Course Learning Outcomes for Unit I

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Analyze cultural influence between the social system and individuals within that social system.

2. Compare and contrast cultures that have nesting relationships (e.g., macrocultures, subcultures, microcultures).

Reading Assignment

Chapter 1:
The Concept of Organizational Culture: Why Bother?

Chapter 2:
The Three Levels of Culture

Chapter 4:
Macrocultures, Subcultures, and Microcultures

In order to access the resource below, you must first log into the myWaldorf Student Portal and access the Business Source Complete database within the Waldorf Online Library.


Unit Lesson

What Is a Learning Organization?

Chris Argyris and Donald Schön (1996) described a learning organization as an organization with the “ability to see things in new ways, gain new understandings, and produce new patterns of behavior—all on a continuing basis and in a way that engages the organization as a whole” (p. xix). Essentially, learning organizations are those that are able to adjust their ways of thinking and behavior in order to learn and change (Friesenborg, 2015).

In this course, you will learn skills for leading people at the team or organization level to adapt the ways they think and behave in a learning organization. The skill to lead change is a critical skill for leaders in any occupation or industry, both now and as we move into the future. Despite its importance, though, the process for becoming a learning organization remains largely misunderstood (Friesenborg, 2015). Learning organizations are envied. They are not common. This course is devoted to equipping you with the knowledge and skills to lead your organization’s culture toward becoming a learning organization.

In this unit, we will discuss the culture within organizations. The organization’s culture is what determines whether the organization has thought-behavior patterns that are dysfunctional or healthy. The organization’s culture determines whether it is a dysfunctional organization or a learning organization (Argyris & Schön, 1996; Friesenborg, 2015). Culture is important within the organization or any other social system (Schein, 2010).
Culture: Patterns for Thinking and Behaving

What comes to mind when you think of culture? Does music, film, or fashion come to mind? How about customs, traditions, and foods? Yes, culture is expressed through these means, but culture is also expressed in ways that are less tangible. Culture shapes the way you think and behave.

Influencing the way you think, culture shapes your deeply-held, underlying assumptions. These underlying assumptions create the lens for how you see the world around you. You use these underlying assumptions as you judge yourself, other people, and your environment. Your underlying assumptions are influenced by what the culture considers desirable and what the culture considers undesirable (Adams & Markus, 2004; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Kitayama, Duffy, & Uchida, 2007; Schein, 2010).

Taken one step further, culture also influences the ways people behave. Each culture has a set of norms, parameters for behaviors that are considered acceptable (Adams & Markus, 2004; Friesenborg, 2015; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Kitayama et al., 2007; Schein, 2010). At your organization, would it be acceptable for you to disagree with leaders? Do people talk through conflict? Do people use passive-aggressive tactics? Are there divisions or silos between employees and managers or between departments? All of these questions point to the organization’s cultural norms for behavior (Argyris & Schön, 1996; Friesenborg, 2015).

The ways that people think and behave are influenced not only by the organization culture but also by the larger macroculture (e.g., the American culture), which, in turn, shapes the social systems that are nested within that macroculture (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Schein, 2010). Different levels of culture are nested within each other. As an analogy, think of the Russian wooden nesting dolls. You twist open the middle of the large, oval-shaped, wooden doll and a slightly smaller wooden doll is found inside. Then, twist open the middle of that doll and, again, a slightly smaller wooden doll is nested inside. Culture is a lot like those Russian wooden nesting dolls. A macroculture may contain microcultures and subcultures. For example, one wooden nesting doll may represent the American culture, which contains the American corporate culture, which, in turn, contains the culture for a specific corporation. As another example, the wooden nesting doll may represent the American culture, which may contain the culture of American families, which, in turn, includes the culture of the specific family in which you were raised. Each social system has a culture. While these examples focused on American culture, other cultures throughout the world also have the nesting feature.

Cultural Influence of the Social System and the Individual

Learning begins at birth. Learning does not come from books alone; it is also acquired through culture. This is called acculturation. From a very young age, you begin to learn norms for thinking and behaving (Conbere & Heorhiadi, 2006; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

Look at the socio-cultural learning model (Friesenborg, 2015) and imagine an individual within an organization. That organization emanates ways of thinking and assumptions about what is culturally desired. The organization also emanates the behavioral norms, the range of behaviors that are acceptable within the organization (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Culture has a tendency to perpetuate itself and to resist change unless the strength of one or more individuals exerts enough influence on the culture as it flows between them and the social system.

In this way, individuals do have the capacity to influence culture, particularly within small- and intermediate-sized social systems, such as teams, families, and organizations (Adams & Markus, 2004; Friesenborg, 2015; Kitayama et al., 2007). Think of revered company presidents, for example. The organization not only influenced those individual leaders, but they also influenced the organization culture where they worked.
As indicated in the model above, the word organization may be substituted with the name of any social system, showing how culture flows between the individual and any social system. In addition to organizations, examples of other social systems include American society as a whole, an athletic team, a class at school, the school as a whole, a professional association, a church, and a family (Friesenborg, 2015).

Take a closer look at the socio-cultural learning model as it applies to American society as the social system. In this case, substitute American society in place of organization on the left side of the model. American society influences individuals who live within the culture, but individuals also have varying levels of influence and may shape American culture. Famous individuals, such as revered American presidents, civil rights leaders, and famous musicians and actors, have influenced American society. These are all positive examples, but powerful individuals with toxic characteristics can also infect the social system through their influence on the culture as culture flows between the individual and the social system (Friesenborg, 2015).

In this way, you as the leader can help shape the culture to lead change. You are the individual, and while the organization influences the ways you think and behave, you have the opportunity to mutually influence the culture that flows between you and the organization (Friesenborg, 2015).

Moving Forward

In this unit, we have just scratched the surface of culture. Throughout this course, you will learn how to detect and influence culture. For me, this learning was life-changing, transforming the way I lead in teams and organizations, while also transforming the way I approach relationships as a spouse, parent, and friend. I hope you find this learning to be equally impactful in your life.

References


**Suggested Reading**

**Waldorf’s Academic Integrity Policy:**

The Waldorf University Academic Integrity Policy is critical to your success as a graduate student. Read the policy, which is available in *Waldorf's Online Programs Catalog* at the following link: [http://www.waldorf.edu/Download-Information](http://www.waldorf.edu/Download-Information). For quick access to this policy after clicking the link, either: (a) view the Table of Contents under the “Academic Information” heading or (b) simultaneously click the “Control” key and the “F” key on your keyboard for the “find” feature, and type “Academic Integrity Policy.”

**A book that is integrated throughout this course:**


**APA Manual:**

It is recommended that you to purchase the most current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)*, as it will be used in courses throughout your master’s degree program.

**Database search & APA resources:**

Introduction to the Waldorf Online Library  
http://waldorf.libguides.com/wol

Purdue OWL  
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/

Specifically, the excellent APA PowerPoint located at: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/17/

**Waldorf Library Tutorial #1:**

The following video presents the Basics of Database Searching (*begin watching at time-stamp 1 min., 40 secs.*; 57-minute recorded webinar).

https://columbiasouthern.adobeconnect.com/_a1174888831/p4c0i44tcv1/?launcher=false&fcsContent=true&pbMode=normal

**Waldorf Library Tutorial #2:**

The following materials address Concerning Citations: APA, Academic Integrity, and Resources. The first presentation is a Prezi, which you can navigate through at your own pace. The second presentation is a recorded webinar you can watch.

Prezi – Additional Supporting Material (to accompany the following webinar):  
http://prezi.com/okeeu7ihygx6/concerning-citations-apa-and-academic-integrity/

Recorded webinar (*begin watching at time-stamp 1 min., 33 secs.*; 57-minute recorded webinar):  
https://columbiasouthern.adobeconnect.com/_a1174888831/p69hpik2cy4/?launcher=false&fcsContent=true&pbMode=normal