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University Cultural Scenes, Power, and the Identity of the Department of Music at Midwest State University

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University Cultural Scenes, Power, and the Identity of the Department of Music at Midwest State University

Bruce Wood, Texas Tech University

This paper is an investigation and development of a locally "grounded" theory resulting from a case study done of a department of music at a state university. The full study was completed (2002) under the advisement and supervision of Dr. Gerald Olson, Professor in the School of Music and the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The setting, which will be known as "Midwest State", is a real place. This university is one of the seven state universities in Minnesota.

Background

The overall study, entitled, "Identity, Saga and Change: The Department of Music at Midwest State University", sought to answer questions of departmental identity and "saga", (meaning historical, storied, destiny-driven values) during a specific time frame (1993-2000) in which significant externally and internally driven changes were absorbed by Midwest State University and the Department of Music. To begin to appreciate these notions of identity, saga, and change, it is important to understand the setting of the study. That setting involved not only the physical and situational context of a state university, but also the attitudinal and professional circumstances of the participants involved. In order to understand this environment, I will briefly describe how I came to be interested in this project.

Researcher

The university and department of music I studied were my place of work for eleven years. I came to know the environment of this particular state university, perhaps no better or worse than any other professor at the institution. But having matriculated

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from a private liberal arts college and then a large land grant university, MSU seemed to be another, quite different kind of place.

There were a number of tangible reasons for this feeling. There was no departmental recruitment plan in effect when I arrived. University admissions had no complete records of student activities during high school (only of scholarship recipients) so that we could identify possible ensemble participants and contact them on campus. Almost all music students held jobs, either on or off campus. Students paid by the credit hour, not for a full-time or part-time load. Students would often play or sing in an organization for a quarter or two, and then they might leave the department or even the university for a time, until they had earned enough money to continue a degree program. And yet, these same students seemed so appreciative of professors' efforts, so pleased for the interactions we had. My office, like many others, was a windowless 9 x 14 cement block cubicle. I shared a suite of offices with three fully tenured professors who taught little else except fundamentals for music classes, and one untenured, energetic and creative music education professor. With an orchestra to build, classes to teach (tenure to achieve!) and a family to raise, I did not spend much time pondering these and other feelings that being at Midwest gave me, but they were unmistakably there.

After being elected as Chair of the Department in 1996, and knowing that national re-accreditation was scheduled in the year 2000, the questions of identity and change became more important. I was also keenly interested in the well-being of the departmental faculty who had been adjusting and working through this period of change. After ten years, I had a better notion of the environment of this state university, and yet I had fundamental questions regarding the purposes and identity of a music department in a state university setting such as MSU. Additionally, I knew that my interpretation of working at this state university was only one perception, and I was keenly interested in how my fellow faculty viewed their sense of place, identity and purpose. Moreover, I was interested in how that departmental identity may have changed or developed over a

period of years that had seen significant transformations in our own university setting. Let me return from the personal voice of faculty member and subsequent Chair to that of researcher, and give the reader an idea of the amount and nature of change during the period of this study.

Merger

Beginning in 1994, Midwest State University and the Department of Music began to experience policy changes initiated from outside the campus, but that would influence us directly. In 1993, the governor and the state legislature decided to merge the seven state universities (then known as Minnesota State Universities) with the technical and community colleges. The University of Minnesota and its branches would remain one entity, while all other institutions of higher education would become Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU). The structural effect was that the chancellor and governing board of the system would now be responsible for thirty-eight institutions rather than seven, and serving 150,000 students rather than 47,000.

Credit Cap on Degrees

Within a short time of the merger occurring, a number of explicit, imposed policies (Barresi and Olson, 1992) were issued. Among the first was a policy mandating that no department could have a major requiring more than 128 credits. Statistics had shown that students were staying in college five, six, even seven years before graduating, and many were not graduating at all. Private colleges were "guaranteeing" that sons or daughters entrusted to their care would finish in four years. As the economy livened up and "recession bargain hunting" at state universities diminished, MnSCU felt obliged to compete. In addition, as a new organization, MnSCU officials had a charge to "streamline" and "simplify" the myriad of degree programs offered by the seven state universities. What this meant for the Department of Music was a potential reduction of seven credits from our part of the music education degree.

Semester Conversion

A second policy of MnSCU was to require all of its member institutions to convert, between 1997 and 1999, from a quarter to a semester format. At the time of the notification of this policy change, members of the faculty were unsure of the implications this would have on our department, but we were fairly certain that implementing it would take a considerable amount of time and energy. The faculty knew that courses would have to go through a campus-wide curriculum committee approval process, and that all two-quarter classes would now either have to be one semester or a full year.

NASM Re-accreditation

In addition to the changes being initiated at the state level, the Department of Music was approaching its decennial reaccredidation by NASM. While the process did not inherently involve change, the process of self-study and subsequent visitation by an NASM team was bound to create change and certainly implied a great deal of time, effort and attention to the particulars of remaining a fully accredited member. The process of self-study (internal review) was a six to twelve month progression, with a consultant visit scheduled before NASM evaluators arrived.

Internally Driven Change

Faculty

During the same period of time as these external events were taking place, a number of internal changes were occurring. The Department of Music was undergoing a significant transformation in its faculty. Between 1994 and 1999, as a result of retirements, six new faculty joined the department. This represented almost one third of the full-time music faculty. National searches were conducted for each position.

Administration

Additionally, during the period of 1993-2000, the university had no less than four presidents and three academic vice-presidents. Two of the presidents were interim

positions. And, in 1996, the College of Fine Arts and Humanities (to which the Department of Music belongs) named a new Dean.

The Complete Study and the Scope of this Paper

The purpose of the overall dissertation was to understand the effects of externally and internally driven changes on a Department of Music faculty in a state university setting. More specifically, the study explored the effects of change as a result of mandates and policies from outside the university campus as well as inside its confines. Further, I was interested in investigating the effects of these changes on the Department of Music faculty, their work lives, and their continuing search for a central, unifying identity of the department. Consequently, the study investigated, through interviews, field notes, and answers to written questions, how one Department of Music faculty endeavored and struggled to find its identity, its "saga", through a period of what seemed to be uncommon change.

This Paper

This particular paper investigates the possibility of a "grounded" theory that may have emerged from the study, specifically that Departments and Schools of Music derive their power and influence from the relative strength of the campus culture(s) to which they belong, and their own viability within those cultures.

A View of Organizational Culture through Burrell and Morgan's Sociological Paradigms

As much of the dissertation had to do with understanding individuals in a social/work setting, it seemed appropriate to investigate, as part of the background research process, seminal works regarding social/cultural constructs. One of the enduring theories in that arena is Burrell and Morgan's Typology of Sociological Paradigms, which appeared in their 1979 work, Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis. To illuminate some key archetypes of organizational behavior, Burrell and Morgan proposed four key paradigms based on what they described as "mutually exclusive views

of the world" (1979, viii). They believe that each paradigm "stands in its own right and generates its own distinctive analyses of social life" (1979, viii). The formation of these paradigms is based on two dualisms in the sociological dimension: subjective-objective, and regulation-radical change.

The Subjective-Objective Dimension

Some key terms Burrell and Morgan use are important in understanding the poles of each dimension. In the subjective/objective dimension, the 'subjectivist' would be inclined toward concepts of nominalism, revolving "around the assumption that the social world external to individual cognition is made up of nothing more than names, concepts and labels which are used to structure reality" (1979, 5). In other words, reality is a construction and, as a construction, it is highly individual. Everyone has his or her own reality or combinations of reality. Further, the subjectivist would be 'anti-positivist'. They would hold that "truth" is a construct and is highly individual. In terms of studying activities in the social sciences, an anti-positivist would "maintain that one can only 'understand' by occupying the frame of reference of the participant in action" (1979, 5).

Its antithesis, in the objective dimension, would hold that realism and positivism are concrete concepts. Realism claims that, "the social world…is a real world made up of hard, tangible and relatively immutable structures. …They exist as empirical entities" (1979, 4). A positivist in the social world seeks to explain and predict by "searching for regularities and causal relationships…based upon the traditional approaches which dominate the natural sciences" (1979, 5). Risking oversimplification, a positivist believes that there are truths to be found, and having found them, they largely remain true.

The Regulation-Radical Change Dimension

The regulation/radical change continuum, earlier identified by Burrell and Morgan as an order/conflict debate, also has terms that can be helpful. The order, or regulation view of society emphasizes stability, functional coordination and consensus,

while the conflict, or radical change view emphasizes change, conflict, and disintegration of the status quo.

Figure 1 (below) is a simple diagram representing how Burrell and Morgan combined the two dimensions as intersecting horizontal and vertical axes:

Figure 1. Burrell and Morgan's Typology of Sociological Paradigms Radical

Radical Humanism o Subjective (many truths)	Radical Change	Radical Structuralism (one truth) Objective
o Interpretivism	Regulation Status Quo	Structural Functionalism

The Four Paradigms

In *Figure 1*, you will find two intersecting axes, one horizontal and one vertical. The horizontal axis represents a continuum symbolizing the subjective to the objective, right to left or perhaps, if you will, many truths on the left to one truth on the right. The vertical axis represents a continuum of desire for change, with the bottom representing regulatory or status quo, and the top representing the radical or high degree of change

from the status quo. According to Burrell and Morgan, each quadrant of the typology represents a distinct way of thinking about organizations and organizational culture. In somewhat simplified terms, here is what each quadrant represents. It is important to note that there are a number of 'places' an organization may 'exist' in this typology, crossing boundaries, as well as many ways an individual may "frame" their own organizational view.

> Structural Functionalism (lower right): A person who has this organizational frame of reference "seeks to discover data about organizations in order that an elite, usually managers, can exercise control" (Parker, 2000: 61). The culture of this organization is "the pattern of basic assumptions which a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which have worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1983: 14). Parker says, "The sharing of meanings, of 'deep assumptions', is suggested to be what culture fundamentally is and the implication is that these depths can be managed from above, if their underlying structure is understood" (2000: 61). At its most extreme, a structural functionalist believes that there is one truth or set of truths that allows their organization to work, and that leadership in that organization is about finding that set of truths, protecting them, managing them and passing them on as unchanging gems of social order.
> Radical Structuralism (upper right): Think of late Marxism, and one might be fairly close to this view of organizations. It shares with structural functionalism "a positivist (one truth) assumption that organizations are real things that can be studied using appropriate methods" (Parker, 2000, 68). As with most other notions of Marxist theory, all relates to the economic domination of the few with the subordination of the many. "Ideas and meanings are seen as subordinate to the determinations of the economic base. …Organizational contingencies—technology, size, structure, culture and so on—are all somehow functional for the system of capitalism…" (Parker: 68). So a radical structuralist would believe that there is also one truth or set of truths to discover and the only way to bring the organization to that truth is through radical, revolutionary change of the economic system that supports a capitalist status quo.

Interpretivism (lower left): This quadrant of the typology suggests that organizational culture or meaning is "socially constructed" by people (Conrad: 1993, 20). The interpretive paradigm of organizational culture "stresses the local nature of cultural processes and, in reducing the object of enquiry to actor level phenomena, its epistemology cautions against any conception of a system, however open or negotiated" (Parker, 2000: 70). Actor level phenomena means that one would study the language, symbols and actions of each individual in the organization, trying to understand what "sets of common typifications" exist (Parker: 70). These shared meanings and beliefs are "continually in process, in organization-making" (Smircich, 1985: 66). An individual approaching an interpretive framework believes there are many individual truths in an organization's culture and identity, and that change in that framework happens in largely individual processes.

Radical Humanism (upper left): This paradigm "Conceptualizes organizational culture as a contested relation between meanings—the distinctive understandings of a particular social group which may conflict with those of other social groups" (Parker: 75). Burrell and Morgan suggest that, in some ways, radical humanism is an anti-organization theory—"a theory which is inherently critical of dominant accounts of scientific knowledge and social arrangements" (Parker: 75). Radical humanism stresses many cultures within organizations, "with organizational myths providing rich resources for members to recognize and partially resolve contradictions" (Parker: 75). Radical humanism, therefore, looks for meaning of individual and shared beliefs of members; that there is inherent conflict and struggle between those who exert control and those who do not. At its furthest point, a radical humanist would want no organizational control whatsoever (anarchy) and would seek to have semblances of it radically dismantled.

Summary

If indeed there are vastly different constructs of how individuals view the social world, what of those views actually "becoming" distinct culture types at American Universities? A brief look at the work of Berquist (1992) gives another, more specific paradigm of social constructs within the work environment of higher education.

Berquist's Four Cultures of the Academy

William Berquist, in his book, *The Four Cultures of the Academy* (1992), suggests that there are distinct cultures operating simultaneously within our colleges and universities. He writes:

> Four different, yet interrelated, cultures are now to be found in American higher education. They have a profound impact on the ways in which campus leaders view their current work in the academy, as well as on the ways in which faculty members, administrators, and students perceive the potential for personal career advancement and institutional change (xiii).

The four cultures to which Berquist refers are the **collegial culture**, the **managerial culture**, the **developmental culture**, and the **negotiating culture**. Each of these, Berquist writes, has distinct evolutionary histories, viewpoints and values. The following is a brief description of each of the cultures Berquist has identified.

The Collegial Culture

With its historical roots in the British university tradition, the collegial culture is characterized by long-established liberal arts educational concepts. Students in the collegial culture are involved in all aspects of the university environment, including residential living and extra-curricular activities. Faculty members, for their part, engage with students in most aspects of collegiate life. In the curriculum, the university emphasis is on "complexity of thought and the educational process. Faculty are suspicious of any curriculum that is too practical, concrete, or contemporary" (1992, 20-21).

The collegial culture relies heavily on the disciplines represented by the faculty to find meaning for its existence. The collegial culture "values faculty research and scholarship and the quasi-political governance processes of the faculty" (1992, 4).

Berquist refers the reader to a radio and television show of the 1930s and 40s (Halls of Ivy) that portrays the images and myths of the collegial culture:

> It is always autumn at Ivy College. The leaves have turned a bright red and yellow. We are ambling down a tree-lined street that winds graciously between old, well-preserved colonial homes. At the end of the street, we arrive at President Hall's handsome (though not ostentatious) home. President Hall's well-mannered son is raking leaves in front of the home. You say hello to him and knock on the door. President Hall's maid (an eccentric but lovable lady in her late fifties) answers the door and invites you into Dr. Hall's living room. A cheery fire always seems to be lit (and in need of minimal tending). You sit by the fire and are offered an inviting cup of tea (or hot cider—something non-alcoholic, of course). President Hall enters the room. He wears an elegant, though slightly worn, cardigan sweater and carries with him a copy of Shakespeare sonnets, which are familiar friends. A mixture of Marcus Welby and Mortimer Adler, President hall engages us in conversation about literature, modern values, and the intellectual growth of students at Ivy College (1992, 27-28).

This culture values the independence of the individual faculty member. In turn, in Millet's words, "Every faculty member expects that the system of organization and operation in a college or university will recognize the importance of the role of the faculty member and provide him with a status of dignity and consideration" (1962). Since the faculty member is placed at the center of the collegial culture, the member "will assume that institutional change takes place primarily through—and power resides in—the quasi-political, committee-based, faculty-controlled governance processes of a college or university" (Berquist, 1992, 45-46). Even though this culture is one that still exists, to some degree, on all college and university campuses, Berquist points out, "For all its strengths—specifically, its encouragement of deliberation and open communication—the collegial culture suffers from a lack of organization and coherence" (1992, 93).

The Managerial Culture

Berquist traces the origins of this culture to two types of American collegiate institutions: the Catholic college and the American junior or community college. In both cases, the culture grew out of the elementary and secondary schools already in place. The Catholic college "was an extension of the established…schools that were being run by various teaching orders of priests and nuns…" (Berquist, 1992, 57). The junior and community colleges were outgrowths of their local communities and schools, with faculty members "trained as teachers rather than as scholars or researcher, and administrators …just as likely to have received their advanced degrees in higher education as in a specific academic discipline" (1992, 58). In these institutions, course offerings were designed "where the desired competencies of students could be specified" (1992, 58). In other words, the focus was far more on vocational preparation. Berquist says the influence of this culture has gained an enormous amount of strength over the years. "This culture, in turn, has become increasingly influential in this country and has generally become almost as prominent as the collegial culture" (1992, 58). How the managerial culture finds meaning is familiar to all those in academic life during an age of increased demands for what is being called accountability. Berquist defines the managerial culture in structural terms:

> A culture that finds meaning primarily in the organization, implementation, and evaluation of work that is directed toward specified goals and purposes; that values fiscal responsibility and effective supervisory skills; that holds untested assumptions about the capacity of the institution to define and measure its goals and objectives clearly; and that conceives of the institution's enterprise as the inculcation of specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes in students so that they might become successful and responsible citizens (1992, 5).

As colleges and, particularly, universities grew, the collegial culture was simply not able to handle the complexity of what Kerr explains as the emergence of the

multipurpose, multi-constituency, multi-level university: what he defined as the "multiversity" (1963). Berquist elaborates on the characteristics of this enterprise:

> The multiversity depended on exceptional managerial skills. Budgets were more complex…with increased administrative support services…. Statewide coordination of educational enterprises encouraged the creation of a new generation of educational managers who were versed in the technical language of large-scale institutions. No longer retreaded faculty members…these were professional managers of the educational enterprise, who had developed their own language, rituals, and values (1992, 67).

The effect of the managerial culture's growing influence on college and university campuses has been strong. The new demands by the public for increased accountability, particularly during times of declining resources and retrenchment, required the kind of planning and organization that the collegial culture just couldn't manage. However, Berquist writes that the campus protest era of the 60s and 70s was not just about Vietnam:

> Students deplored the indifference of vast educational systems to their unique needs. They complained of complicity between big business, big government, and big university; they demanded a renewed focus on teaching and a new emphasis on social values and reform. These protests provided fertile ground for the growth of two other cultures: the developmental and the negotiating (1992, 67).

The Developmental Culture

The juxtaposition of the collegial and managerial cultures in colleges and universities provided a rich environment for the development of a culture of compromise, one that recognized the benefits and drawbacks of each of the preceding systems. Generally cultivated by faculty, they "advocated a more deliberate mode of planning and development that retains faculty authority and a democratic spirit, while avoiding the political infighting of the collegial culture" (Berquist, 1992, 4). Berquist further defines the developmental culture:

> (Developmental culture) finds meaning primarily in the creation of programs and activities furthering the personal and professional growth of all members of the collegiate community; that values personal openness and service to others, as well as institutional research and curricular planning. (This culture) conceives of the institution's enterprise as the encouragement of potential for cognitive, affective, and behavioral maturation among all students, faculty, administrators and staff (1992, 5).

While Berquist's definition of this more recently developed culture may evoke a response of "Well, isn't that what we all want?", he points out that associates within this culture are not always viewed favorably:

> Members of this third culture tend to be relatively naïve about the political process of a college or university and often are viewed by managerially oriented faculty and administrators as too idealistic and ill equipped to implement a carefully conceived program (1992, 93-94).

The notion of a well-conceived developmental culture is sometimes myth, sometimes reality. But its fundamental concept is that "one can take the best from the managerial culture (namely, its procedures), and the collegiate culture (namely, its values), and blend them together…" (1992, 101). Its values reside in such notions as faculty development, curriculum development, and long-range institutional planning, and find their focus in three different characteristics of higher education: (1 teaching and learning, (2 personal and organizational dynamics, and 3) institutional dynamics. The members of such a culture "believe that they can always discover a point of compatibility between personal and organizational well-being" (1992, 101).

The Negotiating Culture

As the managerial culture grew in American colleges and universities, so did its symbiont, the negotiating culture. Berquist explains, "The fourth culture emerged in response to the inability of the managerial culture to meet the personal and financial needs of faculty and staff" (1992, 129). Just as the junior and community colleges were

the genealogical source of the managerial culture, they were also the roots of the negotiating culture. As elementary and secondary school faculties began to unionize, faculties of the junior and community colleges under the same management became interested. Berquist defines this emerging, negotiating culture as:

> A culture that finds meaning primarily in the establishment of equitable and egalitarian policies and procedures for the distribution of resources and benefits in the institution; that values confrontation and fair bargaining among constituencies (primarily management and faculty or staff) with vested interests that are inherently in opposition. The negotiating culture conceives of the institution's enterprise as either the undesirable promulgation of existing (and often repressive) social attitudes and structures or the establishment of new and more liberating social attitudes and structures (1992, 5-6).

The reasons for the emergence of the negotiating culture in colleges and universities went beyond just a response to the managerial model. Simply the growth and subsequent complexity of many institutions provided a need for a responding structure that believed it has the interests of "workers" at heart. Johnstone (1981) identified the process as the bureaucratization of colleges and universities. Ladd and Lipset (1973) agreed, particularly with respect to public universities:

> Accompanying the rapid growth of higher education in the postwar era has been the development in the predominant public sector of gigantic multi-campus universities, with central administrations often directly responsible to state authorities. Inherently, such developments led to bureaucratization and reduced the sense of collegiality between faculty and administrators. Professors found that important decisions were being made off campus.

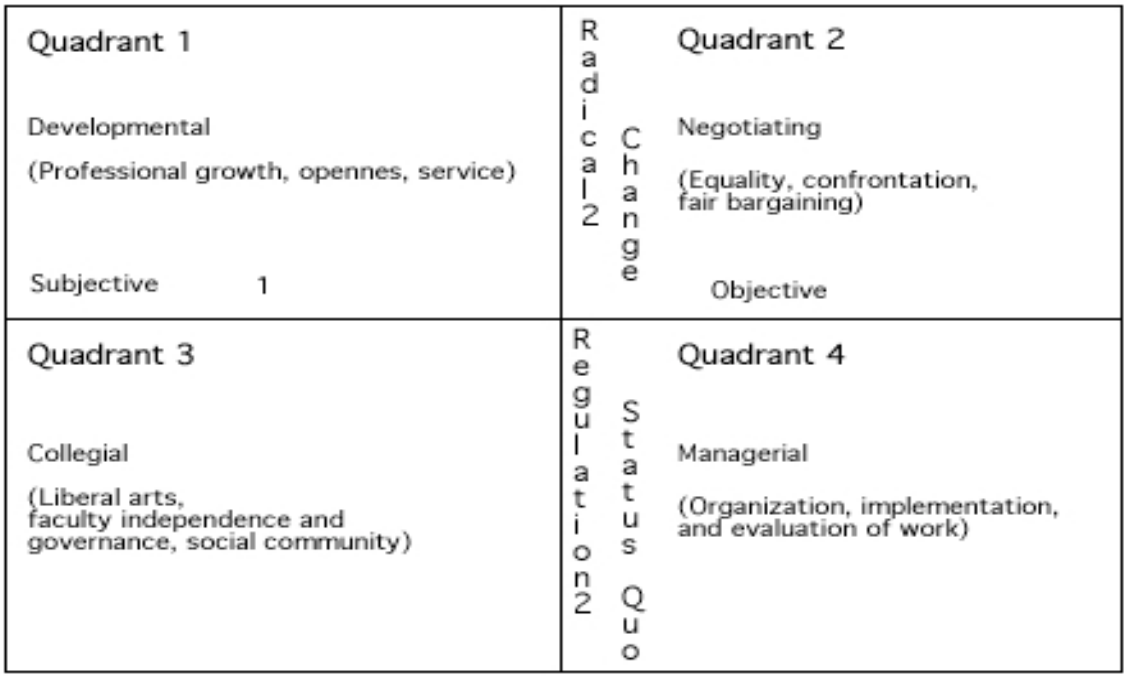
Berquist recognizes the current position of the negotiating culture, writing that it "seems to be firmly established in American colleges and universities—especially the public ones. It serves not only as worthy adversary to those in the managerial culture, but

also as an alternative source of influence and power for those faculty members who feel disenfranchised by the established collegial culture" (1992, 136).

Cultural Frames and Identities within the Typology

So, is there a connection between Burrell and Morgan's *Typology of Sociological Paradigms* and the identification of four university cultures by Berquist? Perhaps an overlay of the cultures into four quadrants (representing the dimensions of Burrell and Morgan [*figure 3])* can add some understanding as to how cultures in the university setting may view the social world. In the figure, I have placed a culture inside a quadrant representing a "possible" predisposition for a Burrell and Morgan paradigm. Judging from participants' responses to questions, this overlay has a good deal of 'local' validity. I would invite the to make comparisons to their own situation for discovery situational validity.

Figure 2: Potential Links of Cultures and Frames within the Subjective/Objective and Regulation/Radical Change Dimensions of Burrell and Morgan.



Comparisons Along the Horizontal Axis

Objective Dimension, Quadrants 2 and 4

One can make a strong suggestion that someone, or a group who views their social/work world in a more concrete fashion, as a realist and in an empirical manner (Burrell and Morgan), may lean toward a managerial or negotiating culture identification (Berquist).

Subjective Dimension, Quadrants 1 and 3

Conversely, a person who views the social/work world in a more subjective way, believing truth is personal, multidimensional, and perhaps even evaporable, may be inclined toward identification with the developmental or collegial cultures.

Comparisons Along the Vertical Axis

Regulation Dimension, Quadrants 3 and 4

Additional distinctions can be made through interpreting organizational predispositions along the regulation/change axis. Collegial and managerial environs, in which the traditions, symbols and internal politics of a university are strong, or with an established hierarchy of structural policies and managerial control, may be more inclined toward the regulation dimension. Those "regulations" may or may not be spelled out, but the expectation of "how we do things around here", would be strong and not conducive to change. Groups or persons who identify strongly with these notions might be inclined toward the collegial (quadrant 3) or managerial (quadrant 4) cultures.

Radical Change Dimension, Quadrants 1 and 2

Equally, a view of radical change, advocating organizational upheaval, would view the power structures of the status quo as unfair and limiting. This would be indicative of the developmental (quadrant 1) and the negotiating cultures (quadrant 2).

These Cultures at Midwest State University

Each of Berquist's cultures seemed to be present at Midwest State University. A careful analysis of the data, including university records, participants' responses, as well as analysis of structural considerations at MSU led me to make the following observations:

1. All four cultures exist at Midwest State University.
2. There is more than one managerial culture exerting power at MSU.
3. The Department of Music exists in a variety of those cultures, with the exception of the managerial.
4. The four cultures have varying degrees of influence and power.