in many of the members, for they are repeated in various permutations. Following Wittgenstein (1968), language attains meaning not by some a priori definition, but through usage. Words begin to be associated with other words that take on "family resemblances" so that a network of meaning emerges. In this discourse, the term "group management" becomes associated with "having one's voice heard."

The discussion continued:

1  Ted: I think it's important that we have some type of guidelines to follow along. Because if this is supposed to filter down to the ranks—we're going to run into a problem. We're going around and around on what a consensus is—a majority—votes—veto power. When you go down to your subordinates, you need something to follow.

8  Mike: We need a rule book that says absolutely how it works. Does anyone know anything about group management? Do they know what other groups do?

11 Karl: They sit down and do what we're doing. We're hammering out the rules of quote group norms that this group of particular people wants to operate
under. Each one of us is going to have our own
opinions and somehow hammer out, and some we’re
going to discover by experience. Now at least
twice today there are things that this whole body
does not want to deal with. They’re perfectly
willing to delegate these to subgroups, i.e., the
room inspection. There’ll be six of us making
that decision. We come back to the group and say
that’s what we do. These guys decided to go off
and discuss the 17th floor—we don’t want to deal
with it as a big group decision—we’re in the
process of deciding what we’re going to do as
they’re happening. It’s not a hard and fast
rule—but obviously, it’s a way this group wants
to work.

Mike: So how often does this big group get together?

Joan: We should say whether or not decisions need to be
announced—or if there should be a majority
vote—if there’s a decision that has to be made—or should no decision be made?

Tim: One of the things Karl and I found out is that we
kept away from each other too long—we weren’t
crossing over any lines—we weren’t becoming
involved in each other’s people—we over-respected
each other’s territory—and it didn’t help—it
hurt. So I think feedback about what you decide
in your area—that’s informative to the group.

Karl: My only real requirement of the decision
process—this is personal—is that all of the key
players that get effected by the decision get a
chance to be heard before the decision happens.

(Pause)

My perspective is to sit down and figure out who
are the people who could be effected by the deci-
sion and b) who has info that could affect the
choice. But consensus to me is the key players
being heard—if you’re going to be effected by a
decision, you have the right to be heard.

(July 1988, continued)

Again, we can see members’ efforts to grasp novelty, and the
temptation to construct pre-definitions to delimit this amorphous
topic. Again, suggestions are made by Ted and Mike (both F&B
managers) to create rules and guidelines for how to behave under these new norms. Again, the assumption in their accounts seems to stress the need to bound the realm of action on one hand and on the other hand to clarify the range of possible actions under these new norms. The concept of group management, at this point, is like an ontological earthquake, shaking the moorings of their assumptions, evidenced by Mike’s question: “Does anyone know anything about group management? Do they know what other groups do?”

Karl’s accounts of group management are responses to these queries and resist the effort to solidify and concretize action in advance. He adapts an interpretive stance of “group management as fluidity,” something which must be “hammered out” as the need arises, citing examples of the creation of various group forms, and the formation of various sub-groups to deal with certain issues as they arise. Finally, he repeats the phrase that began to emerge earlier as a way to understand this new principle: “Consensus is the key players are being heard.”

These are not just mere words. They are creating a world here, putting together a framework which will give them behavioral potential, a new world of objects through which to navigate in new ways giving themselves new options from which to select, enact new versions of social practice in a shared world. They are also creating new status assignments for one another. It is not enough for one person to invent new practices. Others must also accept these new practices in order to give a person behavior potential.

This is an example of language as indicator of future action as the metaphor of “voice” begins to appear in others’ versions as a way
to coordinate social action. What is evolving within the group is a social obligation to account for all behavior in intelligible terms, a new legitimate language, and a new set of accounts.
CHAPTER VIII
EVOLUTION OF INTERPRETIVE REPERTOIRES

This study has been concerned with investigating the development of the cognitive ecology of this management group over a 4 year period by appreciating the expansion and contraction of the horizon of possible meanings as expressed through members' discourse. In this chapter I would like to summarize the changing interpretive repertoires that members generated and put forth ideas regarding the ontological and epistemological assumptions that informed these interpretations.

This is a story of a management group struggling to develop new thinking that would be adequate to grasp the novel demands and challenges that members face when the culture of the parent company begins to impact them. This group initially brought a suspicious, critical thinking to bear on the novel demands they perceived. Through time, members' horizon of possible actions began to expand to allow them to see a newer world of objects that eventually became less threatening. In this sense, this is not only a story about the expansion and contraction of horizons of possible actions, but it is essentially a story about transformations in belief. Only when members shed distrust and suspicion in regard to proposed actions are they able to generate plans and strategies that lead to new knowledge.
As changes occurred on a larger, social level, and new principles for social organization emerged, members began to develop a higher level of consciousness, a more critical and authentic awareness. As the rules for communicative action began to change and came closer to approaching what Habermas (1981) calls the Ideal Speech Situation, members experienced a change in their listener bias and developed a new capacity to bring forth meaning. Through study, the evolution towards open discourse and investigating the moral and ideological underpinnings of daily practices, we can see that the forestructures of knowledge, the pre-theoretical knowledge that informed what is deemed knowable, expanded. Members began to free themselves from arbitrary political and cultural domination, to engage in more authentic self-reflection in which they developed a capacity to more openly confront the contingencies and possibilities of existence. This emancipation involved for them, a crucial re-interpretation of the past, a re-framing of the forces that once appeared to be insurmountable obstacles.

In this study of the emerging contextual and linguistic shifts over a five year period, we can see how the denotative functions of words become suspended to liberate the connotative function of words. This, too, is a form of emancipation, a willingness to let words do their own work. We can see the changing social awareness by appreciating the new expressions that emerge, the new ways to characterize interdependency, the new language for relationships and collaboration.
Therefore, I would like to summarize a few of the shifts in interpretive repertoires and the epistemological assumptions from their respective time periods.


1. **Leaders' accounts of themselves as lost, unclear and ignored by owners. Looking to owners for direction.**

   (1) When we try to find out how they want the hotel run, it's not there. Is this hotel here just for MMF or should we go after conventions and things? They haven't said clearly. I need to know what type of facility this should be. Should we serve average people? Presidents? Royalty? Business community?

   (2) We try to find out how they want this hotel run--is this here just for MMF? What kind of hotel do they want us to be? Is this here just for MMF or should we go after convention business? They haven't said clearly.

   (3) We're like orphans here. They treat us like bastard second cousins. No one tells us what we're supposed to do. We don't get MMF benefits or anything.

2. **Top and middle managers' discourse about employees tends to be negative and constraining. Narratives are constructed in which resolutions to problems tend to be punitive.**

   Bob: I saw trash on the floor near the lobby and I watched two people walk right by it. Finally I went and picked it up myself.

   Fred: They take clothes and throw them on the floor.

   Tim: I think most of it is happening at night. People leave cups half-filled all around with cigarette butts. There's no supervision at night.

   Fred: They need trained supervision.

   Mike: I know the way management probably thinks--why give them anything, they'll just destroy it? Why give them a cafeteria or clean restrooms? They just dirty them.
Ric: Maybe this group should meet every month and closely inspect an area and rate it. Then publish it in one of the monthly newspapers.

_How interaction and discourse predicts forward:_ with Horizon of Potential meanings, the group tends to produce pre-understandings that reinforce a debilitating perception of employees.

**Concrete Actions Cited:** trash, dirt, associated with employees.

**Casual Explanation:** employees are careless and walk right by.

**Anticipated Effects of Action:** if we give them things, they will ruin them.

**Possible Actions/Solutions:** train supervisors to direct them; publish offenders' names in paper.

3. **When efforts are made to present positive action possibilities, managers tend to actively deny these gestures.**

Frank: Instead of fighting over numbers, let's imagine that these statements were true. I translated the data into 14 sentences. I would suggest we just pretend these are what employees are saying they want. And if it is true, what can we do about it? What actions can you take?

Karl: But they are _not_ true. It's absolute bull shit.

(He stands up and walks to the flip chart with his pen and draws three big overlapping circles and points to each one as he talks.)

You have here the 50% or so who took the survey. Over here you have all the ones who didn’t show up from the day shift to take the survey. And this here's the absenteees, the night shift. You can base conclusions.

Frank: But what if they are true? Let's assume --

Karl: You can't assume.
Frank: Then what action would you take based on these statements.

Karl: None.

Frank: Okay. Do nothing. (I write "do nothing" on the chart.) How about others? What actions might you take if it were true, for example, that employees are proud to be associated with this place?

Ric: Use the logo in more places. (Pause). Publish more promotional material about MMF.

4. When top managers interact as a group, members tend to search for quick closure on information processing, become frustrated with suspension of final solution, attempt to resolve ambiguous situations by voting. In their accounts of their situation, they use the labels "Theory X" and "Theory Y" to grasp their experience. These labels tend to generate extreme case thinking.

Karl: This is all bull shit that we're doing.

Festus: It's a new problem. One year ago we didn't have committee decisions.

Tim: A year ago it was different. You'd bring us together to decide what to do.

Karl: A year ago my boss started to insist on group decision making among the four of us.

Festus: The final decision one year ago was Karl's.

Tim: Ain't that way no more.

Karl: I'm confused. We're confused about what the owner really wants. If we don't deliver his product, I'm out on the street. And I'm scared. A year ago I had the leadership skills to make decisions. Now it's a group decision.

Festus: What can we do?

Karl: Just pick what kind of leadership style we do through--Theory X or Theory Y. We can go back to Theory X, go back to a vertical organization chart and just decide for our own group. It used to be no one was on the hotel committee except me. We didn't have to deal with a business plan of a group. I don't have the techniques to deal with
group decisions. I can deal with a straight leadership role.

Festus: *Under the old Theory X system, if we were to buy a business, we’d decided what kind of business we want to be in and then just tell them to get it. But no one tells us. Now we have to meet as a group and everyone has veto power.*

Karl: Under the old system, Ric would say, "I need to buy a bus for this reason." He could just go and buy it.

Festus: *A year ago we’d have a proposal. It wasn’t debated over and over. We slow down when we do this group process. It would be better if you were just a dictator.*

Tim: I’ve been listening. It’s 11:30. What did we accomplish? Nothing.

Ric: I think action walks and bull shit talks.

Karl: Okay, I’m the boss. The meeting is over.

5. *Once the group came to a decision on a business plan, most members generated passive, cynical versions of the plan. Even though MMF begins to finance reconstruction of the hotel, there is a fear and suspicion among some top managers that MMF will withdraw support once they realize that the strategy is wrong. They have a sense of passivity and fear of dismissal.*

Karl: MMF has not given us a vision.

Q.: But the Board of Trustees is about to approve a business plan for MI.

Karl: I don’t trust it. It’s the boss’ plan. He keeps calling to get new numbers. That shows how insecure it is. It’s a game he keeps rewriting.

Q.: What will the Board have to do to prove to you that they accept the business plan that says they will eat the loss of MI and allow you to move on with business?

Karl: Nothing. It will just be a cost decision and they’ll keep spending it until someday they’ll say—"This has gotten out of hand"—and I’ll be gone.
6. The idea of making the hotel a 4 star hotel is proposed. It is an interpretation of the novel demands that owner is making, into language the managers have heard. For members of the Food and Beverage Department, this image generates interpretative repertoires of excitement, hope, and achievement.

(1) I'd like to see MI become as renowned in the hotel field as MMF is in the medical field. This place can really have status. We can cater to the medical community. We can be a showcase for Metroland.

(2) We will make this the best hotel in Metroland. We will be in the area of hotels what MMF is in the medical side.

7. Among those in the Rooms Department, the managers generate scripts negating the possibility of the hotel becoming 4 star. They cite numerous concrete details demonstrating that "4 star is a long way off."

A lot of people think you just become 4 star overnight. But it takes time. You can't just rush into it. Changing things takes a long time. There's only one way to do it I know of—the rote method. Daily dosages of "this is what you have to do" all the way down the line. It takes consistent effort. Like the employee entrance and the corridor look like hell. How can they leave it like that? The back dock, the lobby, there's stuff on the floor. It takes a long time for people to behave differently. We build a nice new beautiful ballroom and there's a piece of chicken on the floor from yesterday's banquet. I expect that kind of stuff to happen for a long time.

8. As Karl, the Director of the Hotel Company, interacts with MMF management, he begins to report an intrigue with the possibility of "team."

Mary [his wife] told me yesterday about an exercise she did in class with logo blocks. They had to put this thing together, but there was no authority, no boss. They had to just keep talking to her. "This thing really works," she said. "This idea about groups really works." Maybe I should take the course next year because I'll be damned if I believe it works.

How do those guys do it? They keep the place running and nobody really runs it. They do things in teams and they're still the best in their industry.

I'd like a formal and informal organization chart to look just like MMF. You have a pile of experts not attached to
a hierarchical chart and when you need help from each other, you go and find them.

I woke up at 3 in the morning last night. It came to me. We need to have a team here. It’s like they have with the physicians. It’s like a football team working together towards the goal. Each person runs on his own but together. We got to have a team because it means mutual respect, shared responsibility, and self reliance. That’s what I was thinking about. I got up and I looked up the word synergy. [He reads from the notes he has written.] Synergistic. A system of two or more people that achieve more than any individual is capable. It requires group effort to accomplish the task. The group can achieve more than any of its members alone. I’m starting to realize, if you can’t fit into this kind of group, you can’t survive here. How can we communicate this to the organization?

9. Others in the top management group cite cynical, negative images in regard to a collaborative concept of “team.” This is often associated with a narrative in which a search for clear authoritative leadership and final solutions are sought and members can act with confidence and without “bumping into each other.” Ric, the Rooms Manager, continues to cite concrete deficient details as evidence that a group meeting is fruitless: “Why are we having a meeting,” he said, “when the employees dock is still dirty.

So we’re supposed to meet. The idea of the four of us sitting in a room and going over specific things about what’s frustrating us—I don’t want to be involved. That’s not why I came to work here—to do some Theory Z experiment. I came here to run a hotel—to train employees. There’s nothing wrong with being a team, that’s not the way I’ve been trained. The team has too many coaches. On a football team there’s only one coach.

10. When members meet together to discuss future plans they tend to generate scripts of impending doom. Accounts of fear and debilitating thought usually emerge in a context in which action is being planned. These repeated versions of constraint and doom may function to withdraw from action and responsibility.

Festus: We’ve been given a blank check.

Karl: We get money way too easy. No one’s ever rejected anything we’ve asked for. Doesn’t that bother anybody? Am I the only one who’s bothered by it?

Ric: I agree. I’m just waiting for the hammer to fall.

Karl: Is anybody but me nervous that our operating projections in the business plan haven't been tested yet?

Ric: I am.

Festus: I am. I'm only a support person, but it you guys are nervous, then I'm nervous.

Karl: Can we deliver a 4 star product?

Festus: We better be able to. We put the Business Plan before the Board of Governors as a united front.

Ric: I'm afraid they're going to wake up and discover this thing can't work like this. There's no way. They're gonna pull the plug on us.

11. Members who have interpretive differences with each other in regard to hotel's future, tend to be suspicious of one another, search for ways to eliminate the other's perspective. Discourse strategies include finding fault with the other by providing a legitimacy for oneself. Efforts to maximize one's claim to be heard assumes an exclusive solution must be reached. In order to be heard, one's interpretation of events must prevail over competing versions.

(1) Festus: So when is the retreat? We need to set common goals.

Karl: Nothing's changed since the last one.

Tim: I agree.

Festus: There's a new problem, a new style of management.

Karl: That's an old problem.

Tim: There's even more of a separation between the two sides of the house [silence].

Tim: Before we establish common goals, I want to hear personal commitments. I don't feel them, see them, hear them, I wonder how deep they are with Ric. I hear them from you and Karl, but I don't know where Ric is. I'm where I was last year with him. I'm not ready to write him off yet but--but how can we formulate a team?
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(2)

Ric:
The guests can’t afford $65 room rates. We’re excluding them. We’re building another 100 room facility for people across the street that’s totally disconnected from MMF. And that’s where most of our patient-guests will want to go. We’ll have to increase it from 100 to 200 rooms.

Festus:
The dollar cost will prohibit most of the current guests.

Ric:
We need an upscale support facility, a hotel and restaurant. The doctors need it for their egos or to do entertaining or whatever. The greatest need is for lunches, secondarily for dinner. Maybe later, if it takes off, for dinner too. Because of the push from our international guests, there’s need for upscale room/domestic services. There’s also a need for an upscale property for corporate business in Metroland too. There’s a potential market there. But where should that be? My father used to say “location, location, location.” The association with the Clinic name is a deterrent to Corporate Metroland. For just medical business, it’s an attraction. The new structure would be removed from the Clinic to a degree. It’s less conducive to patient business. It would be conducive to a 4 star property. Since it hasn’t been built, it’s an advantage in terms of size. We can make it any way we want.

Tim:
We’ve already started. It’s too late to turn around.

Ric:
There’s less of a potential for the high end having to be subsidized.

Tim:
It makes sense in hindsight. But it’s too late.

Ric:
We know there’s already a large market for the low to middle price people. We won’t lose anything.

Karl:
It makes some sense in hindsight.

Tim:
Yeah I can see your point, but it’s already been started.

Karl:
Wait a minute. What prevents us from doing it?

Tim:
It would be suicide to go back and reverse. We’d look like a bunch of idiots.
[Silence]

Karl: Why couldn't we go back?

Tim: Ric, in your career, have you ever seen it? Have you ever had to turn a hotel around yourself?

Ric: My personal integrity and responsibility are on the line here. We're encouraging the owner to pour money into an operation that's not going to return anything.

Festus: How important is the bottom line?

Ric: It's very important. I haven't heard from MMF that they need a 4 star.

Tim: That's what I heard. Those were my marching orders, to make the MI a 4 star.

Karl: I'm sorry, but no one ever said it would be 4 star.

Tim: Well now's a find time to be telling me that.

Assumptions About Human Nature During this Period

There is an assumption that people are incompetent unless they demonstrate competence. Many of the discussions and many of the decisions and policies stemming from these discussions were based on a negative "half-empty" view of human nature. In regard to the MMF leaders, the MI managers were convinced that they were making uninformed decisions. Specifically, Dan Gass was treated with suspicion. Repeatedly, the managers would remark, "He just doesn't know what he's doing. He doesn't belong here. He knows nothing about hotels." Also, discussions about employees tended to dwell on negative examples which furthered the sense that employees were incompetent and incapable of intelligent behavior.

Following these assumptions, the only basis they could imagine for structuring human relationships was hierarchical and autocratic,
creating rules which call for clear separation of duties, and a system to manage the less competent. The need to think and decide should be minimized among employees; only managers and leaders should be given such duties. This view that power belongs in the hands of the leaders extended to their own situation in relation to MMF leaders. They themselves felt powerless in regard to MMF leaders. They wanted MMF leaders to do the thinking and planning and tell them "what kind of hotel this is supposed to be." In spite of the fact that Gass and others invited them to create their business plan, they approached the project with suspicion and the belief that they had little influence. Gass' repeated attempts to engage them in the thinking process were met with passivity and anxiety rather than active contributions.

Human interaction was experienced, seen and felt as fundamentally competitive. Because members were convinced that there is one best way of thinking and that power resides in such supreme structures, efforts were made to put forth preferred, exclusive interpretations. Interpretive battles, especially between Tim and Ric, had the effect of a power struggle. Members acted with the assumption that only one perspective will reign. The behavior manifestation of this assumption was the continued undermining of one another's perspective, the hesitancy to support each others' views, and the continual search for details that would act as the "knockout punch," permanently burying the competing interpretation. Eventually these discussions moved from attacks on the ideas to attacks on the person. There were few, if any, efforts to include multiple perspectives toward building consensus.
Passive, Reactive Ontological Awareness

Members essentially felt subordinate to forces outside the organization, as victims to the market forces. Efforts to create future action plans were continually aborted and overshadowed by feelings of anxiety and fear of impending doom. Members continually returned to scripts in which they depicted themselves as lost, unclear, ignored by the MMF owners, and suffering at the whim of market forces. Such a passive ontological stance reflects what Baxter (1982) called a "non-autonomous state of being." The locus of awareness is other-willed, perpetually under other's control. Members continually look to highly invested others for consent and approval.

Efforts to shift the locus of awareness to the self, to take active control are blocked. When efforts are made to encourage members to engage in positive cognition that would facilitate awareness of possible action, members actively block these efforts. This mode of awareness is reminiscent of Sartre's concept of "bad faith" (1966), the existentialist's favorite example of inauthentic awareness. This is the mode of awareness in which the individual refuses to be aware of the openness of nature, the contingencies and choices available, and instead opts for closure on contingencies, eliminating possible personal choices by placing authority for such matters in the purview of another. Members actively refused to be aware of choices that would appear if they allowed themselves to see contingency. Members are willing to allow their lives to become
subordinate to some abstract, impersonal authority—either in the form of "the marketplace" or the "cloud" of leaders at MMF.

In this sense, members' activities were bounded by a sense of negative freedom (Berlin, 1969), that is freedom to act is viewed as freedom from some granting authority. Action is bounded by what the Other (organization, leaders, God, etc.) defines as not unpermissible.

The ideal endpoint is imagined as fixed, pre-determined, and outside the self, not an open-ended possible creation of one's own making. This group is engaged in attainment of a distant ideal of another's making. They are preoccupied with being given clear directions and marching orders, like Calvinistic man waiting for God's grace and permission to enter Heaven. They are not aware of the emerging nature of the relationships with Gass and other leaders at MMF. In fact, they are convinced, at first, that these administrators already have a plan in mind for MI. They repeatedly refuse invitations to see the possibility of a future plan in which the MI becomes a marketable, four star hotel.

Epistemological Stance

The question of epistemology raises the issue—How do members achieve awareness and knowledge? At this point, members achieve awareness through immersion in concrete, troublesome details and tend to view these within a very short time perspective. Attention is limited, almost constricted, to short-term problems. Members tend not to be concerned with the whole evolving system, but remain immersed in the outward manifestation of daily events. Members
become, in a sense, taxonomists of the deficient and concrete. They cite numerous examples of problems as evidence that they are involved, that they know the world. In fact, this problematic, concrete world is the world they have come to confidently know and it is this kind of world that responds to them, the dependable range of objects they have learned to navigate through. The one topic area that brings differing parties together is the topic of employee incompetence.

Again, their efforts at planning are awkward and unsatisfying. It is difficult for them to sustain a vision of a normative future, of "what ought to be." Instead, they are in a mode of adapting to the immediate here and now of troublesome events.

Criteria of Verifiability

Something is deemed "true" and "valid" if a superior entity (either a person or a rule) deems it so. The basis for establishing truth is the search for a superior voice, in the form of a superordinate, or in the form of one who holds expert knowledge. This criteria for truth search is a hierarchical one, like Popper's view of accumulated truth in science, and is consistent with the non-autonomous mode of ontological awareness. During group meetings, for example, members do not look to each other for affirmation nor do they see as their goal the search for agreement or consensus. Meetings reach a point of frustration whenever members do not receive a clear authoritative answer from some superior voice. Given this view of truth, it is no wonder that when a single member voiced dissent, the group effort tended to crumble and members withdrew into
isolation. Again, the belief is that an unchallengeable superior voice deems the true and right course and defines and delimits the knowable, attainable world. **If even one person dissents, the entire epistemology is challenged.** Therefore, the mere voicing of dissent began to undermine the group's epistemology.

**Concept of Time**

Members tend to have a linear and monochronic view of time. Members tend to see each person as having fixed characteristics over time, engaged in immutable patterns of behavior. Past history, rather than imagined future, is the guide to behavior and decisions. Members are expected to act in pre-defined, previously demonstrated ways. Variations in behavior are seen as anomalies because humans have monolithic character structures. Since time is viewed in short, linear segments, members cannot imagine a qualitatively different social-organizational arrangement.

**Source of Self-Worth**

Members **achieve a sense of self-worth through identifying deficiencies and fixing problems.** Discovering deficiencies and publicly articulating problems are activities which demonstrate expertise and superiority over some part of the world. This, too, is related to the criteria of verifiability as the expression of superior voice. By searching for problems members achieve a sense of their own capacity to deem validity on some interpretation of reality. One clear way to exert authority and demonstrate superiority is to notice and talk about things that are wrong, in essence achieving superiority by claiming some part of the world is inferior.
This problem identification can take the form of noticing physical
deficiencies or noticing deficiencies in employees.

Receiving approval from superiors and dispensing or withhold-
ing approval from subordinates are also sources of self-worth. Given
the non-autonomous ontological stance, one knows one’s worth when one
receives approval from a highly-invested other. Confluent, har-
monious relationships provide verification of one’s goodness.
Therefore, interpersonal conflict, especially with one of higher
rank, is to be avoided at all costs. When differences arise over
interpretation of issues, conflict is avoided very skillfully.
Members take great efforts to find areas of agreement with each other
rather than risk disapproval. Likability is crucial for the
maintenance of interpersonal fabric and personal sense of worth.
There is no skill more fundamental than being liked. When one
experiences deficiency in this area, these efforts diminish to
efforts to be noticed.

Interpretive Repertoires 1988-89

1. In accounts of “group management,” the concept of “group”
becomes associated with the concept of “having your voice
heard.”

   (1) If a decision impacts you, you should have some involve-
   ment. Your voice needs to be heard. There is an obliga-
tion. You have a voice in this decision.

   (2) Someone proposed maybe we as a group should do peer
   review. Karl said something like, Yes, who knows better
   about who does a good job than you guys. You know each
   other. You have to work with each other.” That would be
   amazing. There’s potential for this group to really do
   something tangible. That’s when I realized what group
   management is. It’s a chance to have your voice heard.
2. **When members experience each other as having different interpretations, accounts include reports of tacit efforts to preserve the relationship, to identify areas of potential agreement and congruence.**

Relationships have evolved, just in the last three months. Even with a few that drive me crazy. Joan will always drive me crazy. But I have to learn to deal with it. Her possessiveness drives me crazy. I try now to not be too critical. I try now to step back and evaluate what I'm doing before I act with her. I try to be helpful with her in a quiet way so she hardly even notices it. Otherwise, if I'm too direct, all her defenses go up and she becomes very protective. So I step back. I can do more with kindness then anger. She's very insecure and easily threatened. I'll try and quietly suggest she look at such and such, like a way to do something with the computer. I'll say it like, "You know we could look at this some time. I have an idea you might be interested in. Let's get together before you do that forecast. I could give you info that would help make it more accurate." It makes her look better.

Q. And is that how it used to work in your old job, before this group management?

A. Hell no. I'd send a memo to the GM and say, "The front desk is screwing up the forecasts again." You just act on your own. You see before there a lot of deception. I had to protect myself. I can't believe how far we've come here, how cooperative people have become.

3. **Members offer accounts in which they report a different kind of thinking, transcending the concrete interaction of the moment, distancing themselves from their particular environment, imagining possible human repercussions, and acting with informed insight.**

Q. What is "group management?"

A. Well I have to say, it's totally different that anything I was used to. I was at first very closed minded to it. It seemed like people just kept talking and never deciding. I was seen as terrible, a dictator who just bulldozed things. But god, I was just trying to get a job done. Now, it's different. I step back and wait. I don't act impulsively. I say to myself, "What is this action step going to achieve? How will it impact this other guy or the XYZ department? This might intensify an already bad situation. If I were a receptionists over there and someone tried this, I'd be hurt." I just acted as an
individual. I don’t think like that now. Now I stop and think about how an action affects someone else. I try to get people to guy in before I do something. When I started this XYZ project, I went around and got everybody’s input before I did anything else. That’s all new behavior to me. That’s group management I guess—getting people to buy it.

4. **Members’ accounts of the “group” include reports that it is a place where possibilities are pursued.**

Q. Some have said that “group management” is a waste of time.

A. No. It does take a long time. A lot longer. But it’s a building process. All possibilities are pursued. You try to involve as many people in all the issues as you can. They bring all kinds of things to the issues. You just see things you never saw before. Even in my department I have group meetings now.

Q. Don’t you lose your sense of autonomy and independence?

A. No. Your voice gets heard. Other people actually hear you. It really works, it makes a difference. Listen. I’ve worked on other properties, and the GM just does it. He just does whatever he wants. Here you really have your voice heard.

5. **Member’s accounts include citing learning and development as a goal. When they attribute causality to their actions, accounts often involve creating opportunities for others’ learning, creating contexts that enhance development.**

(1) We’re putting in this Performance Development program. We want to make sure that it’s separate from getting a grade, from getting an evaluation. It should be just for learning. You can’t learn if you’re gonna get beat over the head with a stick.

(2) I have a concern about the way Joan is running the front desk. We have to give these people the tools they need. Somehow we’re still missing with her. Yet I can’t say I’ve tried everything it takes to help that person move forward. You have to give them every opportunity to take off. She admits it—she hasn’t had the experience. Karl and I have been talking about sending her to XYZ hotel to see how they run, to see if it gives her some ideas.

6. **Members deliberately construct contexts to enhance discourse. When new ideas are introduced, the members, rather than**
suppressing discord, begin to create contexts for the expression of diverse and different views. Negative perspectives do not stop members from actively seeking agreement.

(Meeting in which Employee Right of Review Board is proposed.)

Felicia: If people just do their jobs you don't need this.
Karl: What about others in the group?
Felicia: What about them?
Karl: Is there any value in the idea for them?
Felicia: I don't know. I just want to play hotel. We should be working hard right now.
Karl: Are others ready? Let's hear from some other groups.
Ann: One thing we mentioned was that a vehicle for employees voice to be heard already exists—it's called the union. Besides, if there are three line employees and one of them is away from her job to do this, to be on the board, the others will get mad.
Matt: You can veto this person off the board.
Kim: It's the same as if she were called for jury duty.
Sara: People make time for meetings if they have to. The question is, what are we doing when an employee has a complaint? It will take only a couple hours time.
Joe: The spirit is getting lost here. It might disturb the operation of the hotel if an employee is gone at a crucial time.
Karl: Yes it will disturb the operations. These meetings disturb the operations.

7. Exchanges in discourse involve many queries into others' presuppositions toward the purpose of seeking agreement.

Karl: No. I'm assuming they're not [laughter]. I'd be more than happy to—I think you can engage the group here one on one—I have to put forward at least one question, one thought, for the rest of you—but I suspect that unless you—that is those of you we haven't convinced yet—are ranting and
raving and screaming at us—that we may want to
gather together and try such a system voluntarily
in our own areas. And I would also ask you to
give some thought as to how that might impact your
areas. If we should move forward with say the
kitchen and front desk—with this kind of right of
review. It obviously does have impact on the rest
of the hotel—we may ask you for that permission
next meeting I suspect.

Joe: I think it may not be a bad idea to see if those
who weren’t convinced are convinced.

Jenny: By next meeting or by each of us giving into our
own areas?

Joe: No, No—I mean fairly reading--

Matt: Like right now? Are you convinced?

Joe: [nods]

Matt: Are you guys still strongly opposed to this?

Ann: Our group was never strongly opposed.

Joe: We were never opposed—we just needed some ques-
tions answered.

Sara: Where is the group? Could everybody go back to
their appropriate areas?

Karl: Are you unconvinced?

Joe: I’m willing to try.

Ann: I’d be willing to try.

8. Members begin to interpret “group management” as a process that
guarantees personal security. With some, this is associated
with sense of personal liberty.

(1) Of all the things I learned from this, one thing is I know
how this group will treat me. I know I’ll never get
fired. I can’t imagine that they’ll ever fire me. I’ve
never had a job like that.

(2) I suddenly realized, Felicia can’t be fired without my
approval. If someone wants to protect her, they probably
can’t fire her. I like to stand up for what I believe is
right. Now I can see I can win an argument around here.
I love that. It’s like a game.
(3) At least I know how they’ll treat me. I could do almost anything within reason and I probably won’t get fired.

9. In their accounts of the group, members offer attributions of power and reverence.

(1) Everybody has a problem with Matt. He just takes off and does things on his own. Actually, he’s always been that way. It’s made his department fly. But now they’re forcibly calling him to terms. They’re tired of his bull shit and not informing them. They confronted him in a large meeting and told him he’s got to inform them step by step what he’s doing. I think it shocked him. He knows he has to rely on them or his events won’t fly.

(2) I have a new feeling about being a leader and what it means. I understand what Kosar told me. I know now I have the authority, I’m in charge, but I’m the leader by the consent of the group. I know now what he’s doing when he tries to work the balance between the Board of Governors and the organization. They consent to him as a leader. At that retreat, I actually felt the group’s voice. I felt them giving consent. It’s an amazing feeling. I can’t describe it. You’re so full of yourself, you just can’t screw up. You can’t make a mistake. You’re immortal. When I’m wavering on an idea, I used to just feel insecure about it. I’d be passive. Now I bring it to the group. It gives me confidence.

10. Deliberate efforts are made not to resolve problems too quickly, before everyone is heard. Patience is advocated in order to give members a chance to speak, to create a context for the emerging of consent.

(1) One of the most frame-breaking acts this group took was the decision that we can’t vote. We can’t decide by voting. Voting is not the same as consensus.

(2) I made a mistake last week. I asked for a show of hands. I was getting impatient. We’d heard the same ideas over and over. It was time to decide I thought. Well it was a mistake. They stopped me. People just needed to keep talking about it. I forgot, sometimes people just have to blow off steam. They have to get stuff out of their system. It doesn’t mean I have to take all of it with me, keep it going in my head after they say it. Just keep giving people room.
11. **Members speak of the environment as something that they can influence and shape as willed.**

(1) I just wanted to announce to all of you that we're not gonna be subsidized by MMF next year. They're reducing it every year and we have to make money on our own. The marketing plan is underway. I'm not worried.

(2) Roy: In order to be 4 star, we need to have a pool.

Mike: We just had the pool removed two years ago.

Karl: We can go back to MMF and convince them to build one on the third floor. It will take some convincing, but we could do it.

**Ontological/Epistemological Assumptions of Egalitarian Thought**

In the last two years of this longitudinal study, a crucial shift in thinking occurred, a fundamentally different way of seeing the world, of relating to one another. It would be fair to say that members literally came to see the organizing process differently and fashioned new roles for themselves. As the interpretive repertoires from this period illustrate, members adapted different concepts and different cognitive orientations to understand the process of organizing. This wider, more expansive horizon of understanding formed a cognitive ecology that allowed for more creative, responsible behaviors. Phenomena previously perceived as insurmountable obstacles now no longer hinder the relational learning process. In a sense, they have expanded their range of dependable objects, capable of navigating in a more complex world. The interpretive repertoires which members earlier had adopted, reflecting a sense of fear, inferiority, and incompetence, were a reflection of an unknown, undependable range of objects. No concepts, no cognitive scripts had existed to guide and navigate members through that confusing world.
A contracted horizon of possible objects could not grasp the novelty that was posed before them. Feelings of anxiety and constricted awareness were inevitable. The negative, debilitating accounts of that period were a reflection of an unknowable world filled with threatening obstacles.

The new-found clarity of 1987-1988 can be explored at a deeper philosophical level. Like the interpretive tendencies from the earlier years, here too we can see a set of epistemological and ontological assumptions. What are the new set of assumptions that inform members of awareness, that create the horizon of knowable objects?

Assumptions about Human Nature

Humans are now seen not as fixed states of being, not as having immutable character structures, but as in a process of "becoming." Earlier, employees were seen as innately deficient and incompetent, "empty" and waiting to be "filled with knowledge." Now, however, there are attributions of innate potential. Organizational members require a developmental context that would facilitate the expression of potential. This expressive view of human development calls for a more trusting view of human nature. Proof is no longer required to demonstrate competence. The assumptions of incompetence appear to have dissipated. Members do not hold each other to paradigmatic logic demanding evidence. Even line employees are talked about in a different way. Managers begin to talk about creating a context "that brings out the best" in employees. The assumption, of course, is that the best is already there, waiting to be expressed.
Given these changing assumptions, the basis for structuring human relationships must alter also. Bureaucratic, traditional structures are no longer appropriate. In fact, managers develop a meta-cognitive capacity, a capacity to notice that top-down, subordinating relationships help create subordinate-like behavior. New forms of organizing are given experimental trials as new, more egalitarian structures begin to emerge. Decisions and discussions are now placed in the hands of committees. Deliberate efforts are made to create diverse membership on these committees, to include different perspectives.

Rather than seeking to eliminate competitive viewpoints with excess evidence and establish preferred interpretations, members begin to notice and seek for areas of agreement. The activity of seeking consensus replaces the desire to defeat opponents.

The new attributions and accounts of the "group" include seeing the group as having more power than any individual. Given the new thinking in regard to the importance of seeking agreement among members with innate potential, the group is now seen as the forum where potential is realized and consensus achieved. Attempts are made to include diverse interpretations, to open the processing of information rather than seek premature closure. In fact, the group is seen not as imprisoning, but as a place where liberty and personal security can be achieve because more rather than less possibilities can be pursued.
"Proactive" Orientation to the World

Members begin to see themselves as creators not only of their organization, but the environmental, market forces that shape the organization. Members begin to sense the very process of negotiation and discourse helps to create the world that is later experienced as real and objective. Issues and dilemmas previously seen as outside their control are now discussed as things to be shaped and created. Efforts are now made to shape the market, to create the necessary market that would guarantee the hotel's survival. Rather than shrink at the prospect of unilateral decisions made by MMF leaders, managers begin to imagine ways to discuss and negotiate these issues, how to "win over" necessary stakeholders. This "proactive" orientation to the world belies a deeper level of assumptions, a meta-cognitive awareness that the mere act of engaging in discourse and negotiation helps to shape the world one experiences as reality. Traditional roles are no longer seen as immutable. As one member said, "It's possible that Tim and Karl will no longer have all the power."

Epistemology

The epistemology, the members' way of knowing the world, is qualitatively different. Rather than knowing the world through immersion in the concrete particulars, members begin to stand back and distance themselves from the particulars and are concerned with larger wholes. Abstract concepts begin to guide selection of the perceivable world, that is, a deliberate, conscious effort to search for certain details within a definable frame. In this sense, members
begin to take a **longer term focus** when confronting obstacles and begin to imagine possibilities emerging where they once saw obstacles and hindrances. Rather than seeing isolated individuals in actions, members begin to see the relationship as a whole and rather than react immediately to problems with an individual, they imagine ways to **preserve the relationship** through time, beyond the current obstacle. This capacity to step back and see larger wholes is again evidence of meta-cognitive capacity, a mode of **awareness through conscious** awareness. This shift in awareness from the component parts to the relationship between entities leads to the capacity to see not only "what is," but "what ought to be," what members are capable of through collaborative activity.

Members are able to adopt a **more dialectic mode of knowing**, seeing things from different perspectives, able to appreciate multiple viewpoints. Epistemologically, there is a "pull" to not reduce tension by avoiding uncertainty and the unexpected. There is a **new appreciation of novelty** and the possibilities inherent in the unexpected. Novelty is something to be embraced rather than avoided. In this sense, members have a more reciprocal relationship with the world, which calls for their own expressiveness as co-creators and partners. In a sense, members developed a "second innocence" (Maslow, 1968), a capacity to incorporate and transcend the deficiencies of the world and welcome the surprise of the unexpected.

By meta-cognitive capacity, I mean awareness of awareness, specifically a consciousness of what leads to certain kinds of consciousness. This includes paying attention to what social conditions heighten the possibility for the emergence of consent. This
includes taking a wholistic view of members' development. The incident of the Rooms managers meeting concerning Felicia best exemplifies this capacity. Members stop to anticipate Felicia's negative reactions to certain ideas and anticipate her need to discharge her negative feelings, almost as in a purging. Based on prior modes of thought, the complaints of one individual such as Felicia were adequate to curtail energy and commitment and engender frustration. Now, however, members begin to look beyond Felicia's reactive posture and plan ways that this negative emotion can be expressed without harming the fragile web of group consent. They imagine a narrative sequence that would minimize the triggering of Felicia's hostile and defensive impulses, and create a landscape in which her own need will emerge.

The group, at this point, exhibits a marked epistemology that for lack of better terminology, I will call discovery by positive search. That is, members notice distress patterns in each other and deliberately decide to bypass these negatives and distresses, and search for some positive quality, some area in which movement is possible, some way to trigger renewed energy. The ontology, the ideology or belief which informs such thinking is clearly egalitarian, that even the most distressed person exhibiting the most troubling behavior has goodness and worth that needs to be noticed. Create room for distress to find expression and this allows for more positive, facilitating learning to occur.
Criteria of Verifiability

The test for whether action is deemed valid, rests with the group. While authority figures continue to retain a disproportionate amount of importance, there is greater reliance on achieving the group's consent as a way to validate action. One F&B manager related a story.

I wasn't sure what to do about one of my supervisors. It was complicated, so I decided to bring it to the group and see what they say. They agreed with my idea—I should give him the promotion. Tim [Mike's boss] disagreed. But I did anyway.

Concept of Time

A qualitatively different concept of time began to emerge. Members began to imagine activities and behaviors now as monochronic and deterministic, but rather as cyclical. This became especially apparent in reference to people, who were not seen not as static and fixed, but as evolving and living through patterns. Also, ideas were depicted as living through a life cycle, generating early resistance and later greeted with more receptivity. This concept of time liberates action in subtle ways. Where before, a member's resistance was enough to withdraw an idea, now this resistance is seen as temporary.

Members began to talk more frequently with images of the future in mind rather than the past. Possibilities for future action were given more attention than past actions.

Ontological Awareness

The ontological awareness of being and the life process shifted in the later stages for this group. There tended to be less search
for early closure on information processing and more of a **willingness** to remain open to the processing of information. There is more of an open stance to the nature of existence, an awareness of the indeterminate nature of existence. For some members, there is a willingness to be aware of the contingencies and possibilities, the unfettered chaos of the world. This recalls Heidegger’s (1962/1927) notion that authenticity lies in the facing of alternatives and possibilities of action that become evident in the chaos of daily living. No longer is there an urge to obey unchallenged authority. In this sense, relations are more dialogical, members are aware that the bases for action are found in negotiated agreements. The locus of awareness is self and other-willed, following Baxter’s concept of a semi-autonomous mode of awareness (Baxter, 1982).

There is more of a sense of “positive” liberty (Berlin, 1969), as opposed to negative liberty. “Positive liberty” is “freedom to” act in a way of one’s choosing. Free action is not defined as action within an authority’s span of approval. Individuals feel able to initiate new action, beyond the scope of anything delimited by previous authority.
CHAPTER IX
CONCLUSION

Having looked at the transformation in interpretive repertoires and epistemological assumptions that occurred in this organization, the question arises, what made such transformations possible? What conditions supported the emergence of these new perspectives?

To answer this question adequately, we have investigated in the previous chapter, exactly what did transform over the five year period. In this chapter I would like to (1) continue the discussion of the nature of transformation; and (2) begin to investigate why such changes occurred and propose what kind of liberating social structures make metacognitive awareness possible.

The Emergence of Authenticity in Group Life

In this section, I would like to propose that what emerged for this group was a more authentic awareness of self, of the possibilities and contingencies of action, and of the socially constructed nature of the world. To make such a statement is a departure from the epistemology of discourse analysis, which focuses on describing and identifying the functions of on-going language. Implicit in this research ideology is that all reality is a socially constructed world with no attention give to whether one world is better than another.
Having identified how the functions of language shifted throughout this study, I would like to go beyond a functional analysis and continue what I began in the last chapter, to highlight the liberating social structures that emerged through this discourse.

First, I want to propose another interpretive summary of the five year period, by looking at the group's changing root metaphors to explain itself to its world. A root metaphor is the group's basic analogy for understanding the world (Pepper, 1942). This was the methodology Srivastva and I (Srivastva & Barrett, 1988) used to study the development of a learning group.

There were at least three root metaphors that emerged to explain the group's understanding of itself. As Wittgenstein (1968) understood, to understand language is to understand the "family resemblances" of key words and concepts. Similarly, Turner (1974) proposed that to understand a group's root metaphors, one must attend to associations of commonplace expressions. Thus, for example, expressions like:

"This place is a battleground."

"I was afraid you would hit me."

"There is anger loose in this room."

"Boy, you two were really fighting."

can be interpreted as part of the root metaphor, "the group is in a battle" (Srivastva & Barrett, 1988).

In this group's development, I would propose that there were three root metaphors that emerged, reflecting how members understood themselves and the organization:

(1) Medic Inn as Bastard Second Cousin.
(2) We are a Split House.

(3) Group management is a place where everyone's voice is heard.

Member's expressions in each period reflected these interpretations of the world (see Table 2). The first root metaphor, "we are a bastard second cousin," depicted both self as degraded and outer world as degrading. It conveys the sense that members are dependent on some protective presence (the parent organization), have been abandoned and forgotten, and are wandering and lost. The constricted range of imagined action reflected this sense of helplessness. Attributions of deficiency and blame toward self (as management), parent organization, and employees proliferated during this period. The fear of impending doom, that is the fear of being completely isolated from "the family," almost guaranteed passivity and inactivity. All locus of action lies within the realm of some highly invested Other.

The second major self-reflective root metaphor was "we are a split house." The connotations of "house" and "home" are powerful here and reflect a sense that the focus for liberation is not so much on a parent company to bring them back into the family, but the focus is on themselves and their own home. Again, as documented, their frequent meetings and attempts to plan reflected this sense of "trying to get our house in order." It was during this period that members confronted their differing and sometimes incompatible interpretations. The major dilemma was no longer worrying about whether they would be accepted or abandoned, but facing the need to accept each other. To the degree they were closed to one another's
TABLE 2
EVOLUTION OF INTERPRETIVE REPERTOIRES,
ROOT METAPHORS AND DISCOURSE EFFORTS

Root Metaphors

I. "MEDIC INN AS BASTARD SECOND COUSIN"

- accounts of orphanage
- accounts of helplessness
- accounts of careless, incompetent employees
- accounts of punitive action
- accounts of external constraints, obstacles to action
- accounts of fear of impending doom

Discourse to achieve effect of withdrawal from responsibility to take action.

Transition: Proposal of "4 star" model.

- accounts of possibility of achieving excellence
- accounts of impossibility of achieving excellence
- accounts of excessive velocity toward 4 star goal

Discourse to achieve effect of defending positions.

II. "WE ARE A SPLIT HOUSE"

- accounts of personality differences
- accounts of incompetence
- accounts of refusal to take action toward goal of 4 star
- accounts of incompetence and arrogance in "other" department

Discourse to achieve effect to blaming the other for lack of overall stability/security.

Transition: Proposal of "team" as a goal.

- accounts of excitement for possibility of team
- accounts of football team with too many coaches
- accounts of team as irrelevant and chaotic
- accounts of leadership vacuum
- accounts of impending doom
II. "WE ARE A SPLIT HOUSE" - Continued

Transition: Proposal to include middle level managers in planning process.
- accounts of excitement optimism at possibility of achieving teamwork and healing split house
- accounts of fear of abandonment
- accounts of leadership vacuum
- accounts of singular disruptive member as lethal to entire group
- accounts of "Chicago group"

Transition: Proposal for top managers alone to devise business plan
- accounts of self-blame, discouragement, and failure to heal split house
- accounts of other team as incompetent
- accounts of lack of commitment of other and self as committed
- accounts of defense of attacked member
- accounts of self as transformed believer
- accounts of leader as incompetent and "out of touch"

Discourse to achieve effect of blaming one another for personal incompetence.

III. "GROUP MANAGEMENT AS A PLACE WHERE EVERYONE'S 'VOICE IS HEARD'"

- accounts of self as transformed believer
- accounts of group as providing safety to speak
- accounts of employees as associates
- accounts of group as place to achieve consensus for action
- accounts of any action as possible
- accounts of experimenting in group context
- accounts of need for rules to guide action
- accounts of refusal to decide by voting
- accounts of creating contexts appropriate for development of potential

Discourse to understand the other.
interpretations, took a monological stance (Srivastva & Barrett, 1988) in an attempt to eliminate one another's voice, they were embattled prisoners, unable to act without defending their moves; unable to imagine a range of action without confronting one another as enemy. In short, the horizon of possible action was only as wide as their capacity to hear and accept each other's perspective and because there was so little acceptance, each of the top managers had and frequently exercised veto power, at least passively. At this stage unwillingness to say "yes" was a resounding "no." Members' range of imagined action was constructed like armor, as they first anticipated each others' resistance and then imagined how to overcome such resistance. Again, at such a stage, most action must be strategic, with passive moves (such as silence, repeating the phrases without explanation, telling negative stories about a missing party, and refusing to face the same party with such data) were as confrontive and forceful as active resistance. A significant interpretive battle is going on here and as it becomes evident, only one side eventually wins.

Eventually, after a personnel change, efforts are made to "heal the split house" by bringing all managers from each group together. The interpretive shift in this case was most dramatic, essentially occurring over one three day period in June of 1988. The new self-reflective root metaphor is "everyone has voice in group management." Again the thematic focus is on the organization itself rather than the restrictions of the environment or the punishing parent company. Also, the sense of "home" has expanded. There is no reference to two split groups intent on excluding one an other. This interpretive
paradigm has a more inclusive design. Also, as opposed to the previous two root metaphors, there is an emergent sense of incom- pletion here. Everyone has a voice, there is a hint of multi- directionality and the unpredictability of the future. In fact, during this period, members speak of the group as "a place where possibilities are pursued." In practice, new proposals are brought forth and multiple perspectives are encouraged. The group creates structures for dialogue that bring out dialectical reasoning processes; members are given a chance to challenge leadership figures.

A few things become clear in looking at these three root metaphors. First, each in a sense "contained the seeds of its own destruction." Each interpretive frame lived itself out for a period of time, and as dialogue between members continued, there emerged new metaphors and interpretations that opened more of the world for appreciation. The shifts were not sudden. There were hints at shifts and a dim awareness of what was needed to heal the group’s sense of constriction and inability to act. (For example, in 1985, members were beginning to call for the need to heal the split and include everyone, etc.) There was a self-transforming quality operating in symbolic transformations similar to the way Marx saw consciousness operating in response to material changes with each stage leading to a more advanced one. Secondly, with each interpretive shift, there was an expansive inclusion. At first, the emphasis was on MCF, the massive Other capable of abandoning the "bastard second cousins." As this stance could not survive and members began to formulate plans as the group focused attention on itself, there was acknowledgement of diverse perspectives: "We are a split house."
Finally, after a few attempts to include the next level of managers, a new, larger group was formed to manage the hotel. Therefore, with these interpretive shifts, there was a widening of concentric circles, to a first acknowledge and then include diverse perspectives. It is because of the nature of dialogue that these transformations occur.

Third, with each widening of perspectives, an expansion of action possibilities emerged. When members interpreted themselves as abandoned second cousins, cut off from the source of nurturance, they had little energy to direct their own future action possibilities. The Impersonal Power of the Other was so strong it appeared to be a law of nature. Further, consistent with the sense of abandoned orphans, they were isolated from one another. Their relationships with each other were shallow, uncommitted, and complacent. Discourse during this period was chaotic and ill-formed as members became increasingly frustrated in meetings. However, as members began to see the group as a place where voice is heard, they began to be more experimental and even playful with new, previously unimaginable action possibilities. Multiple perspectives are given voice where previously there was no energy to inquire. There are less efforts to achieve closure on information processing towards devising final answers. In these later stages, there is a more active, inquiring quality to members' interaction, little uncritical acceptance of relationships to some high-invested Other. Members' range of action is expansive because they seldom get lost in complacency.

Authentic awareness involves seeing the socially constructed nature of the world and the power of language to create distinctions
that are then perceived as real. In this group, members had moments of authentic awareness when they came to understand the process by which the Other receives its potency, which is to say, some members came to understand the power of language. Once members notice the generative power of language, a whole new range of action possibilities open up.

To see the socially constructed nature of the world is necessary, but not a sufficient component in attaining authentic awareness. For, if inquiry were to stop at this point, people could become dispassionate and even nihilistic. Once one knows alternative versions of reality are feasible, there is a tendency to withhold one’s passion for one version. Once one attains the awareness that the world achieves meaning through shared consent, authenticity becomes possible when one actively reinvests in the world, even while one remains aware that alternative arrangements are possible and others are constructing different versions.

The more committed one’s relationship to another, the more expansive and full the range of meaningful action. We speak of authenticity in this context, because such conditions heighten the development of the fullest possible self. As Kierkegaard (1935) noticed, authenticity involves continuous leaps into existence. Following Baxter (1982), authentic movements occur in those acts of perceiving chaos in the world, facing alternatives and possibilities of action evident in that chaos, and living in them rather than avoiding them. Thus authenticity involves the further step of investment in shaping self and world in an ideal direction. Following Fish (1972) the value of inquiry
is determined less by its truth-content than by its effectiveness in stimulating further inquiry and thereby contributing to the progressive illumination of the aspiring mind. (p. 8)

Every group with any history to speak of develops its own epistemology, its own way of processing and knowing the world (Schein, 1985). To the extent that there is a pull toward high velocity and a push toward early closure on information processing, members must rely on familiar, unchallenged forestructures of knowledge in perceiving the world. The supportive, on-going presence of others is necessary to perceive the world in its fullness, otherwise one must resort to familiar patterns and schemas that pre-define the world. The supportive group presence must be of a particular kind. In order to "take in" the active, transitional nature of the world, one must be supported to be able to suspend familiar precepts and schemas. Letting go of one's motivated, ego-directed reading of the world is a risky venture, but is necessary to give up the notion of striving toward something, which is usually striving towards making up deficiencies. This appreciative apprehension of the world (Kolb, 1984; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) involves a playful, experimental stance, a slowing down of velocity and demands of expediency, allowing oneself to experience the world in its wholeness and interconnectedness. It is this slowing down quality of dialogical, group relationships that allows appreciative apprehension to emerge. It was in this sense that Buber reported when he engaged in the dialogue, "the world seemed to slow down."

A group which engages in sustained dialogical exchanges supporting open information processing has more likelihood to form a
holding culture that enhances authentic awareness. In such an environment, members do not have to reduce tension by avoiding the unexpected, but can experience the joy of coming to terms with the world. One does not have to experience novelty as threat as a result of lacking the possibility to form precepts to grasp it. When there is less pressure of velocity for closure on information processing, members are better supported to actively respond to novelty and uncertainty rather than passively engaging old, familiar schemas. If dialectical processes are institutionalized, members are more able to express their multiple inner perspectives rather than succumb to the busyness of the everyday world that pulls for the presentation of a singular voice from each individual. We are in fact a collective of competing voices rather than a singular identifiable voice (Vygotsky, 1962). In this sense, members can approach the world expecting something new and intelligible to be revealed with each encounter (Heidegger, 1962/1927; Gadamer, 1979) and are thus closer to an authentic awareness of the world.

Further, it is in a state of isolation that members are most likely to generate scripts of impending doom that constrict possible action. Attributions of blame, gestures of withdrawal, and self-handicapping strategies to protect self-worth are failures to do (Arendt, 1958), to develop active, creative powers. Our natural, non-neurotic state is one of unlimited creativity and the engagement of fresh response to the world. Such a natural state pre-supposes an influence-optimism (Polack, 1978) that allows one to grasp the unity and flow of history and to remain aware of the possibilities and
contingencies of everyday affairs. Thus, authentic awareness is only possible in active, committed group life.

The emergence of authenticity involves overcoming the seduction of retreat and passivity because the Other appears overwhelming and all embracing by nature. Authenticity involves awareness of the process by which such power is created and sustained, which is to say through language. Members of a social system achieve authentic awareness when they inquire into and become aware of the creative and directive power of language to constitute social worlds and when members apply this awareness to deliberately create generative language, that is, language of distinctions that enhance the pursuance of possibility and creation.

Knowing and understanding the world are intimately tied to believing. What I know and understand is a function of my dialogical encounter with the world. The more open I am to receiving the world, the more I anticipate a full meaningful world, and the more is revealed to me. Thus, as Heidegger noticed, it is through care that the world becomes understood. And as Ricouer noted, we must believe before we can understand: "Never, in fact, does an interpreter get near to what his text says unless he lives in the aura of the meaning he is inquiring after" (Ricouer, 1969, p. 351). We apprehend the world to the extent that we believe and care about the world. Therefore, the greater the extent to which members of a culture develop caring bonds, the more knowledge and understanding is available to them.
Quinney concludes:

What is known, therefore, depends on what is believed to be the purpose of existence. All understanding takes place in the nexus of believing and knowing. There can be no understanding without the aim of knowing for a purpose. Because we care, we desire to know. We do not begin to know *tabula rasa*; we are active knowers, not passive: "Mostly we know when we enjoy, love, praise, and care for the things around us" (Holmer, 1976). The understanding that results from such believing and knowing is the appropriate understanding of reality. (Quinney, 1982, p. 61.)

It is, therefore, a group context which legitimizes talk about yet to be attained possibilities and supports the authentic emergence and development of the individual. In fact, people inherently want to be released from stale scripts and frozen schemas that lock them into perceptions of the world. Given the opportunity to create dialogue, members begin to propose *utopias* to talk imaginatively. The most important intervention into a social system is intervention into members' imagination, their tacit awareness behind their language making capacity, that area of dim apprehension that whitehead discussed. Even one successful experience at dialogue is adequate to stir the imagination, to generate metaphorical insights, to stimulate members to form possible worlds—even though the explicit language is not always immediately available.

**Development and Expansion of Cognitive Horizon of Possible Meaning**

In this section I would like to track the findings from this group's development, summarize the dynamics of how changes in relational patterns paralleled changed in the linguistic repertoire of this group and allowed for the emergence of new awareness. Building on the findings of this case study, I would like to propose a
developmental framework for understanding the expansion of the cognitive horizon of groups; to highlight the process by which a group's linguistic and cognitive horizon contracts and expands.

(1) When there is any sense of possible abandonment by a highly invested Other, the group's horizon of possible meanings contracts and the range of imagined action becomes constricted. Thinking becomes deductive, logical, paradigmatic as most assertions require explicit proof. Speech tends to be limited to its denotative function. Passivity, withdrawal, and the repeated expression of emotive states further contracts the horizon of possible meanings and discourages the anticipation necessary for dialogical encounters.

As this case demonstrated, there were many occurrences when fantasies of abandonment were stimulated at various levels of the organization. In each case, cognitive constriction ensued as members found it difficult if not impossible to imagine optimistic future scripts. During such constricted imaginative periods, a number of other dynamics can be identified: The group experiences abandonment by a reliable external voice, a withdrawal of symbolic significance that shrinks the cognitive horizon of possible meanings. Language does not reverberate, does not awaken possible worlds and new action. Common meanings for words are limited to the least common denominator. Language that attempts to expand is challenged and must be negotiated. So, for example, in the meeting of February 1985, members cannot anchor agreement even on the most fundamental nouns—in this case the steering committee. Within 30 lines of dialogue, we hear:
So we were talking about a steering committee. (line 1)
Do we need a steering committee? (line 3)

What are we attempting to steer? (line 22)

We have a feedback committee. Aren't (line 24, 25)
they in charge of the feedback process?

What would be the purpose of the steering (line 29)
committee?

In order for speech to be released to have reverberations of
meaning, there must exist a tacit solidarity between members, an
assumed but unspoken connection with a receptive "audience." The
relational solidarity may be more imagined than real, that is it may
be only the result of someone's imaginative projection of agreement.
Again belief is the crucial factor here. Following Ricoeur, the
reader must live in an aura of believe in order for the text to have
any mean. The withdrawal of a belief in solidarity diminishes
reliable meaning transactions.

Also many previous meaning transactions are called into serious
question. Previously, under bureaucratic norms, it was assumed that
meaning was pre-determined, "delivered," and not demanding negotia-
tion. Awareness processes and knowledge acquisition was limited to
accepting the privileged interpretation of events as issued. When
this source of meaning--issuance is withdrawn, members' beliefs in
regard to what constitutes acceptable meaning transactions is chal-
 lenged. Again, like the example of the telephone conversation cited
earlier, structure of discourse guides and determines meaning. The
accepted "well-formed" discourse structures under bureaucratic norms
triggered members to anticipate a limited, authoritarian interpreta-
tion of words. When these norms are suddenly shaken, the "aura of
belief" no longer exists and members return to the "minimum" meaning, the dictionary meaning of terms.

(a) Many previous unspoken, tacit agreements are threatened. All interpretive agreements between members must be explicitly, deductively achieved. Interpretive battles are experienced as threatening, as if not having one's word accepted is tantamount to further abandonment.

Again, it became clear in the course of this study, that whenever the group imagined a pessimistic future, functions of speech became very limited and constricted. Members' language did not stimulate possible worlds, or create generative future scripts. Rather, agreements, when achieved at all, were hard-won and the result of explicit negotiation. Efforts were made to restrict the connotative release of meanings that spur multiple interpretations.

(b) Negative, debilitating speech is most contagious because it is in this arena where explicit agreement is easiest to achieve. Members' expressions of distress stimulate reactions and reinforce each other's fears.

Meaning does in fact reverberate, but does so in a way that does not facilitate new action. When scripts of impending doom and fantasies of abandonment are generated, members tend to fend off complete isolation by bonding with each other through articulation of stressful details. It is easiest to achieve a sense of self-worth by noticing some inferior part of the world. By calling attention to deficient details, members find comfort because (1) they achieve a sense of superiority to what they label as an inferior world; and (2) others have a common language to notice and label deficiency,
facilitating agreement and the formation of bonds. Hence both self-efficacy and social solidarity are achieved when members' focus on deficiency. Members seem unable to view speech as playful or creative and are unable to separate the person from the expressions. In this sense, expressions of doom are manifestations of fear of not being heard, seen, noticed, as if "history will go on without me."

(c) Because there is no accepted structure of meaning transaction, "agreements" from former meetings are not sustained. Old issues are re-negotiated and even trivial details need to be re-visited and restated. The anxiety about the lack of an optimistic future script ("What will happen next?") shortens the imagined time span.

Members suffer from "memory loss" for what constitutes "well-formed discourse." Meetings and formal forums of interaction are marked by anxiety, repeated questions of basic procedure, and attributions that such events "are a waste of time." When members can imagine a script for good interaction and successful meaning transactions, they have a frame to understand divergence, disagreement, ambiguity, and suspension of closure. Without such frames, these moments appear chaotic and threatening. The time span within which members imagine meaning-development is very short.

(d) Passive, controlling behavior is the manifestation of an effort to explicitly control whatever meaning one can in the absence of an enhancing fictional script. Discourse is marked by a search for closure, finality. Speech is predominantly strategic.

Under such conditions, efforts are made to control and delimit meaning. Many of these strategic efforts are in the form of
passivity and refusal to grant consent to another's meaning gestures. Passive responses to such gestures rather than active disagreement are more likely because members cannot risk the loss of whatever relationships they have. Because there is little hope or sense of an optimistic script, the present state of the relationship cannot be disrupted and must be maintained at all costs. Members cannot imagine the sustained presence of another, a relationship that can tolerate discord and divergence.

(2) The experience of publicly articulating scripts of fear and doom in the presence of the highly invested Other and/or the experience of taking risky action in the presence of a highly invested Other while the Other acts as a holding environment, is a crucial and transformative event. This is the prototype event that allows members to begin to form fictional scripts that depict structures of acceptable meaning transactions.

The source of fantasies of impending doom was usually an authority figure. The experience of confronting and challenging authority is catalytic if the authority figure acts as a "holding culture," staying in place while its "guest" changes its perspective. When the leaders in crucial episodes did not withdraw or avoid confrontations, but allowed members to express distress, members were able to form new perspectives and see their former self-other relationship in a new light. That authority figures do not retaliate or withdraw is crucial. The leaders' staying in place throughout these episodes allows members to reflect on action rather than react to leaders' reactions.
(a) Once this divestiture occurs, members have an experience of successful, well-formed discourse. Imagined scripts of possible agreement and stable consensus emerge.

This experience of cognitive and emotional discharge becomes the prototype experience from which members form scripts for what good, well-formed discourse looks like. The most feared event for the group was the loss of significance and meaning that accompanies a sense of abandonment. This experience, however, is one of successful meaning creation and it stirs the formation of an imagined script for what successful discourse looks like.

And again, the form that this meaning transaction takes is crucial. Members have the opportunity to speak the unspeakable, and the most feared distress (complete abandonment) does not occur. Here, we can truly appreciate the extent to which discourse is action. When Karl approaches Dan Gass, his boss, with the proposal to have a management retreat, the act of speaking these words is highly consequential. This is speech that performs an interpersonal function, in this case, notifying his boss that his passive posture has shifted. When the most feared consequence does not occur, Karl is almost forced to reflect and compare the most feared script with the actual interaction: he was not abandoned and he is capable of expansive action within the very same relationship that was previously labelled oppressive. A new language must now emerge to grasp a new possible script.

(b) The crucial cognitive shift that members experience is the freedom to see the object (Other) from a new perspective. One of the
early manifestations of this is cognitive complexity, the capacity to separate the person from the expression.

A comparison is now made between speaker and action. When one is able to imaginatively hold one's self in such a way as to see one's previous self-schema of constricted action and compare the emerging schema of possible action, a crucial cognitive separation emerges: the person is not necessarily the expressed distressed pattern. It is now possible to see self and other as engaged in a developmental shift, to imagine that different contexts pull for different action. Again this is a contradiction to the monologic, singular view of action that marks a traditional bureaucratic rationality.

Since so much confusion and chaos were experienced in these periods, it was crucial for members to be able to express feelings of distress. The moments when members freely expressed distress, felt someone was listening, and did not experience retribution, were crucial transformational points. For the speakers, there appeared to be almost a purging experience. Distressful feelings are a manifestation of old schemas and scripts of impossibility. When one is able to articulate distress, the tacit impossibility schemas become explicit, the first step toward their transformation.

The moments when listeners, on their part, made tacit distinctions between the person expressing the distress and the distress pattern itself, were the most liberating of social arrangements. At such times, the listeners did not engage in defensive routines and allowed speakers to "work through" distress, to discharge and cleanse.
Once this experience occurs, members have a model for how they themselves can act as a holding culture that supports experimentation and on-going inquiry, one that allows members to emerge from embeddedness to achieve a new perspective of themselves and their world, that allows the other to express distress and not react with strategic speech. The group provides a context for member's inquiry and exploration. Members stay with each other through discontinuous and chaotic events. Active inquiry allows for members to achieve differentiation, to emerge from the embeddedness to discover new meaning, a new perspective toward self and toward the world within which they were embedded. As Kegan (1982) pointed out, the continuous holding environment serves as an evolutionary host simultaneously letting go and holding on. When the group simultaneously holds on, stays in place, and allows free movement, members are more able to achieve an evolutionary recognition of self and world, to achieve greater cognitive differentiation.

As a holding environment, the group responds not only to what the person is, but to who the person may become. Again, this raises questions in regards to the group's epistemology. Fundamentally, who is the person who is speaking? When the group acts as a holding culture, they see the person as a motion, between balance and imbalance with the world. The capacity for members to remain present while there is confusion, to remain themselves when others feel anxiety and not be tempted to immediately relieve anxiety, is necessary to build a nurturing holding environment that allows for transformations in awareness.
(3) Once an optimist fictional script exists for what constitutes well-formed discourse (the horizontal dimension of speech), members begin to co-author generative, expansive, connotative meanings. The range of accepted tacit agreements begins to expand as negotiation takes on another dimension. Interpretive differences still exist, but now have a playful rather than threatening quality. There is less desperate undermining of one another's meaning efforts.

As members become more familiar with common scripts of what discourse structures look like and they could easier predict the form that meetings would take, they became more able to allow speech to open up "possible worlds" (Bruner, 1987). Cognitive familiarity with well-formed discourse relieves anxiety about what is unfolding. As members become more comfortable with this logical structure (the horizontal dimension of speech), the vertical dimension is released. That is, members' attention is free to notice and create connotative reverberations of possible worlds.

(4) The quality of the discussion of the future undergoes a transformation. The future is no longer seen as unalterable nor within a short time perspective. Also, the perspective on history changes. Past events undergo re-interpretation simultaneously to generative insight. The new language that reframes the past now becomes the basis for new connotative meanings and the opening of possible worlds. It is at this point that positive scripts and the language of possibility are contagious.

This is the stage during which presuppositions and fore-structures of knowledge begin to shift. In this case, there were at least three "breakthrough" meetings in which members began to create
an expansive cognitive landscape within which radically new action could be imagined.

The meeting of March 1988 is an example of how members' scripts begin to shift. They become aware that the label "employee" carries with it connotations and imagined scripts which limit the range of possible action towards others. Once one is called "employee" while the self is labelled "manager," the possibilities for partnership and mutual influence are constrained. By engaging in linguistic play, "trying out" new labels that cue new, more generative imagined scripts, members begin to change the very forestructures by which they know the everyday world. During this meeting, one can witness a near explosion of connotative meanings stimulated by the word "associate." People begin to use the exact same word and yet mean quite different things by it. Yet members do not challenge each others' language use and force each other to negotiate and define explicit meanings. Members live within the aura of belief, that is, they anticipate a meaningful discourse experience. This is demonstrated by the fact that no one stops the dialogue to question what is happening. Also, the same person within a few lines of conversation uses the exact same word and yet infers (or means) quite different things by it. Listen to a few of the connotations that reverberate within the space of 30 lines of dialogue. The topic here, oddly enough, begins with a problem focus: why do employees fail to respond to guest needs?

They need training to overcome the impossible.

They have to see the world through the guest's eyes.
Maybe we need to treat them different--so they see themselves as our partners, our associates.

Partners, yes. This is their hotel, their home.

Training alone won't do it.

Help them see they're an associate.

Maybe we should call them associates.

We want them to make decisions. That's not a traditional employee.

Stop treating them like employees. Treat 'em like associates.

They have to be creative thinkers.

She (an "employee") needs confidence-stop acting like an employee.

The motivation to go ahead and take risks and not constantly be afraid and have to check with your boss.

Support their risk taking.

Support their development.

(5) Efforts to include previously unincluded others are transformative.

Such efforts create tacit bonds among members of the inviting group. They now begin to frame themselves as the inviting group, as members who have experienced an agreed upon meaning transaction. They now begin to "act like" a group that has achieved a shared agreement. This inviting group now becomes the initiators and guides of well-formed discourse.

Following Berger and Luckmann (1967), it is when a new generation enters the scene that a social group begins to treat its own experience as "objective knowledge." The actual face-to-face encounter is now history. A new party was not a participant of this face-to-face transaction and cannot have access to the experience
except through a second order version. The parties who had the face-
to-face encounter, now must articulate the experience into objective
language to the newcomers. This process of socialization and
articulation is itself transformative. The experience now presents
itself as objective knowledge for the involved parties. Again, the
crucial transformation here is a shift in belief as members "invite"
others to join them. (This is not unlike the dictum that religious
people feel most religious when they are inviting potential con-
verts.) What was experienced as intentional and subjective now
becomes part of the "paramount reality" of everyday life. The
structures of discourse and meaning transactions that previously
seemed unintelligible, now are represented in precepts and forestruc-
tures of knowledge. In Berger and Luckmann's terms, this becomes
knowledge that is "already objectivated." The meetings that were
experienced as "leaps" into a playful reality now achieve paramount
status. As part of everyday reality, these experiences become part
of the standard discourse and therefore intersubjectively available.
The meaning transactions, once articulated to a newcomer, now con-
front me as fact and like all facts, have a coercive, unavoidable
reality. As I hear myself speak, my own subjective reality becomes
more real to me, becomes continually available to me as new scripts,
beliefs, and anticipations are triggered. In this sense the language
used in inviting a new group makes my own experience "more real" not
only to the listener, but to myself, even as the language becomes
detached from the face-to-face situation which it depicts. This is
what Hannah Arendt (1958) had in mind when she wrote that humans must
talk about themselves until they know themselves.
Conclusions and Implications for Inquiry

Finally, I would like to put forth the following conclusions that have profound implications for further study and for the practice of social science:

(1) An organization's mission is its anticipated futures as expressed in the internal dialogue of the organization, that is, the discourse that its members engage in. As members create and reproduce interpretive accounts, they are grasping forward, creating scripts and possible futures.

(2) As members engage in discourse, they communicate not only the content of their conversation, but they also communicate a subtext: how they want to be interpreted and how they are interpreting others. Discovering the patterns of these communicative intentions (a) reveals the ideological core of the organization, (b) the ontological assumptions of its members, and (c) discloses members' epistemology.

(3) Under norms of a bureaucratic rationality, contexts of interaction pull for discourse that focuses on culturally defined problems and implementing solution to such problems. Under norms of an egalitarian rationality, contexts of interaction pull for discourse that oscillates between problem identification and creating scripts that value possible future scenarios.

(4) When new concepts are proposed to grasp novelty, there must be an affirmative context in order for these ideas to be given authentic consideration. That is, members must feel free to put forth interpretive accounts without fear of constraints.

(5) A valuing, positive interaction context is necessary for a speaker to trigger the release of the meaning of words towards enhancing possible worlds.

(6) Within an egalitarian context, members develop a metacognitive capacity. This includes (a) a capacity to create a context that induces instrumental logic, one that attempts to control the literal, denotative meaning of spoken and written words once uttered; and (b) a capacity to create a context that induces a logic of understanding and co-authorship, that is, one that allows the connotations of words to trigger possible worlds.

(7) In the larger world, social scientists have a very influential role in selecting categories of thought that enter
social discourse and have a directive effect in establishing an inventory of what is. The practice of social science should not be a dispassionate endeavor.
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