CHAPTER 13

MANAGING MEANING—CULTURE

VIOLINA P. RINDOVA AND SANTOSH SRINIVAS

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INTRODUCTION

The world as we deal with it is always constituted by those in it, so that … it can always be re-viewed, re-constituted and thus transcended by making use of possibilities for reframing, or for redefining the way in which the world is understood. (Turner, 1990: 3—4)

THE management of meaning as a key management task was established clearly with Pfeffer's (1981) seminal paper 'Management as Symbolic Action: In this paper Pfeffer (1981: 1) advanced the argument that the 'analysis of management or leadership in organizations must proceed on two levels. On the level of substantive actions and results, decisions are largely the result of external constraint and power-dependence relationships. On the expressive and symbolic level, the use of political language and symbolic action serves to legitimate and rationalize organizational decisions and policies' He highlighted the differences between substantive and symbolic actions, associated them with different goals and outcomes, and located the management of meaning in the symbolic realm with the purpose of explaining and rationalizing substantive actions. Pfeffer's article not only focused research attention on the management of meaning as a core managerial task, but also defined the research agenda on the topic emphasizing the socio-political dynamics of meaning management as a means for building social cohesion within the organizational boundaries, and managing conflict with external audiences.

In the thirty-five years since the publication of his seminal article, the management of meaning has emerged as a central area of inquiry in organizational science. The con- cept has attracted wide scholarly attention across research streams ranging from micro research on cognition and decision-making, to meso-level studies on organizational culture, image, and identity, and macro-level research on organizational strategies, competitive and stakeholder interactions, and institutional logics.

This research has shown that organizations, and their environments, are systems of beliefs, shaped and transformed by managers' use of symbolic means—language, narratives, frames, concepts, rituals, and visual images that inform, direct, motivate, and facilitate organized action (Smircich and Morgan, 1982; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Rindova and Fombrun, 1999; Lounsbury, 2007; Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury, 2012). Leaders' and managers' own interpretative processes have been found to be cen- tral to the strategic choices and possibilities they envision and pursue (Pettigrew, 1977; Smircich and Stubbart, 1985; Barr, Stimpert, and Huff, 1992; Kaplan, 2008; Martins, Rindova and Greenbaum, 2015). The management of meaning has also been increas- ingly recognized as an essential part of a firm' strategy for managing relationship with stakeholder audiences by influencing external perceptions about the organizational identity, image, reputation, and celebrity (e.g., Hatch and Schultz, 1997; Gioia, Schultz, and Corley, 2000; Ravasi and Schultz, 2006; Rindova, Pollock, and Hayward, 2006; Rindova, Petkova, and Kotha, 2007). In entrepreneurship research, meaning-mak- ing has been related to resource acquisition and wealth generation (e.g., Aldrich and Fiol, 1994; Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001; Garud and Giuliani, 2013; Petkova, Rindova, and Gupta, 2013). Taken

together, these theoretical and empirical works highlight the management of meaning as a basis for mobilizing internal and external action, and for generating advantageous positions in exchange relationships with resource holders. The research further shows that the management of meaning in pursuit of internal cohesion and external support involves overlapping and interrelated activities that increasingly blur the boundaries between internal and external processes of meaning exchanges.

We organize our discussion of the findings of this research as follows: the first sec- tion highlights some important distinctions and debates that surround the meaning of meaning; the second section reviews studies on the substantive consequences of man- aging meaning in organizational and strategic management research, emphasizing that strategic activities are 'simultaneously symbolic and substantive, involve recipro- cal processes of cognition and action, and entail cycles of understanding and influence' (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991: 447). The third section provides some directions for future research.

UNDERSTANDING MEANING AND MEANING-MAKING

The concept of meaning has a long and complex intellectual history spanning psychol- ogy, philosophy, semiotics, linguistics, hermeneutics, sociology, anthropology, and, of course, marketing and management (e.g., Ogden and Richards, 1923; Schiffer, 1972; Bruner, 1990; Baumeister, 1991; Shore, 1996; Zilber, 2008; Park, 2010; Brown, Colville, and Pye, 2014; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Gee, 2015). Across these different dis- ciplines many different definitions and perspectives on meaning and meaning-related processes have been advanced.

It is therefore not surprising that organizational science lacks agreement both about what constitutes 'meaning' and what processes are involved in meaning-making. As Gray, Bougon, and Donnellon (1985) argued, meaning, as it pertains to organizational life, can be considered from a variety of perspectives—from a cognitive perspective as concepts and schemas, from a relational perspective as maps and networks, and from an institutional perspective as logics and ideologies. Meaning-making therefore is invoked in a variety of ways in the literature, with some definitions emphasizing its cognitive aspects 'focused on appraisal and interpretation, which is described in terms of devel- oping frameworks, schemata, or mental models, others emphasizing its social nature in that it 'occurs between people' and is 'negotiated, contested, and mutually co-con- structed' (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014: 62 and 66), while others yet highlighting that it is shaped by the ideational and symbolic aspects of institutions (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, 2012). Not only organizational scholars differ in how they view mean- ing-making, but a proliferation of meaning-related constructs have been observed in the literature. In a recent review of the organizational sensemaking literature, Maitlis and Christianson (2014: 69) document the introduction of terms such as 'sensebreak- ing, 'sensedemanding, 'sense-exchanging, 'sensehiding, and 'sense-specification, in addition to the now well-established construct of 'sensegiving' (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). While this phenomenon reveals the intensification of scholarly interest in mean- ing-making, it also

highlights the need for finding the common threads in the diversity. We highlight three important issues in this regard.

First, we concur with Baumeister (1991) that meaning is not easy to define, as to define it is to already use meaning. He defines it as 'shared mental representations of possible relationships among things, events, and relationships. Thus, meaning connects things' (1991: 15, emphasis in original). In a similar vein, Weick (1995: 111) described sensemaking as con- necting cues and frames in stating that "The combination of a past moment + connection + present moment of experience creates a meaningful definition of the present situation (...) Frames tend to be past moments of socialization and cues tend to be present moments of experience. If a person can construct a relation between these two moments, meaning is created' Thus, to understand meaning and meaning-making, scholars need to investigate connections and connecting—what is being connected and through what processes.

Second, much disagreement surrounds the answers to both questions—what is being connected and how. Researchers working from the perspective of either cognitive or social psychology espouse an information-processing paradigm and study how observed stimuli are given meaning through the application of schemas (Fiske and Taylor, 1991). Schemas are cognitive structures that represent 'knowl- edge about a concept or type of stimulus, including its attributes and the relations among attributes' (Fiske and Taylor, 1991: 98) and that provide frames for interpret- ing new information. Research suggests that whereas meaning-making as a type of cognition is not necessarily 'conscious, verbal, deliberate, or rational' (Fiske and Taylor, 2013: 364), individuals are motivated to engage in meaning-making in order to reduce the discrepancy between 'situational meaning'—derived from the experi- ence in a particular environmental encounter—and 'global meaning' based on their broad orienting systems consisting of beliefs, goals, and subjective feelings (Park, 2010). Such meaning-making requires 'relatively stable mental models or schemas by means of which people maintain a sense of fundamental stability in their apprehen- sion of reality' (Shore, 1996: 157).

The notion of schemas is also central to the Carnegie School approach to the study of organizations (Simon, 1955; March and Simon, 1958; Cyert and March, 1963) that highlights the importance of cognitive frames of reference for the regularity in the way people construct meanings (see Cornelissen and Werner, 2014, for review). The neo-Carnegie School (Gavetti, Levinthal, and Ocasio, 2007) has further emphasized how mental representations impose structure 'on an information environment to give it form and meaning' (Walsh, 1995: 281), anchoring organizational action in a schematic, top-down, theory-driven information processing perspective.

In new- institutional theory schemas are viewed as 'the realm of institutionalized cul- ture, of typification, of the habitus, of the cognitive shortcuts that promote efficiency at the expense of synoptic accuracy' (DiMaggio, 1997: 269). Institutionalists have argued that stable meaning structures become further organized in 'logics' defined as socially constructed, coherent, and integrated sets of 'assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules'

(Thornton and Ocasio, 1999: 804) that prescribe legitimate ends and means (Friedland and Alford, 1991). Logics direct attention, activate identities, goals, and schemas, and shape the social interaction of actors (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, 2012). They further provide building blocks for meaning construction, and meaning construction serves as a mechanism by which logics are brought to bear on organizational practices and identities (Dalpiaz, Rindova, and Ravasi, 2016).

Scholars working from sociological and communication perspectives tend to espouse a symbolic view of meaning-making as mediated by the operation of signs, symbols, and concepts in a given cultural world (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1974). This view—often summarized by the 'semiotic triangle' that consists of a stimulus (a referent), a symbol, and an interpretation (a reference) (Ogden and Richards, 1923)—emphasizes that multiple interpretations of the same stimulus can be evoked by different symbolic devices. Meaning emerges from 'a three-step interface of action: sending a symbolic cue, responding to the cue, and responding to the response' (Allan, 2006: 22). Thus, in contrast to the socio-cogni- tive perspective emphasizing how information cues and the organization of knowl- edge in structures, both subjective and intersubjective, affect meaning-making, the socio-cultural perspective incorporates the role of signification, communica- tion, and contextualized interaction. The symbolic interactionist view stresses that analyzing how meaning- making is influenced through the use of symbolic devices deployed in some form of communication is critical for understanding collective processes of meaning-making, the emergence of shared understandings, as well as the management of meaning as a purposeful act. Research in this tradition con- ceptualizes meaning-making as a 'bottom-up' process in which language and other symbols are seen not simply as priming 'a separate "internal" cognitive process, but as potentially formative of individual and collective meaning construction' (Cornelissen and Werner, 2014: 196).

Third, acknowledging that meaning is both an individual and a social construct (Flower, 1994), researchers stress that meaning is neither directly transferrable, nor controllable, but is instead constructed (Crotty, 1998) and negotiated (Schultz and Wehmeier, 2010). This means that the symbols employed by the actors, and the influ- ence they have on the actions of others are not only determined by either the stimuli, or the symbols, or the receiver's interpretations alone, but by the interaction among them in a given social interaction context. Further, the socially and collectively generated meanings can have multiple roles in organizations and their environments—as con- tested outcomes, as well as media through and within which power struggles for change take place (Hardy and Maguire, 2008). On the one hand, organizations are systems of shared meanings developed through socialization and sustained by leadership and power. On the other hand, organizing is precarious as contradictory meanings emerge from multiple sources, including stratification, occupational and group differences, as well as differences in individual goals and cultural experiences. The collective meanings and their representations therefore serve both as resources for action, and as contextual constraints. Co-constructions 'need not reflect widespread agreement in the collective; and 'meaning in an organization is best captured by a multiplicity of stories' (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014: 95).

MANAGING MEANING INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY

Pfeffer (1981: 1) conceived of the management of meaning as a key managerial task because organizations are 'systems of shared meanings and beliefs' and 'the construction and maintenance of belief systems' is necessary for 'continued compliance, commitment, and positive affect on the part of participants regardless of how they fare in the contests for resources. By managing meaning, he argued, managers render the activi- ties of an organization sensible and consensually understood and agreed upon, thereby motivating organizational members and satisfying the demands of external audiences. Through management of meaning, managers accomplish two critical tasks: lower opposition and conflict, thereby mobilizing organizational action, and reduce scrutiny by external audiences. We turn to a discussion of organizational research related to each of these themes next.

Organizational Culture and Identity

In the 1980s research on organizational culture and symbolism emerged as a central perspective for understanding the management and construction of organizational meanings (Dandridge, Mitroff, and Joyce, 1980; Smircich and Morgan, 1982; Schein, 1985; Smircich and Stubbart, 1985; Donnellon, Gray, and Bougon, 1986; Turner, 1986; Martin, 1992). This work showed that effective leadership depends as much upon sym- bolic modes of action as on instrumental modes of influence. It demonstrates the cru- cial role of leadership in the structuring and transformation of organizational reality through the use of symbolic resources such as language, rituals, dramas, stories, and myths to 'frame and shape the context of action' (Smircich and Morgan, 1982: 261). Smircich (1983) showed how a system of shared meanings in an organization emerges as a product of its unique history, personal interactions, and circumstances of action, as well as purposeful design by managers using symbolic means. Hatch (1993: 686) proposed that culture is 'constituted by continuous cycles of action and meaning- making shadowed by cycles of image and identity formation. Identifying the role of meaning in the continuous production and reproduction of culture, she suggested that whereas symbolization involves 'culturally contextualized meaning creation via the prospective use of objects, words, and actions (1993: 673), interpretation evokes 'a broader cultural frame as a reference point for constructing an acceptable meaning' (1993: 675).

Subsequent work extended the analysis of the interplay between organizational cul- ture and identity. Hatch and Schultz (1997) characterized organizational identity as a 'self-reflexive product' (1997: 361) 'grounded in local meanings and organizational symbols, and thus embedded in organizational culture' (1997: 358). Others have sug- gested that identity is a 'cultural meaning or sensemaking focused on itself' (Fiol, Hatch and Golden-Biddle, 1998: 58) constituted by tensions between 'substantive reflections and symbolic expressions' (Rindova and Schultz, 1998: 47). Using a longi- tudinal case study, Ravasi and Schultz (2006) illustrated how organizational culture provides resources for leaders to both make sense of and give sense about organiza- tional identity.

Gioia, Schultz, and Corley (2000) departed from the original Albert and Whetten's (1985) formulation of organizational identity 'as that which is central, enduring, and distinctive about an organization's character' (2000: 63) by attend- ing to the difference of expressed values from which identity is imputed and to the notion that 'the interpretation of those values is not necessarily fixed or stable' (2000: 65, emphasis in original). Because of this difference, they argued organiza- tional identity has a degree of fluidity arising from varying member interpretations. In a recent review of multiple perspectives on organizational identity, Gioia et al. (2013) further emphasized the importance of recognizing organizational members as 'meaning creators' (2013: 170).

Organizational and Strategic Change

Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991: 444) drew attention to strategic change as a critical time when the rich implications of meaning-making can be understood. They showed how strategic change instigation involves attempts by the chief executive officer (CEO) and top management team to first 'figure out and ascribe meaning to strategy-relevant events, threats, opportunities, etc. and then to construct and disseminate a vision that stakeholders and constituents could be influenced to comprehend, accept, and act upon to initiate desire [sic] changes. Researchers have further shown that the imposi- tion of meanings to strategic issues characterized by ambiguity, for example, whether issues are categorized as threats or opportunities, affects strategic actions taken such as changes to product-service offerings (Dutton and Jackson, 1987; Thomas, Clark, and Gioia, 1993).

Because strategic changes frequently involve symbolic struggles over meanings, processes such as framing of actions are seen as critical to secure understanding and negotiate support for the proposed strategic re-orientations (Fiss and Zajac, 2006). Research in this vein shows that the success of strategic change efforts rests not only on the substantive changes in vision, goals, structures, and processes, but also on the use of symbols to trigger a 'cognitive reorientation' and stakeholders' acceptance of the change (Gioia et al., 1994). In a study of conditions that trigger sensegiving, Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) suggested that organizational change creates an imperative for leaders to construct shared accounts, as change increases the ambiguity and unpre- dictability of a broad set of issues, and the salience of interest divergence for stake- holder audiences. Rindova, Dalpiaz, and Ravasi (2011) similarly showed that ongoing redefinitions of organizational identity accompany fundamental shifts in organiza- tional strategies of action. Finally, Sonenshein and Dholakia (2012) drew attention to how managerial communication influences the requisite psychological resources of employees, and ultimately their belief that they could implement the change, closely linking interpretations of strategic change to the likelihood of change implementation behaviours.

Innovation

The management of meaning has also been related to organizational innovation. For instance, Bartel and Garud (2009) argued that sustaining innovation in organizations requires 'real-time coordination among people with different kinds of knowledge, sys- tems of meaning, and modes of acting' (2009: 109), and that such coordination can be

achieved using cultural mechanisms, which they referred to as 'innovation narratives: They suggested that such narratives facilitate the translation of ideas and ambiguous situations in a way that provides both coherence and flexibility to interactions during the innovation process. Boland and Tenkasi (1995) similarly argued that in the context of knowledge-intensive organizations, creative meaning-making is central for success as work processes are characterized by 'indeterminacy, ambiguity, and uncertainty' and work is 'emergent, exploratory and often moves through multiple pathways with under- standings being developed and changed as the work proceeds' (Tenkasi and Boland, 1993: 30). Thus, sensemaking is seen as a central process that supports organizational innovation capabilities and activities. Stigliani and Ravasi (2012: 1253) provided an eth- nographic account of the interplay between social practices and cognitive processes that link individual and collective level sensemaking in the innovation activities of a leading design firm. They found that the combination of conversations and use of material and symbolic artefacts (e.g., thumbnails and frameworks) enables collaborative construc- tion of meaning, with members making sense together, rather than, or in addition to 'giving sense to one another. Taking a different view on the relationship between man- aging meaning and innovation, Martins, Rindova, and Greenbaum (2015) propose that organizations can use structured meaning management for business model innova- tion by designing processes that resemble naturally occurring cognitive processes for meaning transfer and recombination—namely, analogical reasoning and conceptual combination.

Environmental Enactment

A new perspective on the management of meaning in organizations emerged from strategic management research conducted from a socio-cognitive perspective. Porac, Thomas, and Baden-Fuller (1989) pioneered the study of industries as socio- cognitive communities. They articulated the core tenets of the interpretative view in strategy research which sees meaning-making as ongoing and continuously con- structed through micro-momentary interactions among participants, with interpre- tations and actions being closely intertwined. From this perspective, organizational activities are an 'ongoing input-output cycle in which subjective interpretations of externally situated information become themselves objectified via behavior' (1989: 398). As a result of this continual exchange interpretations become shared and 'material conditions and mental models become inextricably intertwined' (1989: 412). Reger and Huff (1993) similarly showed that shared interpretations of the past, present, and future of industry groups shape industry evolution and reinforce eco- nomic realities.

The recognition of the intertwining of interpretations and actions was associated with the view of environments as 'enacted' rather than objective (Weick, 1979; Smircich and Stubbart, 1985), in which the role of strategists is not to go '"out" to collect facts' for the purposes of environmental scanning, decision-making, implementing a structure, and controlling of events. Instead, Smircich and Stubbart (1985: 730) proposed, the task of strategists is 'an imaginative one, a creative one, an art' that involves the effective use of various 'value/symbol systems' to generate the context for other actors to interpret organizational life. Accordingly, they criticized strategic management for ignoring the

social nature of strategy formation, and the systems of shared meanings that facilitate or constrain strategy implementation.

Rindova and Fombrun (1999) build on these ideas and characterize market exchanges as unfolding through cycles of resource exchanges that connect firms' pro- duction processes to product and factor markets and cycles of interpretative exchanges that connect organizational belief systems (knowledge, culture, and identity) to field- level belief systems reflected in industry macro-cultures, competitive categorizations, and reputational orderings. Their framework suggests that firms compete not only over material resources, but also over favourable constituents' interpretations about various dimensions of value creation. A firm's competitive advantage depends not only on the resources it possesses and deploys, but also on the processes through which it communicates about the value its resource allocations create, and through which it responds to the definitions of success provided by resource holders. Meaning manage- ment therefore needs to be viewed as a strategic process, central to both securing supe- rior competitive positions, and influencing the perception of value in organizational environments.

Rindova, Becerra, and Contardo (2004) similarly re-conceptualized competi- tive interactions as a combination of competitive actions and 'language games' (Wittgenstein, 1953). They argued that the language that surrounds competitive inter- actions 'subtly but persuasively shapes the competitive reality both inside and around warring firms' and that 'by attending to the constructive power of language, researchers and managers alike can better cope with the complexities of current market environ- ments, where the pursuit of meaning and competitive advantage are closely inter- twined' (2004: 683-4). Nadkarni and Narayanan (2007: 689) built on these ideas in empirical analysis of firms in the aircraft and semiconductor industries, and showed that industry velocity was not necessarily objectively pre-determined but reflected 'col- lective strategy frames' 'about industry boundaries, competitive rules, and strategy- environment relationships available to a group of related firms in an industry. Weber and Mayer (2014) address how the cognitive frames of exchange parties affect transac- tion costs and exchange relationships, arguing that frame misalignment gives rise to 'interpretative uncertainty.

Taken together the contributions of the interpretative research in strategy have led to a new perspective on the management of meaning as a key strategic activity. From this perspective, by managing meaning, managers not only mobilize internal action and appease powerful external actors, but instead tightly couple symbolic and substantive actions to increase strategic fit with audience perceptions of value. Meaning-making, in this view, is a key boundary-spanning process through which firms manage inter- actions with stakeholders (Rindova and Fombrun, 1999), competitors (Porac, Thomas, and Baden-Fuller, 1989; Porac and Thomas, 1990; Reger and Huff, 1993), and exchange partners (Weber and Mayer, 2014).

Communicating with External Stakeholder Audiences

Whether a firm uses communications purposefully to influence perceptions of itself or not, external audiences ascribe meanings to its actions and develop images of it. Put differently, the meaning-making processes of audiences about organizations do not rely on organizational communication alone because 'associations [in a broader sense, including perceptions of quality, loyalty and awareness] are created by anything linked to the brand' (Aaker, 1992: 164), and the firm as a whole.

Organizational communication provides firms with opportunities to draw attention to actions and accomplishments they deem important, to reduce information asymme- try about managerial intentions and investments, and to supply 'ready made' interpre- tative frameworks for stakeholders to apply to interpreting their behaviours (Rindova and Fombrun, 1999). Indeed, several strands of organizational and strategy research have focused on how firms use communication to influence the meaning-making pro- cess of stakeholder audiences. Working from an organizational culture and identity per- spective, Hatch and Schultz (1997: 361) argued that the externally and internally directed management of meaning connects culture, identity, and image in a mutually interdependent circular process, so that 'who we are is reflected in what we are doing and how others interpret who we are and what we are doing: They suggest the need for managers to simultaneously attend to, and bridge, the internal and external symbolic contexts of organizations. Suchman (1995) highlighted the debate between the institutional and strategic approaches to legitimation, with the latter research stream studying how 'organizations instrumentally manipulate and deploy evocative symbols in order to garner societal support' (1995: 572), and the former stream arguing that organizations that try to actively manage their legitimacy may be perceived as manipulative (Ashforth and Gibbs, 1990).

The strategic approach to legitimation has been particularly productive in the analy- sis of how new firms gain legitimacy and improve access to resources. Following a social constructivist view, Aldrich and Fiol (1994) argued that for entrepreneurs, social con- texts 'represent not only patterns of established meaning, but also sites within which renegotiations of meaning take place' (1994: 649). They proposed that through strategic use of symbolic resources, new ventures could gain cognitive legitimacy more quickly and develop new meanings that alter established expectations and norms. Lounsbury and Glynn (2001) extended these ideas in articulating a cultural view of entrepreneur- ship emphasizing the use of symbolic resources, such as stories to evocatively represent the venture's potential, making it more attractive to funders and other resource holders. Holt and Macpherson (2010) contrasted the cultural view of entrepreneurship to the myth of entrepreneurs as lone 'heroic' actors noting that by using stories entrepreneurs 'cast their actions within a wider institutional frame' to enlist stakeholder support.

Current research on managing meaning with stakeholder audiences shows that organizations may be usefully viewed as skilled cultural operatives that draw on cul- tural resources such as categories to furnish a set of meanings—emotional, behavioural, social, and economic—that renders themselves more understandable to relevant stake- holders, and thereby enables success (e.g., Wry, Lounsbury and Glynn, 2011; Glynn and Navis, 2013). Hatch and Schultz (2009), however, warn against the mistaken belief that

organizations own the meanings of their expressions and that stakeholder perceptions are congruent with their intentions. In fact, research suggests that stakeholder interpretations of firms' actions and identities become a reality—an enacted environment—that further commits the firm to a given course of action (Rindova, Becerra, and Contardo, 2004; Rindova, Pollock, and Hayward, 2006; see also Rindova, Reger, and Dalpiaz, 2012). This poses a challenge to organizations to re-orient from being the sole producers of meaning to facilitators for its co-creation with multiple stakeholders.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

In the preceding section we reviewed some of the core developments in organizational research on the management of meaning as shaped by Pfeffer's (1981) seminal article. In this article he argued that symbolic and substantial aspects of organizational activity are most likely only loosely coupled because 'management action operates largely with and on symbolic outcomes, and that external constraints affect primarily substantive actions and outcomes in formal organizations (1981: 6). He suggested the need for fur- ther research on the relationship between symbolic actions and substantive outcomes.

As we have shown, in the thirty-five years since the publication of his article, a great deal of progress has been made in understanding how meaning-making affects the mobilization of action inside and outside organizations, with the growing consensus that substantive and symbolic have mutually reinforcing effects that enhance the out- comes of both. Put differently, researchers have shown that not only symbolic actions have substantive outcomes, but that substantive actions themselves are born from meaning-making processes embedded in symbolic systems. This perspective is most evident in interpretative strategy research (Porac, Thomas, and Baden-Fuller, 1989; see also Kaplan, 2011, for a review).

Further, the focus of analysis on the effects of the management of meaning on stakeholder audiences has shifted away from avoiding potentially negative effects by reducing scrutiny and conflict, and towards generating additional value by enacting and shap- ing the environment—the notion of 'endogenous environments' (Kaplan, 2011: 686)— and developing social approval assets, such as legitimacy, status, and reputation (see Rindova, Reger, and Dalpiaz, 2012). Asa result, the topic of the management of meaning has gained prominence in the research agendas of scholars who study entrepreneurship (e.g., Hill and Levenhagen, 1995; Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001; Dodd, 2002; Nicholson and Anderson, 2005; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Petkova, Rindova, and Gupta, 2013; Garud, Schildt, and Lant, 2014), strategic and institutional change (e.g., Schultz and Wehmeier, 2010; Zilber, 2011; see Greenwood et al., 2008; Cornelissen et al., 2015) and the social construction of value in markets (Westphal and Zajac, 1998; Rindova, Pollock, and Hayward, 2006; Rindova and Petkova, 2007; Rindova, Dalpiaz, and Ravasi, 2011; Eisenman, 2013).

Overall, the research on the management of meaning increasingly emphasizes the substantive consequences of symbols, the need for developing skills for using symbols substantively, and the coupling of substantive instrumental action and symbolic expres-

sion to ensure stakeholder understanding, positive evaluation, and support. Further, with the expanding scope and diversity of research in entrepreneurship, organizational studies, and strategy that incorporate meaning-making in the analysis, some exciting new areas of research have emerged. Below we highlight two such areas ripe with oppor- tunities for significantly advancing the analysis of meaning-making in organizations and their environments.

Meaning Management as a Managerial versus Organizational Capability

With the growing recognition of the substantive consequences of the use of symbols to manage meaning-making within and across organizational boundaries, the ques- tion of whether some managers and organizations are more skilful in doing so, and why, has gained central importance. The traditional research on organizational cul- ture and identity we discussed was largely embedded in a view of culture as a relatively unified system of values or norms that unequivocally guides and constrains cognition and action (Giorgi, Lockwood, and Glynn, 2015). This traditional research portrayed organizations as different in the content of the meanings they manage but similar in the processes through which they do so. It therefore did not consider the variation in processes through which organizations develop and change their cultures and identities (managing meaning internally), and their images and reputation (managing meaning externally).

In contrast, some of the recent work in cultural sociology and organizational research suggests that individuals and organizations vary in how much culture they hold or use, and how diverse their cultural resources are (Swidler, 2001; for reviews, see Weber and Dacin, 2011; Giorgi, Lockwood, and Glynn, 2015). For example, in a study of French gas- tronomy setting Rao, Monin, and Durand (2005) demonstrate how actors engage in a 'cultural bricolage' by borrowing and recombining cultural materials from across cat- egorical boundaries to effectively address market problems and opportunities. Rindova, Dalpiaz, and Ravasi (2011) show how Italian manufacturer Alessi gradually expanded the set of cultural resources it used to guide its strategy making. They develop the con- struct of 'cultural repertoire enrichment' to highlight the possibility for organizations to expand their ability to use cultural resources through effortful investment in wide- ranging changes in their practices. Zott and Huy (2007: 74) show that entrepreneurs vary in both what symbolic actions they perform and how they perform them. Their findings suggest that those entrepreneurs who are 'skilled cultural managers'—that is, those who deploy a wide variety of symbols and do so more frequently—attract more resources than others. Organizations can use even unconventional cultural resources, such as conceptions of time, to enable interpretive shifts and address conflictual issues in pluralistic environments (Reinecke and Ansari, 2015).

Scholars have further argued that we lack adequate theory about the specific resources and capabilities organizations need in order to manage meanings strategically. They have suggested that the economic value of strategy is culturally constructed, and that an organization's ability to engage in cultural works—that is, purposive actions of cre- ating, maintaining, and disrupting the cultural elements in its institutional context— influences

its competitive advantage (Maurer, Bansal, and Crossan, 2011). Dalpiaz, Rindova, and Ravasi (2010) further argue that the management of meaning involves the development of a set of intangible assets that resemble knowledge and reputation, but are distinct from them. They build on Bourdieu's (1984) ideas about cultural and sym- bolic capital as resources that determine how individuals manage their positions in the competition for status in the socio-cultural world to argue that organizations also can develop cultural and symbolic capital to claim desirable positons in markets.

Taken together, these studies suggest that organizational abilities to manage the deeper meaning systems have implications for organizational performance, effective- ness, and competitive advantage. Further, they suggest that there are multiple processes through which individuals and organizations use cultural resources, and that these pro- cesses occur at different levels of analysis (individual versus organizational) and vary in effectiveness in selection and deployment of cultural resources in specific individual and collective activities. They point to the importance of investigating what processes constitute capabilities related to the management of meaning and whether these capa- bilities differ from other type of organizational capabilities studied in management research such as technological (Helfat and Raubitschek, 2000) and knowledge integra- tion capabilities (Grant, 1996; Verona and Ravasi, 2003).

Interplay between Organizational Culture as Systems of Beliefs (Shared and Fragmented) and Societal Culture as a Toolkit

Related to the set of questions above is the question about how organizational cul- tures and other cultural processes such as identity and image management relate to the broader societal culture and the variety of meanings generated in organizational envi- ronments. Whereas organizational researchers have moved away from the analysis of organizational environments as objective and given, they continue to assign actors in organizational environments to relatively passive roles as evaluators with fixed expecta- tions (Hsu, 2006; Hsu, Hannan, and Kogak, 2009). However, as Wry, Lounsbury, and Glynn (2011) show, actors have considerable cultural agency in constructing and man- aging the symbolic boundaries—that is, conceptual distinctions used to categorize— and thereby in actively and strategically shaping their environment. Further, in a study of the emergence of modern Indian art as a category, Khaire and Wadhwani (2010) show that the meaning construction is a collaborative enterprise, and therefore, organizations keen on participating in it should attend to distributed agency and interpretive shifts in their fields, and skilfully engage in the collective discourse through which meanings are constructed. Similarly, Weber, Heinze, and DeSoucey (2008), in their study of the emer- gence of the grass-fed meat and dairy products market in the United States as social movement, show how the movement participants mobilized broad cultural codes to cre- ate the new market segment. Their analysis showed that the activists opposed the domi- nant industrial logic of agricultural production by elaborating a shared meaning system based on semiotic codes with oppositional structures, and that this emergent meaning system stimulated producer activities, as well the development of a collective producer identity. In sum, these studies (see also Glynn and Navis, 2013) advance a socio-cultural perspective in

which organizations and other social actors are seen as actively engaging in an interactive co-construction of meanings.

Scholars seeking to advance research in this direction can draw on current research in media and communications that has increasingly focused on the active production and co-production of meaning by audiences, and organizations that serve as platforms for display and aggregation of user-generated content (Bruns, 2008; Jenkins, Ford, and Green, 2013). Given how active audiences have become in the explicit production of meaning, and how the costs of distributing such symbols and content have decreased, we suggest that the next important frontier in the analysis of the management of meaning is in the exploration of the ongoing and fluid exchanges of meanings between and within the various communities in which organizations are increasingly embedded. Such anal- yses can respond to recent calls from institutional scholars for developing a truly inter- active understanding of meaning co-construction (see Cornelissen et al., 2015).

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