Organizational Culture and Change: Understanding the Western Herald's Newsroom Culture

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ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND CHANGE:
UNDERSTANDING THE WESTERN HERALD’S NEWSROOM CULTURE

by

Sarah Ling Wei Lee

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in partial fulfillment of the
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Sarah Ling Wei Lee
The purpose of this study is to explore organizational culture and change in a college newspaper's newsroom. Student journalists often use college newspapers as a means to get editorial experience and also to get published. Even so, the college newspaper newsroom is unlike a typical metropolitan or local community newspaper's newsroom in the way that it experiences change. College newspapers encounter organizational change as part of the newsroom’s inner workings constantly because of frequent turnover and other factors. As a result, they are suitable for understanding how staff members make sense of newsroom culture in a dynamic, changing environment. Two methods were used to gather data for this study: observations and long interviews. A textual analysis using Baxter and Montgomery’s (1998) dialectical framework was used to analyze the interview transcripts. The findings suggest that editors and staffers at the Herald experience change as inherently contradictory and ineffective.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“When I look back at when I started writing here and the makeup of
the newsroom as opposed to now...I mean I could write a book on
everything... stuff that’s changed, you know, LOTS of things have
changed” – Editor 9

A college newspaper’s newsroom is truly a place filled with complexities
involving a variety of changes of different magnitudes, including staff turnover,
structural changes, new technology and so much more. As Editor 9 illustrated, one
could easily write a book about these different changes – the longer a person remains
in the newsroom, the more credible a witness he or she becomes to the newsroom’s
changing tides. In this paper, I attempt to provide you a snapshot, if you will, of one
college newspaper’s newsroom culture through its organizational members’ accounts
and my own observations of the newsroom.

In my research on college newspapers, I found most literature covered issues
such as ethics (e.g. Kostyu, 1990; Villanueva, 1996), journalism education practices
(e.g. Brandon, 2002; Frith & Meech, 2007; Greenberg & Lau, 1990), First
Amendment (e.g. Lisby, 2002; Villanueva, 1996), and censorship (e.g. Healy, 2007;
Kirtley, 2003, June/July; Silver, 2007). Furthermore, the bulk of the research has been
conducted on community colleges, specifically on community college journalism (i.e.
Stevenson & Mufuka, 2005; etc). The premise of such research is students who pursue a community college journalism education must seek the high standards that have characterized four-year colleges’ preparation of students for effective careers in mass media (Community College Journalism Association, 2001). Based on this brief survey of literature, I feel that one distinct area that has not been fully explored by communication scholars is newsroom culture and change in a college newspaper.

Newsroom culture and change have been explored in great detail at the metropolitan and local community newspaper levels (e.g., Daniels & Hollifield, 2002; Gade, 2002; Gade, 2004; Gade & Perry, 2003), but college newspapers seemed to lack this fanfare attention. Organizational change is a staple of a college newspaper newsroom’s inner workings, whereas change for a typical newsroom at a metropolitan or local community newspaper occurs when people in management positions (i.e. editor or publisher) implement it (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Burke, 2002; Gade, 2004).

Specifically, changes at a metropolitan or local community newsroom are often organization development initiatives that are designed to increase the organization’s effectiveness and productivity. According to Editor and Publisher (2006), there are 1,592 college newspapers nationwide, which include two-year degree community colleges as well as four-year degree colleges and universities. Out of these 1,592 college newspapers, 826 have an online counterpart (Yahoo Directory of U.S. College and University Newspapers, 2007). This population of college newspaper staffers is not small and obscure, as shown by these figures, and yet it is a population that is understudied. In this respect, this study is an effort to fill the gap in the literature and
also an effort to encourage other communication scholars to consider this unique population in future studies.

College newspapers play an influential role in journalism education, especially in terms of understanding the momentum and practices of a newsroom. According to Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes and Wilhoit (2007), in a 2002 study on bachelor degree holders who are in the mainstream news media, 73 percent had taken courses in journalism, and 74 percent had worked on a college newspaper or other campus medium. Weaver et al. also noted, “High school and college media provided an important connection to the [journalism] profession. Dozens of journalists said that these experiences cemented their interest” (p. 59). In addition, the clips and experience that student journalists get at their college newspaper can often help pave the way to internships and jobs. Another important aspect of college newspapers is their function as a training ground for student journalists. In an article on *Quill Online*, a magazine for the professional journalist, Gina Barton (2002) wrote an anecdote about David Chandler, who worked at *The Boston Globe* for 21 years. He never graduated from college, but he spent his four years on campus working at the student newspaper. She quoted him, “In retrospect it turns out I was getting all the education I needed for what turned out to be my career” (Para. 36).

Purpose and Assumptions

The purpose of this study was to explore newsroom culture and organizational change in a college newspaper’s newsroom. In other words, how do newsroom staff
members experience what is changing or has changed in their environment (e.g. seating arrangement in the newsroom, work practices, production schedule deadlines, new leadership, etc)? The research site selected for this study was the *Western Herald* newspaper, a student-run college newspaper at Western Michigan University. One of the typical changes that occur at this college newspaper is staff turnover. The *Western Herald* experiences this change on an annual basis. Furthermore, the *Western Herald* newspaper began publishing in 1916, which would indicate that an organizational culture would have developed, changed and passed on to new employees over the past several decades. This characteristic meets Schein’s (1984) three main requirements of an organization prior to determining its culture, which are: (1) a group that has been together long enough to have shared significant problems; (2) a group that has had opportunities to solve those problems and to observe the effects of their solutions, and; (3) a group that has taken in new members. In addition, the *Western Herald* is a convenient case study for me, given my past undergraduate working experience with the paper as a staff writer. I will describe my undergraduate experiences with the newspaper in the methods chapter as part of being the human instrument.

Upon undertaking this study, I began with a few assumptions about organizational culture, change, sensemaking, college newspapers, and also the qualitative approach I chose. First, organizational change is inextricably linked to organizational culture. Change in an organization is a chaotic phenomenon that emerges from some form of innovation, initiative or even experimentation that goes
against the existing stability and order within an organization (Thietart & Forgues, 1995); in other words, a play of counteracting forces. Often, changes in an organization affect the organizational culture significantly, as the effects inform whether the change will have a positive outcome (e.g. performance and productivity increases, a positive environment for organizational member’s career growth is created) or a negative one (e.g. organizational members resist change). It is also important to note that culture is difficult to change because it is a creation by organizational members through various series of sensemaking processes (Keyton, 2005).

The second assumption, stemming from the first, is about organizational sensemaking. When organizational members encounter problems, or some form of difficulty, within an organization, they engage in sensemaking with one another to help do their jobs better and manage their personas in the workplace. This is an active process that organizational members engage in and even more so when change occurs in their environment. Organizational sensemaking is also a means of reinforcing cultural values, artifacts and assumptions within the organization. Drawing upon Karl Weick’s (1995) work on organizational sensemaking, organizational members use a variety of sensemaking processes. The most commonly used form, and one also studied extensively by communication scholars, is narrative. Narratives have been used by societies, organizations and even family and friends to pass on a cultural heritage – whether it is dealing with problems in the system, or even regaling fond memories that inspire new members to claim ownership and pride in that system.
Another sensemaking process that will be addressed in this study is arguing - a type of belief-driven process (Weick, 1995). Weick draws from several scholars (i.e. Hage, 1980; Huff, 1988; Tompkins, 1987) to illustrate the importance of arguing in the sensemaking process, specifically arguing is used by organizational members to challenge ideas and clarify them by creating a new set of strategic ideas that further enhances the quality of information available to the organization itself.

The third assumption is that college newspapers in general are training grounds for student journalists or college students who are interested in gaining print newspaper experiences. Regardless of academic stream, the newspaper publishing experience is the ultimate fruit of one’s labor at a college newspaper. A student’s major does not limit the student from pursuing such valuable experiences. In addition, more often than not, a college newspaper is not directly affiliated with a university or department, but functions as a training ground for students. Furthermore, college newspapers are a form of norming rite or ritual for student journalists to understand the functions of a newsroom and to get clips. In other words, college newspapers are the stepping-stones prior to a larger metropolitan newspaper or local community newspaper, which adds to this idea that college newspapers are training grounds. Of course, I acknowledge that there is more than one way to attain these norming experiences, especially with the established internships that most journalism or communication departments have with nearby newspapers. Traditionally, the college newspaper has been the primary choice for such experiences. The norming rites or rituals for student journalists in college newspapers often have nothing to do with
actual journalistic work, but rather they concern the organizational functioning of the newsroom. For example, the organizational structure of a college newsroom is similar to most large metropolitan or local community newspapers. The organizational structure of a newsroom, which is a type of cultural artifact that can be seen and experienced in an organization, is a hierarchical one consisting of an editor-in-chief, managing editor, copy editors, section editors, staff writers, and design/layout department (Robertson, 2003). Student journalists who work for a college newspaper are normed into the organizational structure of a newsroom in terms of roles and responsibilities and formal communication patterns. For example, the editor-in-chief manages and communicates with editors and the design/layout department frequently, but not so much with staff writers. Staff writers communicate with their section editors on a frequent basis, but not as much with the editor-in-chief or other editors.

My last assumption is that a qualitative approach is the best methodological choice for this study. Studies of organizational culture often cannot be depicted through statistics, numbers or a controlled environment. As mentioned earlier, organizational culture emerges from its members, which illustrates the idea that culture is something that is experienced and difficult to control. The qualitative approach is in no way a passive approach to understanding organizational culture, but, rather, an interpretive depiction through the organizational members' experiences. Since an organization's culture emerges from its members, the culture is unique to that organization alone, which emphasizes context-driven research. This type of research has often been viewed as non-generalizable and also not transferable
to other organizations in terms of its findings. Nevertheless, such research serves as an illustration of an organization’s cultural practices that communication scholars or college newsroom staffers may find useful, which they must customize to their own research, or to their own organizational needs. As illustrated by Hallowell, Bowen and Knoop’s (2007) case study on the Canadian-based company Four Seasons’ expanding to Paris, the Four Seasons took cues from Walt Disney Company’s failed attempt to expanding to Paris with Euro Disney. In Hallowell et al.’s (2007) case study, the Four Seasons took a different approach in managing its presence in France by actually adapting part of the Four Seasons organizational culture to suit the local French culture. The Disney Company, on the other hand, made no attempts to adapt its strong organizational culture to the local French culture, which led to a large degree of incongruence between the two dominant cultures. This example shows that if one truly wanted to transfer findings from one context to another, some form of customization and adaptation is necessary.

In the following chapter, I will provide a review of the existing literature concerning the main theoretical frameworks that inform this study. First, I will provide a review of organizational culture. This will inform the interpretation of culture within organizations, and also its relations to professional culture and newsroom culture. The next body of literature that will be explored is organizational development and change, including its relation to the culture of the organization. Sensemaking in organizations will be the third literature reviewed, specifically, narratives and arguing as forms of sensemaking. The last literature that will be
reviewed is dialectical theory. The dialectical framework suggested by Baxter and Montgomery (1998) was chosen as the approach for the textual analysis of the interview transcripts after I noticed that the participants explained their experiences in the form of concurrent opposites and contradictions. For each section of this chapter, I will discuss what previous research has revealed about the theoretical framework. Finally, I will discuss how these past studies have led to my research questions.

Chapter Three will be a discussion of the methods implemented to gather data for this study and also the data analysis procedures I used. First, I will provide a definition of what becoming the human instrument means to a qualitative study and how my past experiences may have filtered my interpretations. In addition, I will address what measures I used to counter these filters and to keep myself in check. Second, I will provide a description of the research site, specifically its organizational makeup, production schedule and distribution. Third, I will describe the process of negotiating entry into the newsroom and how I was introduced to the newsroom. Recruiting participants will be the next section I will address, for both observations and long interviews. The recruitment process involved public and personal invitations, and also an approved Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) written consent form. In the next section, I will detail how I conducted my observations using the systematic process offered by Silverman (1993). I will provide details about the long interviews, specifically how I chose my participants, how I developed the interview protocol, and how I executed the interviews. Afterward, I will provide details on how I conducted my data analysis for the long interviews.
Last, I will evaluate the reliability and validity of this qualitative study, and also its limitations.

Chapter Four is the heart of the thesis – analysis and findings. The findings of this study are organized around my two research questions. First, I will provide the answer to research question 1, “What cultural changes have student journalists at the Western Herald experienced?” based on the data I have collected from the field. Second, research question 2, “How do they make sense of these changes discursively?” will be answered using excerpts from interview transcripts as evidence to illustrate the findings from the coding analysis. The answer for research question 2 is organized in such a way that dialectical tensions developed through the coding analysis can help us to ascertain which tensions might be found in newsrooms generally, which ones seem to be more specific to college newspapers, and which ones seem to be exclusive to the Western Herald newspaper. In addition, each tension will be addressed alongside Baxter and Montgomery’s (1998) dialectical framework to provide a detailed explanation and theoretical connection. The findings suggest that editors and staffers at the Herald experience change as inherently contradictory and ineffective.

The final chapter of this thesis is the discussion and conclusion. In this chapter, I will provide my insights, as well as possible implications of this study; in other words, a discussion of the significance of this study and its relevance to academics and others who might gain insight from a better understanding of
newsroom culture at college newspapers. Finally, I will address limitations of this study and suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many communication scholars have explored various aspects of the newsroom environment at the industry level to uncover newsroom problems (e.g., protecting star reporters from ethical disrepute to maintain a newspaper’s glamorous reputation) and also to improve communication competencies within the newsroom (e.g., flattening the hierarchy of the editorial staff and working in teams). Aspects that have been explored include the use of the Internet and other technology (e.g., Cottle & Ashton, 1999; Deuze, 1999; Garrison, 2001; Pavlik, 2000), media convergence in newsrooms (e.g., Hammond, Petersen & Thomsen, 2000; Singer, 2004), organizational development (e.g., Gade, 2004; Gade & Perry, 2003), organizational change (e.g., Daniels & Hollifield, 2002; Gade, 2002; Gade & Perry, 2003), and the influence of gender on work done by media professionals in news organizations (e.g., Bruin, 2000; Craft & Wanta, 2004).

Organizational culture is another aspect that has been studied in newsrooms by communication scholars (e.g., Cohen, 2002; Hollifield, Kosicki & Becker, 2001), but not as ubiquitously as technology and media convergence in newsrooms. Often, organizational culture is referred to as newsroom culture (Deuze, 2003; Gade & Perry, 2003; Hollifield et al., 2001; Lowrey, 2003). I drew upon these different industry-level studies of newsrooms, and also organizational scholars’ work, to help inform this review of the literature. This chapter will specifically review the literature
in four main sections. First, I will discuss organizational culture and its relation to professional and newsroom culture. Next, I will examine organizational development and change and its relation to the culture of organizations. The third section emphasizes sensemaking processes, specifically narrative and arguing as ways of understanding newsroom culture. Last, dialectical theory will inform readers of various dialectical tensions, as well as praxis. The chapter concludes with a statement of my research questions.

Organizational Culture

In the late seventies and early eighties, the idea of culture as an important perspective, or as a way of seeing organizational communication, emerged out of various economic and intellectual situations. “Changes in economic and intellectual discourses reflect a shift in economic power and doubts about managerial capabilities to control organizational life,” Smircich and Calás (1987) wrote (p. 330). These changes led to culture surfacing as a lens for research, especially among organizational communication and management scholars. Eisenberg and Riley (2001) identified the origins of the concept of organizational culture in Jacques’ (1951) book, *The Changing Culture of a Factory: A Study of Authority and Participation in an Industrial Setting*, whereas Parker (2000) identified the first use of the term in an article by Becker and Geer (1960).

In any case, culture has a pervasive influence on how an organization functions. Culture determines how an organization responds to its business environment, how it organizes its work, how it structures its day-to-day activities, as
well as how it deploys and rewards its managers’ and employees’ skills and talents. Furthermore, culture is the determining factor of social interaction patterns that are used to accomplish work, as well as the nature of the relationship, or contract, between the organization and its employees. Equally important, it sets the tone of an employee’s communication orientation toward customer or client service (Sanchez, 2006).

Communication scholars have also been intrigued by the concept of organizational culture because of the notion that messages, meanings, and symbols are central to an organization’s existence (Keyton, 2005). Keyton’s explanation refers to organizational culture as a descriptive approach, where the culture emerges from the organization through those three different means mentioned above. In the late seventies, the focus on organizational culture became more prevalent when communication scholars “relocated communication as the central process in organizations and equated communicating with organizing” (Eisenberg & Riley, 2001, p. 293). Weick’s (1979) book, The Social Psychology of Organizing, was influential in moving researchers toward discovering systems or patterns of interpretation in organizations (Keyton, 2005). The body of literature on organizational culture grew rapidly in the early eighties. As Eisenberg and Riley wrote, “The speed with which ‘organizational culture’ emerged as a significant lens for communication scholars and other academics to examine or otherwise engage with organizations and institutions was astounding” (p. 291). Around the same time, popular business books, such as those by Peters and Waterman (1982) and Deal and
Kennedy (1982), provided case analyses of organizational cultures, resulting in prescriptive advice for practitioners (Keyton, 2005). These business books were based on the assumption that culture could be managed and were often geared toward efficiency, productivity and profitability. This perspective is in line with Sanchez’s (2006) work, My aim, in contrast, was to describe the culture of the Western Herald’s newsroom, letting the characteristics of the culture emerge, instead of prescribing what they ought to be.

Defining Organizational Culture

Organizational culture has several definitions varying from scholar to scholar. My initial choice of definition to guide this paper was Schein’s (1991) model of organizational culture. Schein’s definition of culture in groups and organizations provided one of the first valuable platforms for many organizational communication scholars in their research of culture. First of all, Schein wrote that culture is unable to exist unless there is a group that “owns” it. According to him, “culture is embedded in groups, hence the creating group must always be clearly identified” (p. 5). Schein (1992) also added that organizational culture is:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has 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. (p. 12)
Three required characteristics must exist in a group before an organizational culture can exist or be determined (Schein, 1984). I used these characteristics to identify the research site for this study. Schein described a group as a set of people (1) who have been together long enough to have shared significant problems, (2) who have had opportunities to solve those problems and to observe the effects of their solutions, and (3) who have taken in new members. If these criteria are not met, then a group's culture cannot be determined. In addition, "the passing on of solutions to new members is required in the definition of culture because the decision to pass something on is itself a very important test of whether a given solution is shared and perceived as valid" (Schein, 1984, p. 7). If a group is able to pass on, with conviction, the elements of a way of perceiving, thinking and feeling, one can assume that that group has had enough stability, as well as enough common experiences, to have developed a culture (Schein, 1984). Once again, the research site selected for this study reflects these criteria and more so in regards to passing on the organizational culture with confidence to new members during its annual turnover. In other words, the culture remains in the organization as people go in and out of it.

Schein (1992) further argued that culture could be analyzed at three different levels: artifacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions. Artifacts on the first level of Schein's (1984) model basically describe what is obvious in a physical and social environment that an organization has created: artifacts such as things displayed (e.g., architecture, art, dress, etc) or unconcealed behavior (e.g., decision-making styles, communication during meetings, etc). In Schein's model, these
artifacts are easy to observe, but difficult to decipher (Schein, 1985; Schein, 1992).
Moreover, the observer can describe what he or she sees and feels, but is unable to
reconstruct meaning in a given group or organization based on that alone, or to
discern whether the artifacts even reflect important underlying assumptions. If an
observer lives in a group long enough, however, the meanings of artifacts gradually
become clear (Schein, 1992).

The next level of the model is espoused values. Espoused values are values
that are held by individuals in the organization (Schein, 1985; Schein, 1992). These
values often shape how an organization runs. For example, members in an
organization may value the importance of respecting people who are in senior
positions. However, not all values hold equal weight in an organization. Often, a
relationship between artifacts at the first level and values at the second level will
occur; whether the levels match one another also affects meaning (Schein, 1985;
Schein, 1992).

If the first level and second level do match, it could possibly indicate that
there are underlying cultural assumptions in the organization. On the other hand, if
they do not match, Schein (1992) suggested that this might indicate the organization’s
rationalizations or aspirations for the future. Drawing an example from the research I
conducted at the Western Herald, the editor-in-chief implemented a potluck ritual (an
artifact) in hopes of instilling social cohesion among the staffers. The Western
Herald’s culture does not value social cohesion as an end in itself but rather as a
means to an end. This is illustrated by Editor 4: “I think being good friends is a good
thing, I’m not going to say that you’re necessarily going to work harder with your friends, but you’re going to enjoy work more if you’re with people that you like and people that you get along with and people that annoy you.” So, in this case, the *Western Herald* aspires to more social cohesion in the future through activities such as potlucks. This example illustrates that an organization may value a certain type of artifact or behavior in practice, yet experience conflict with the values it espouses.

Schein (1992) wrote that in order “to get at that deeper level of understanding, to decipher the pattern, and to predict future behavior correctly, we have to understand more fully the category of basic assumptions” (p. 21). This leads us to the final core level of Schein’s model. These are the core assumptions that individuals in an organization hold about the world and how it works (Schein, 1985; Schein, 1992). Schein said “basic assumptions, like theories-in-use, tend to be those we neither confront nor debate and hence are extremely difficult to change” (p. 22). In addition, these basic assumptions are not only specific to organizational functioning, but also to how people view the world and humanity’s relationship to the world (Schein, 1985; Schein, 1992). For example, members of the organization may share a basic assumption that the world is fast-paced and cruel. Therefore, everyone should work extra hard to catch up with the competing world and be stern in their business dealings with others. After awhile, this basic assumption becomes a norm for everyone in the organization and becomes taken for granted (Schein, 1992) to the extent that no one really talks about it, but knows it subconsciously. An example from the *Western Herald*: The *Herald* editors share an assumption that all college
newspapers go through the same struggle that they do with staff writers regarding poor writing and lack of commitment to the organization. As Editor 2 recounted to me, “You’re only as good as your writers.” This is an assumption that has become the norm for Herald editors, and it is now taken for granted, in the sense that it is not a topic of constant discussion, but a way of experiencing the Herald.

Martin (2002) extended the definition of organizational culture to include “patterns of interpretation composed of the meanings associated with various cultural manifestations, such as stories, rituals, formal and informal practices, jargon, and physical arrangements” (p. 330). She characterized the boundaries of organizational culture as fluctuating, permeable and blurred; she argued that organizational culture is a subjective phenomenon viewed differently by different people. In addition she argued that we should not assume that organizational culture is tied to a physical location or to a collection of bodies. As Parker (2000) wrote, culture is not a mechanism internal to an organization, but rather “culture-making processes take place ‘inside,’ ‘outside’ and ‘between’ formal organizations” (p. 82), which results in many different senses of culture.

Keyton (2005) wrote a refined description of organizational culture that will be used as the definition of organizational culture to guide this study. She described organizational culture as a set of artifacts, values and assumptions that emerge from the interactions of organizational members. Her definition encompasses Sackmann’s (1990) and Smircich’s (1983) notion that organizations are evolving, dynamic, complex cultural systems with inconsistencies and paradoxes, and with several
cultural groups or meaning systems. In other words, an organization does not have a culture, but rather is culture.

Keyton identifies two common features in organizational culture definitions provided by various scholars in her book, *Communication & Organizational Culture: A Key to Understanding Work Experiences*. First of all, organizational culture must be shared by a collective or group. The collective can vary in size, and those who share cultural elements may not be confined to any one department or unit. Organizational members are drawn together by their meaningful and shared interpretation of cultural elements, and not necessarily by their job function or location. Second, organizational culture is a multilevel construct comprised of many elements – mainly artifacts, values and assumptions. Keyton explained, “As a set, these elements guide our organizational behavior, help us make sense of the organizational world in which we operate, and create a mechanism for identifying with others at work” (p. 22). Although the artifact, value and assumption categorization scheme is commonly noted in various scholars’ definitions, organizational culture phenomena are not always so neatly identified. Any cultural phenomenon may exist on one, two, or all three levels, as a culture is a system of artifacts, values and assumptions and not any one artifact, value or assumption only.

At this point it is important to briefly distinguish between organizational culture and organizational climate, as these terms carry different assumptions and perspectives. Deshpande and Webster Jr. (1989) wrote a detailed definition that helps summarize the difference between the two concepts and informs my study. They
defined culture as, “a set of shared assumptions and understandings about organizational functioning” (p. 5). On the other hand, organizational climate “relates to members’ perceptions about the extent to which the organization is currently fulfilling its expectations” (p. 5). I examined the newsroom culture -- its artifacts, values, and assumptions -- and not perceptions of the organization’s expectations. The following section will discuss similarities and differences between newsroom culture and organizational culture.

**Newsroom Culture as Organizational Culture**

Newsrooms have been known to have a specific organizational culture that influences the way a newsroom runs (Hollifield et al., 2001). Often this is described as newsroom culture instead of organizational culture in various bodies of literature. Newsroom culture consists of three main elements: the national culture within the operating organization, the long-term influence of the organization’s founder or early dominant leaders, and the nature of the organization’s operating environment (Hollifield et al.). The operating environment in this case refers to the organization’s primary line of business, the technologies it uses to produce its products, and also the market environment in which it competes (Bloor & Dawson, 1994). The culture in a newsroom is established both historically and socially; it includes shared practices, knowledge and values that experienced members of a group transmit to newcomers, and is used to shape a group’s processes, material output and ability to survive (Hollifield et al.).
Different organizations within the same industry sector would be expected to have similar organizational cultures because of their shared market environment, technologies, work processes and production values (Hollifield et al., 2001). Hollifield et al. gave an example that illustrates this point: Newspapers are similar to televisions stations. More specifically, both media are involved in news production and distribution. Even so, newspapers are said to operate in a different sector versus television stations because they use different production and distribution technologies, and they also operate in a fundamentally different market environment. Keyton (2005) also added that industry-wide standards and government regulations are likely to impact organizations in a similar way.

Regardless of similarities, culture varies across organizations in the same industry because organizations compete for workers and, once hired, each employee contributes differently to the organization’s culture. In the context of newsroom culture, culture varies from newsroom to newsroom because it depends on the contribution of staff members in the newsroom. Furthermore an organization’s culture is exclusive to the organization itself, as it is not transferable to other organizations. As discussed in Chapter One, if an organization truly wanted to import another organization’s culture, some form of customization and adaptation would be required, and some form of ownership by members would be needed for this move to be successful.
Hollifield et al. (2001) addressed the influences of professional culture in the newsroom as well. At this juncture, it must be noted that organizational culture is not professional culture (Keyton, 2005). Professional culture is distinguished by specialized professional knowledge, the provision of an exclusive and essential service that involves the discretionary application of specialized knowledge in unforeseen situations, members’ efforts to gain primary control over their work, basic standards for professional education or training, an established code of ethics, membership in professional associations, and a reliance on other members of the professional subgroup as the primary reference group within the organization. (Hollifield et al., 2001, pp. 94-95)

In other words, professionals—such as nurses, journalists and engineers—learn the culture of their occupations, as they are educated in, and later enact, cultural beliefs and values in the performance of their occupation’s practices and ceremonies (Bloor & Dawson, 1994). The beliefs and values consist of different codes for constructing meaningful interpretations of persons, events, and objects commonly encountered in their professional world (expertise and public interest are examples of beliefs). These codes include conscious schemas that may be learned either through formal education within accredited professional courses, through on-the-job socialization, and through unconscious schemas that predispose the individual to cope in a professional manner with unforeseen and changing situations. Also, people within a professional culture are likely to rely upon other members in the professional
culture as their primary reference group, since they share a distinct pattern of values, beliefs, norms and interpretations for judging the appropriateness of one another’s actions (Bloor & Dawson, 1994). Often, professional culture does not become an organization’s culture. However, if the number of one type of professional is large, or if powerful organizational members belong to one profession, a professional culture may form and exist simultaneously with the organization’s culture (Keyton, 2005).

Research suggests that professional culture often conflicts with the dominant organizational culture and with other professional subcultures that co-exist within the parent organization (Bloor & Dawson, 1994). Specifically, the organizational culture is frequently viewed as impinging upon the professional’s ability to use his or her own knowledge, judgment and skills in the service of the public interest. As such, it is supplanting the professional’s expertise and internalized code of ethics with the particular demands of the organization’s bureaucracy (Hollifield et al., 2001). Despite the conflict between journalists’ professional culture and the values and demands of the parent news organization (Hollifield et al., 2001; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991), media scholars have found that journalists in professional newspapers willingly adapt to the organizational culture even when it impinges on the professional journalistic culture (Altschull, 1997). This tendency underscores the influential nature of organizational culture on an organization’s operating functions.

Journalistic professional culture operates strongly across organizational boundaries, although mass media scholars tend to use the term “journalistic routine” to describe the function of these professional norms (Hollifield et al., 2001; Turow,
Shoemaker and Reese (1991) defined “routines” as the “patterned, routinized, repeated practices that media workers use to do their jobs” (p. 85), which includes the use of shared basic values for identifying news, such as importance, timeliness and proximity (Hollifield et al., 2001). Turow further expanded the definition to include shared journalistic values such as fairness and objectivity. In some sense, these definitions of journalistic “routines” fall within the standard definitions of professional culture used in management research and occupational sociology (Bloor & Dawson, 1994). The study by Hollifield et al. suggested that organizational culture is, compared to the professional journalistic culture, a growing influence in the newsroom, specifically in decision-making. Like other corporate organizations, news organizations are looking for candidates who can fit into the organization’s culture to maintain a harmonious work environment.

After unraveling the various literatures on organizational culture and its relation to the newsroom, it is important to explore literature on organizational development and change, especially in reference to the changing environment in a college newspaper. I would like to make a note that whenever a change occurs in an organization, whether structurally or culturally, it is a form of development for the organization. In other words, “development” is a politically correct term to downplay the common negative assumptions associated with change. Even though the change may be a hostile takeover or layoffs, at the end of the day, the changes that take place are a means for the organization’s improvement. The following section provides an overview of concepts commonly used in organizational development and change.
Organizational Development and Change

Organizational development (OD) is the study of how organizations evolve, learn and adapt (Argyris, 1993), a literature rooted in social psychology and management. This line of inquiry attracted the interest of U.S. scholars and corporate managers in the late twentieth century as the changing global marketplace threatened U.S. dominance (Gade, 2003; Kanter, 1983). A majority of organizational development research has focused on one organization at a time and on site-specific elements (Cameron & Whetten, 1983). Gade (2003) explained that scholars take this situation-by-situation approach because the interaction of change-related variables produces a chain effect that makes the change process difficult to measure and also makes theory-building more difficult.

Nevertheless, most organizational development initiatives are attempts to change the organization’s culture, or way of doing things. Some scholars argue that the values and beliefs of an organization’s culture can be changed by focusing on micro-variables, such as procedures and routines (Schneider, Brief & Guzzo, 1996). As Keyton (2005) noted in her book, Communication & Organizational Culture: A Key to Understanding Work Experiences, organizational culture is inextricably linked to organizational change, and the only way to change an organization is to change its culture. However, a large body of organizational development literature indicates that changing an organization’s culture is not easily accomplished, and understanding the need for change is not enough to convince employees or even members of management to accept it (Gade, 2004). As noted in Chapter One by Thiétart &
Forgues (1995), change is a chaotic phenomenon, and in most organizations it is avoided because chaos can lead to loss of company profit and productivity.

**Defining Organizational Development and Change**

Earlier, I reviewed how organizational culture is defined and specified the definition that guides this study. I will follow suit here with the concept of organizational development. A refined definition of OD offered by Beckhard (1994) comprises five main characteristics: an effort that is 1) planned, 2) organization-wide, 3) managed from the top, 4) to increase organizational effectiveness and health, and 5) managed through planned interventions in the organization’s “processes,” using behavioral science knowledge. Now I will elaborate each of these characteristics.

First, OD programs involve a systematic diagnosis of the organization, the development of a strategic plan for improvement, and the mobilization of resources to carry out the effort – hence the notion of *planned* change. Second, OD efforts affect the entire organization, or rather the total system; for example, change in the reward system or even the total managerial strategy. Change in relation to the entire organization does not necessarily refer to a total corporation, or an entire government, but it refers to a system that is relatively free to determine its own plans and future within very general constraints from the environment. Third, OD efforts are managed from the top because the top management of the system has a personal investment in the program and its outcomes. Managers actively participate in the management of the effort, but this does not mean they must participate in the same activities as others. Nevertheless, the managers must have both knowledge and commitment to the
goals of the program and must actively support the methods used to achieve the goals. Next, OD efforts are designed to increase the organization's effectiveness and health. As such, an idea of what an "ideal," effective, healthy organization would look like is necessary to determine the organization's current condition and where it aims to be in relation to the "ideal." Many OD scholars have come up with a variety of definitions of what a healthy operating organization is. One that seems to capture the essence of such a definition is the one that Beckhard (1994) cited, written by Lou Morse: The commonality of goals are cooperative group relations, consensus, integration, and commitment to the goals of the organization (task accomplishment), creativity, authentic behavior, freedom from threat, full utilization of a person's capabilities, and organizational flexibility (p. 5). Last, OD achieves its goals through planned interventions using behavioral science knowledge. In other words, a strategy is developed to intervene in an existing organization, drawing upon the knowledge and technology of the behavioral sciences, such as processes of individual motivation, power, communications, perception, cultural norms, problem solving, goal setting, interpersonal relationships, inter-group relationships, and conflict management (Beckhard).

*Types of Organizational Change: College Newspapers v. Professional Newspapers*

Organizational change is the planned outcome of most OD efforts in professional newspapers or corporate organizations. On the other hand, change in a college newspaper revolves mainly around turnover of staffers in positions ranging from staff writer to editor-in-chief. Based on the definition of OD provided earlier,
the type of change that a professional newsroom goes through is planned, and indeed implemented and managed, by upper management. The organizational changes that took place at the Western Herald when I was collecting data met several characteristics of organizational development set forth by Beckhard (1994), specifically the change effort was planned, affected the entire organization, and was managed from the top.

Nevertheless, the process of organizational change varies from organization to organization, depending on the its goals for change and also on whether the environmental changes are internal (e.g., technological deployment, leadership, organizational design, hiring-firing-retiring-resigning, etc) or external (e.g., globalization, economy, demography, technological advancements, etc.) (Burke, 2002). Environmental factors play a significant role in determining the type of change required and also which course of action will resolve a problem in an organization or improve it. For example, professional newspapers often go through organizational change to gain more revenue. Hence, there is more recent research on market-driven journalism (e.g. Beam, 2003; Cohen, 2002; Underwood, 2001) and convergence to promote ad revenue online (e.g. Dailey, Demo & Spillman, 2005; De Mooij, 2003; Deuze, 2004). For a college newspaper, on the other hand, organizational change may be more focused on basic operations. For example, the staffers at a college newspaper will eventually graduate and leave the university. Therefore, a replacement is often trained prior to the exit of a staff member, especially for positions like editor-in-chief and section editors. At the Western Herald, an editor’s tenure begins in summer
(May) and ends in spring (April) of the following calendar year. If the editor graduates in spring, he or she will not choose to stay on as an editor, and thus a search for a replacement begins after the new editor-in-chief is appointed for the next term. The new editor-in-chief conducts the hiring process for the staff members who will be employed during his or her tenure. Often a new editor-in-chief means new leadership, and new leadership brings in a new set of beliefs, values and assumptions to the existing organizational culture. In this sense, leadership change reflects a revolutionary type of organizational change.

Revolutionary change often occurs by internal disruptions that pull subsystems and activities out of alignment with each other or the environment, or changes in the system’s environment that threaten its ability to obtain resources (Burke, 2002). Revolutionary change, by definition, can be seen as a jolt to the system. For example, organizations that change their missions exemplify revolutionary change. The change of mission affects all other primary dimensions of an organization, which are leadership, strategy, structure, culture, and systems (Burke, 2002). That being said, the fundamental mission of any organization is to survive. At times, organizations survive by continually fixing problems and trying to improve the ways things are done. Sometimes, however, survival depends on an entirely new reason for existence with completely different products and services. Professional newspapers today provide a good example. In order to compete for audiences, newspapers have begun to include online counterparts to their newspapers and overhaul their look as well as their “feel.” One newspaper that comes to mind is
USA Today. In 2007, USA Today revealed a revamped online counterpart with different features and overall design that is better suited to today’s audience needs and wants.

Evolutionary change is much more popular than revolutionary change, mainly because organizational members tend to resist revolutionary change very strongly, as it disrupts their organizational way of life. Evolutionary change consists of gradual improvements, incremental steps to fix a problem, or even change to a part of the larger system. If a change does not affect the whole and does not fundamentally modify the deep structure of the organization, then it is evolutionary. For example, the Cape Cod Times in Massachusetts launched its first hyperlocal site called MyCape.com, a town-based community Web site serving 16 towns on Cape Cod, on March 22, 2007. The Cape Cod Times Web site catered only to Falmouth town initially with the intention of creating 15 additional sites gradually over 2008 for the other towns. Due to enthusiastic community response, the timetable was drastically accelerated, and all 16 sites were launched by Memorial Day weekend in 2007 (American Press Institute, 2008). Some of the changes that the Western Herald experienced illustrate evolutionary change, as management (editor-in-chief and general manager) sought to make improvements, fix problems at incremental levels, or even change a part of the Herald’s system (e.g. removing/adding editorial positions, new policies/procedures in page counts, etc). Nevertheless, the constant change in leadership, strategy and culture can also be revolutionary. As mentioned
earlier, the editor-in-chief brought in new values and traditions such as holding potlucks on Wednesday evenings and brainstorming sessions for the editorial section.

*Three Levels of Organization Change*

When organizational change occurs, three levels of an organization are affected: individual, group and system. Changes at an individual level include recruitment, selection, replacement and displacement. From an evolutionary change perspective, individual-level changes are operationally based – placing people in positions as a consequence of changes that are under way. As for the revolutionary change perspective, individual-level change is often strategic – placing people in positions that are key to the overall change effort. Conducting team-building activities throughout the organization to improve teamwork and cooperative behavior is an example of evolutionary change at the group level. On the other hand, conducting team building with the top executive group initially, in order for that group to model behavior desired for overall change, is an example of revolutionary change (Burke, 2002). The third level of change is system, or organizational-level. An example of change at this level could be change in terms of policies and procedures in the company. From an evolutionary change perspective, change processes involve those that promote problem solving and continuous improvement. Large-scale change, such as large-group interventions and survey feedback, exemplifies revolutionary change.

Based on the various levels of change within an organization, resistance to change will happen at all three levels as well. At the individual level, resistance often is enacted when an organizational member loses something of value or anticipates
that loss. Group-level resistance, on the other hand, comes in the form of changing allegiances or ownership within the organization. Resistance at the organizational level usually comes in the form of diversionary tactics, like sabotage and excuses, such as the timing for change is wrong. These examples of resistance are not exhaustive, but merely offer an idea of possible resistance that could happen at the various levels in an organization. During these organizational changes, a significant amount of sensemaking by organizational members takes place to understand the changes that are happening in their organization and to reduce uncertainty while increasing the organizational member’s adaptability to change. Weick (1995) notes this occasion as turbulence, basically a combination of how often the change occurs and the frequency and direction of the change that takes place in the organization. Turbulence is an interesting concept that alludes to the notion that, the more turbulence there is in an organization, the more organizational members will use intuition and heuristics to make sense of their environment. In other words, organizational members fall back on what has been rewarded or practiced in the past. The following section will address the literature on organizational sensemaking.

Sensemaking in Organizations

Studying culture in the newsroom is important because the culture of an organization reflects how organizational members make sense of organizational actions, as well as change. Sensemaking differs significantly from interpretation, as Weick (1995) explained in his framework of sensemaking in organizations: Sensemaking is about an activity, or a process, whereas interpretation can be a
process, but is more likely to provide a description of a product. He also added, "A focus on sensemaking induces a mindset to focus on process, whereas this is less true with interpretation" (p. 13). In other words, sensemaking coaxes an individual to focus his or her state of mind toward the process of conceptualizing. Additionally, Weick wrote that sensemaking is a valuable process because it highlights the invention that precedes interpretation. Furthermore, sensemaking implies a higher level of engagement by the organizational member with the situation or problem at hand. The sensemaking process helps reduce ambiguity in the information environment, and reducing ambiguity is central to the process of organizing (Weick, 1995). Hence, for sensemaking to occur, three critical components must take place: enactment, selection and retention (Weick, 1979).

Individuals create the environment that confronts them through the process of enactment. Weick (1995) explained that, "There is not some kind of monolithic, singular, fixed environment that exists detached from and external to these people. Instead, in each case, the people are very much a part of their own environments" (p. 31). The process of enactment basically suggests that different organizational members will place different meanings to different information they receive, and hence create different information environments (Weick, 1979). For example, the editor-in-chief at the Western Herald talked about staff writers who were unreliable and did not meet the deadlines that were set for them. When someone’s story did not come in, there was a hole to fill in the newspaper. The next step based on Weick’s (1979) model of sensemaking is selection. During this process, individuals will select
the best option to reduce ambiguity effectively. Going back to the example above, the editor-in-chief and section editor tried to come up with a solution to help fill the space in the newspaper. In this case, their options were to pull a story from the wire services (e.g., Associated Press, McClatchy Times) they subscribe to, get another writer to cover the missing story, or fill the space with a spare story from another section. In the story that the editor-in-chief recounted to me, the section editor picked a wire story to fill the space due to time constraints, which leads us to the third step in Weick’s model: retention. If the option selected is the best choice, retention comes into play, and the individual stores the choice he or she made in memory for future reference. This option selected by the section editor eventually became the default choice based on past enactments.

In addition to Weick’s (1995) model of sensemaking, he suggests two forms of belief-driven sensemaking processes, one of which is arguing. Arguing refers to a dispute between people, where an argument is distinguished by Brockriede’s (1974) five generic characteristics: 1) a leap from existing beliefs to adopting a new belief or reinforcement of an old one, 2) a perceived rationale to justify the leap, 3) a choice among two or more competing claims, 4) a regulation of uncertainty in relation to the selected claim, and, 5) a willingness to risk a confrontation with one’s peers on that claim (Weick, 1995, p. 138). Nevertheless, Weick notes that these five characteristics should not be seen as a checklist for an argument, but rather it is interrelated dimensions that should been seen as a whole. In this case, when an occasion for sensemaking occurs it can be seen on a continuum from non-argument to argument
Weick (1995) further suggests that viewing arguing as an interaction between minorities and majorities can help us understand how an argument facilitates sensemaking, specifically "when minorities argue their case, they seem to induce different thought processes than when majorities argue their case" (p. 140). He also notes that different meanings for events emerge from these different thought processes. The minority-majority perspective is often seen in meetings and arguments become a common element of those meetings (Weick, 1995). Weick wrote that meetings are events for sensemaking and it assembles as well as generates minorities and majorities' opinions, which further provides an infrastructure to making sense. At the Western Herald, news meetings are held four times a week from Sunday through Wednesday. The editor-in-chief facilitates the news meetings to discuss what stories are going into the newspaper the next day and brainstorm ideas for the editorial section. In my observations I noted that arguments often emerged from these news meetings especially when discussing certain hot topics for the editorial section (e.g. prep-school for college, using the terminology "queer", alternative fuels for environmental protection, sexual assault awareness, etc). Most of the time the staffers are caught between a majority-minority split, which on one hand is considered good by the editor-in-chief as the editorials are written in such a way that represents both sides, a journalistic trait that is constantly emphasized at the Herald according to member checks. There is not much argument in regards to deciding whose stories goes where in the newspaper because it has been standardized how many pages a person gets and they create their own dummies for their own pages. The front page
consists of news stories – managed by the news department – and there are no discussions or specific allocations for sports or A&E stories in the front page.

The quote that best explains the sum of the process by Weick (1979) is, “Organizations paint their own scenery, observe it through binoculars, and try to find a path through the landscape” (p. 136). In other words, members of the organization make sense of their roles through interactions with other organizational members and non-organizational members (e.g., family) and also their environment by learning from past experiences. It must be noted that sensemaking in an organization is a collective effort by organizational members and not a process that is undertaken solely by an individual. As such, staff members in the newsroom are actively sensemaking among one another, especially in this decade, when change initiatives are taking place in professional newsrooms due to changing market needs. Likewise, at college newspapers, change has become a necessity for their survival and continuity. In other words, organizational change driven by internal or external environmental factors creates more opportunities or reasons for sensemaking.

**Forms of Sensemaking**

Weick (1995) wrote that people pull from several different vocabularies to focus their sensemaking. He suggested six primary vocabularies that people draw from: society (ideology), organization (third-order controls), work (paradigms), coping (theories of action), predecessors (tradition), and sequence and experience (narratives or stories). The various vocabularies often are referred to as devices; they impose discrete labels on a subject matter that is continuous. “There is always
slippage between words and what they refer to. Words approximate the territory; they
never map it perfectly. That is why sensemaking never stops” (p. 107).

For the purpose of this study, I will explore the vocabulary of sequence and
experience in greater detail; this vocabulary usually takes the form of narratives.
During my observations at the Western Herald, I found that staffers used narratives as
a way to conceptualize and make sense of how things work at the newspaper and how
to manage their jobs. Weick (1995) wrote that actions are fleeting, but stories about
actions are not. Stories serve as a guide to conduct within an organization. He referred
to stories as narratives that depart from shared norms of experience and prevailing
reality in four specific ways: 1) The actions described are difficult, 2) the situation
poses a predicament that cannot be handled in a routine manner, 3) unexpected events
happen in an otherwise normal sequence of events, and 4) something about the
situation is unusual in the narrator’s experience. He also suggested that an interesting
story of this sort is a threat to one’s model of reality, which means that interesting
stories are cues that evoke a mixture of fear and curiosity. Moreover, stories are a
pretext to update a reality, but the originality of the content may make it difficult to
do so. It is important to note that stories are inventions, rather than discoveries
because people who build narratives of their own lives use hindsight. Other functions
of stories, according to Weick (1995), include: 1) “Stories aid comprehension because
they integrate that which is known about an event with that which is conjectural” (p.
129); 2) “Stories enable people to talk about absent things and to connect them with
present things in the interest of meaning” (p. 129); and 3) “Stories can guide action
before routines are formulated and can enrich routines after those routines are formulated” (p. 129).

Content and meaning are important for sensemaking. Successful content is rich in dynamics, process, imagery, verbs, possibilities, and unfolding narratives; it represents flow and continuity. Unsuccessful content is dominated by statics, structures, nouns, the impractical, and lists. Often content is embedded in cues, frames and connections (Weick, 1995). For this reason I must reiterate the necessity of understanding narratives as a form of sensemaking because their content can change organizations and color members’ interpretations. When organizational members talk about their work experiences, narratively or otherwise, their thoughts and statements about their current organizational reality may seem to emerge as contradictions. Weick (1995) notes that the spirit of contradictions is “no less a part of sensemaking, even though it is given less attention” (p. 144). Nevertheless, contradictions are not addressed often in studies of organizational sensemaking. After conducting my interviews with some of the staffers at the Western Herald, I found that the participants experienced several contradictions. I must note here that the interviews served indirectly as an occasion for sensemaking as well, since the participants’ responses were retrospective. Such contradictions can be explained through the dialectical framework offered by Baxter and Montgomery (1998). Examining dialectical tensions, with their emphasis on flux, seems particularly appropriate for a study focused on cultural change. In the following section, I will
review literature on the dialectical framework and how it can contribute to the understanding of sensemaking, especially in regards to change.

Dialectical Theory

Dialectical theory is considered to be one of the premiere theoretical frameworks in the study of personal relationships and relationship negotiation. This theory has been used to study romantic relationships (e.g. Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Baxter & Erbert, 1999), friendships (e.g. Sias, Heath, Perry, Silva & Fix, 2004), family communication (e.g. Braithwaite & Baxter, 2006), group communication (e.g. Kramer, 2004; Prentice & Kramer, 2006) and even healthcare teams (e.g. Apker, Propp & Ford, 2005). This theory originates from Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism (Baxter, 2004). Dialogism argues that social relationships are not singular monologues, but a multiple fusing and differentiation of voices. The key idea of dialectical theory is that relationships take shape amid “the interplay of conflicting and interconnected forces” (Montgomery, 1993, p. 206). These conflicting and interconnected forces are not exclusively good or bad, and according to dialectical theorists, we carry out our relationships while negotiating these ever-present forces (Montgomery, 1993).

Bakhtin (1981) extends this dialogic thought by arguing that all social interaction is “a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies” (p. 272). This idea of negotiating forces exists on a continuum. Relational dialectics proposes that there is no balancing point, no center nor equilibrium, only flux (Baxter, 2004). Furthermore, the forces are interdependent, and both ends are pulling simultaneously in opposite directions. As participants in a relationship
negotiate these opposing forces, change occurs, and this process of cyclical change continues throughout the relationship (Baxter, 1993).

Four Core Assumptions

Relational dialectics are centered on four core assumptions: contradiction, change, praxis, and totality (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998). Contradiction has been defined as a dynamic tension between unified objects in a system (Baxter, 1993). Baxter (2006) extends this definition as “united-yet opposed voices” (p. 132) that are in constant interplay with one another. It must be noted that this contradiction is not considered negative, but rather a source of energy and growth (Baxter, 2006). This alludes to the process of arguing in Weick’s (1995) organizational sensemaking, where a synthesis of ideas occurs between the two opposed to create a new strategic idea. Contradictions have also been known as dialectical tensions. The notion that there are differences in a relationship over time is called change in relational dialectics. These differences occur in a spiral form throughout the relationship (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998), and without the dialectical tensions, relationship participants are incapable of change. Relational tensions and change share an absolute interdependent relationship. The third core assumption in relational dialectics is praxis. Praxis carries the idea that individuals both act and are acted upon (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998). The focus of praxis is on the actions or practices of individuals, not on the ideal, but rather the actual. This notion suggests that past experiences and actions create the framework for future actions, which is in line with the organizational sensemaking framework. The focus on actual behavior and practice is what differentiates praxis from change. Because experiences differ over time,
individuals experience an ever-changing framework by which they act in future interactions (Baxter, 1993; Baxter & Montgomery, 1998). No phenomenon can be understood without being in relation to another (Baxter, 1993). Neither does any phenomenon exist in isolation. Totality in relational dialectics explains just that concept. Baxter and Montgomery (1998) explain this as an “inseparability of phenomena” (p. 6). Individual tensions do not stand alone, outside of the opposite tension. Each tension is inextricably linked to the other. This inextricable link allows change to be ongoing throughout the relationship. Baxter (1998) suggested six primary dialectical tensions that encapsulate these four assumptions, and these tensions emerged in the interview data collected from the Western Herald. In the following section, I will discuss each dialectical tension and its effects on individuals’ communicative sensemaking processes.

Six Dialectical Tensions

Baxter (1998) has identified six dialectical tensions falling into two categories: internal and external. A tension is considered internal if it manifests itself within the relationship context (Baxter, 1998). On the other hand, a tension is considered external if it manifests itself between the relationship as a whole and others outside of the relationship (Baxter, 1993). Another way of framing the location of the tensions is that tensions take place “between and among phenomena” (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998, p. 5). The primary tensions initially identified by Baxter (1993) are integration-separation, stability-change, and expression-privacy.

The tension identified by Baxter as integration-separation is centered on the idea that individuals have a desire to be independent, and simultaneously to be
connected to others (Baxter, 1993). In an organizational context, organizational members may try to maintain their individuality, but also will conform at times to connect with other organizational members. In the internal dialectic, this tension has been identified as *autonomy-connection*, which is the notion that, within the relational context, individuals feel the need to be independent of, and simultaneously interdependent with, their relational partner. In the external dialectic, people experience a tension of *inclusion-seclusion* (Baxter, 1988). With regard to others outside of the relationship, relational participants experience flux about the amount of engagement and disengagement with others outside the relationship (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998).

*Stability-change* is a dialectic tension that carries the idea of the contradiction between constancy and flux (Baxter, 1993). In an organizational context, organizational members may have the desire to change with the organization to be more productive, especially when management introduces a change initiative. At the same time, the change initiative could be viewed as a challenge, and, thus, organizational members may want to revert to a more familiar way of doing things. In the internal dialectic, this tension is referred to as *predictability-novelty*. Relational partners have a need for sameness in relationships, yet they simultaneously yearn for the unexpected. The relationship as a whole experiences a separate tension with others outside the relationship (externally); this is referred to as *conventionality-uniqueness* (Baxter, 1993). How much do relational partners deviate from the expected norms in relationship? There is a desire to stay within the typical ways of doing relationship, yet there is at the same time a need for creativity and newness.
Expression-privacy is the final tension identified by Baxter (1993), specifically what is expressed and omitted is the focal point of this tension. In the organizational context, this can be seen when organizational members decide how much they want to share about themselves to others, especially to employers, because exposing too much may be a risk to their job security or perhaps an opportunity for advancement in the organization. Internally, people in relationships experience a tension about how open or closed they are in communication with their relational partner; this tension is referred to as openness-closedness (Baxter, 1993). In the dialectic of the relationship as a whole among others, there is a tension of revelation-concealment. How much of the relationship is exposed or hidden to others outside of the relationship?

In addition to the six dialectical tensions, Baxter and Montgomery (1998) suggested eight different strategies, known as praxis, that individuals use to manage and negotiate these dialectical tensions. The eight praxis are: denial, balance, integration, recalibration, spiraling inversion, segmentation, disorientation, and reaffirmation. Three of the praxis strategies that were found in the data are integration, reaffirmation and recalibration. Integration refers to an individual responding to the tension as a whole without compromising or diluting the solution (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998). Reaffirmation is basically when the individual accepts that the contradictory polarities cannot be reconciled (Baxter & Montgomery). Recalibration, on the other hand, is the strategy in which the individual reframes a contradiction so that the polarities are encompassed within one another. Examples from the corpus will be discussed in Chapter Four.
Based on the literatures informing this study, the following research questions were developed to guide the research process:

RQ1: What cultural changes have student journalists at the *Western Herald* experienced?

RQ2: How do they make sense of these changes discursively?
CHAPTER III

METHOD

Polonius, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, once said, "Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't." During my data-gathering process for this study, Murphy's Law held firm and truly what could go wrong, went wrong. Thankfully, there was a method in place to guide this topsy-turvy madness. Some of the incidents that reflected this frenzy include: loss of preliminary expanded notes with theoretical links due to a computer malfunction, learning to interact with college newsroom folks in the midst of their insane production schedule, and conducting a full-fledged qualitative study on my own. These incidents illustrate varying degrees of anxiety and difficulty in the research process, which are part and parcel of the experience of being a human instrument.

As mentioned in the first chapter, the approach taken in this study is qualitative, as organizational culture is a phenomenon that is experienced and cannot be understood through pre-set or controlled measures. To reiterate Schein's (1992) basic conceptualization of organizational culture, he wrote that culture consists of artifacts, espoused values and underlying assumptions. These three components consist of a variety of meanings that have been attached to the culture by organizational members. In order to identify those meanings, we need to explore how organizational members make meanings and how those meanings get reinforced to
formulate an organizational culture. Two primary qualitative methods were selected for this study: observations and long interviews. Observations and long interviews were chosen to create an informed triangulated view of the organization’s culture.

The qualitative research process consists of a number of layers. As a researcher, you are keeping your eyes, ears and mind open in the field to not only what is being said or done, but also possible meanings that the participants have developed over time. Organizational culture, likewise, has a number of layers. The qualitative approach allows me, as the researcher, to explore those different layers as well as the meanings attached to those layers by organizational members. The following sections will provide specific details on the research procedure that was used to carry out this study, which includes: a) becoming the human instrument, b) describing the research site, c) negotiating entry in the newsroom, d) recruiting participants, e) protecting participants, f) conducting and analyzing observations, g) conducting long interviews, h) coding interview data, i) evaluating reliability and validity, and j) limitations of the methods.

Research Participants and Research Site

Becoming the Human Instrument

In qualitative research, the question of how to gain access to participants is crucial in comparison to quantitative research. A lot of stress is placed on the researcher as the human instrument of research, which basically means there is a greater degree of closeness and personal involvement between researcher and
participants. The relationship between researcher and participant is crucial to the success of the research, and it develops from the very beginning of the research process (Mann & Stewart, 2000). Mann and Stewart further emphasized that “the communicative competencies and the perceived social and personal characteristics of the researcher are salient issues” (p. 82). In other words, the researcher’s background and past experiences shape how a researcher communicates and builds rapport with the participants.

As a human instrument in my research process, I believe that I possess several traits that have worked to my benefit and also to my detriment. I have a bachelor’s degree in journalism and six years of professional and academic experience in publishing. My background in journalism has provided me with an understanding of the industry and of the various challenges that reporters and editors encounter in producing a product, whether it be a newspaper or magazine. Furthermore, the jargon that news people use comes part and parcel with the experiences I have gained, working to my advantage in negotiating entry into the research site and interpreting my observations. The qualitative approach to this study involves observing everyday communicative phenomena that may be mundane and unnoticeable if one is not constantly aware of their being an important piece of a larger phenomenon.

On the other hand, my familiarity with the journalistic context may also have caused me to overlook certain behaviors or actions by taking them for granted. To ensure that I would not overlook certain phenomena during my research process, I decided to keep a diary to monitor myself. I began by starting an online blog
specifically for my thesis where I could write my thoughts, joys and frustrations about the entire research process. In my opinion, writing down my experiences and understanding, along with the observations I attained from the *Western Herald* newsroom, trained me to be more sensitive toward the newsroom environment. Moreover, I was making myself aware of my experiences with others in the newsroom. This was a significant step towards improving my understanding of myself and also the art of qualitative research.

*Research Site*

The *Western Herald* newspaper is available for free on all WMU campuses and at certain local businesses (i.e. Video Hits Plus, Jimmy John’s, Campus Wok, The U, etc) that are close to the main campus. Currently its circulation is 8,500, and it is targeted to the WMU community primarily. The WMU community in this case refers to students, faculty, and administration. The newspaper is published from Monday through Thursday during fall and spring semesters. In summer session one, it publishes twice a week on Mondays and Wednesdays, whereas in summer session two, it publishes only once a week on Monday. It also has a Web site, serviced by College Publisher Network. The Web site is mainly used for archiving stories, posting online job applications for the *Western Herald*, accepting letters to the editor via a prepared form, and listing staff information. Periodically the paper will have polls on the Web site, which occasionally make their way into stories.

The *Western Herald* is an independent newspaper and is not funded by the university. Revenues from advertising cover its operation costs and also the rental of
the space in the university to house the newspaper. The Western Herald office is located in the basement of Faunce Student Services Building, where a majority of the registered student organizations' offices are located as well. The newspaper is governed by a board of directors composed of two administrators, two faculty members, one at-large community member, three student members, and one member of the Herald staff. There are five different sections in the newspaper: News, Arts and Entertainment, Sports, Opinion, and Classifieds. Each section (excluding Classifieds, which is managed by the advertising department) has an editor who manages story assignments, editing, and managerial tasks related to his or her individual section, and also manages a staff of 10 or so writers and photographers. Approximately 50 writers and photographers work for the paper all together. In addition to the different section editors, other formal editors' positions at the Western Herald include: editor-in-chief, managing editor, general manager, copy editor, Web editor, design editor, and assistant design editor, for a total of 10 editors' positions. The general manager, a non-student position, functions as an advisor to the editor-in-chief, the advertising department, and circulation department (See Figure 2 for organizational chart of the Western Herald's newsroom staff). All staff members of the Western Herald are paid, including the general manager and the staff writers and photographers.

Negotiating Entry into the Newsroom

Negotiating entry often requires time, patience, and sensitivity to the rhythms and norms of a group: "Those who propose qualitative research must demonstrate their knowledge about the nuances of entry" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 65). As
an undergraduate at Western Michigan University, I used to work for the *Western Herald* for two years as an Arts and Entertainment staff writer. The experience I had with the paper provided familiarity with the newspaper production schedule, specifically the high- and low-peak months of work. This knowledge helped me in planning my entry negotiation.

In late July 2007, production at the *Western Herald* had slowed down due to the summer break session, reducing the number of students on campus and, therefore, the number of news stories to cover. The *Western Herald* staff members are still working in the newsroom, but at a slower pace. I emailed the *Western Herald*’s general manager during this time to ask for permission to conduct my research in the newsroom. He redirected my email to the student editor-in-chief to manage my inquiry because, he said, “The *Western Herald* is a student-run newspaper, so the student editor-in-chief… ultimately needs to make this decision” (General manager, personal communication, July 26, 2007).

I followed up with the student editor-in-chief via email, and she replied, “I see no problem with allowing you to conduct your research in our office, it sounds like very interesting research and I’d love to help you out” (Editor-in-Chief, personal communication, July 30, 2007). For the observation process, the editor-in-chief gave me written consent to have access to the newsroom and to formal meetings. The editor-in-chief and I agreed that she would introduce me to the newsroom staff members via two ways: 1) introduction during three different staff news meetings and 2) a flier about the research that she would distribute directly to staff members. In
addition to the editor-in-chief’s consent, I received individual consent from the editors and writers whom I observed in the newsroom by giving them a separate consent form at the beginning of my observation process. I carried additional consent forms with me throughout my time at the newsroom just in case I may have missed any writers at the beginning. The observations began Sunday, October 29, 2007.

Recruiting Participants

Participant recruitment for the observation process involved attending staff news meetings, as well as section meetings, to get individual consent from editors and writers to allow me to observe them while they were in the newsroom. I gave them a written consent form that has been approved by Western Michigan University’s Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) and that explains the purpose of the research, the risks and benefits, procedures for anonymity, and the voluntary nature of participation (see Appendix A). The editor-in-chief briefly introduced me to her section editors during the first few staff news meetings after I started visiting the newsroom, and then I gave an overview of my research and provided the opportunity for section editors to ask any questions or address concerns that they may have had. A few general questions related to the study were asked, such as: “Have you conducted this study in other college newspapers?” and “What will you be observing?” The section editors were provided a copy of the flier as well, which had my contact information should any question or concern come up. During the section meetings, the section editor introduced me briefly to the writers, and I gave each writer a copy of the flier and consent form. I also gave an overview of my research, as well as the
opportunity to ask any questions or voice concerns that they may have had about my research. Additionally, for editors or writers whom I might have missed at either meeting, the editor-in-chief provided me with a list of staffers and contact details so that I could contact them personally. I missed only two staffers at the first few meetings and made attempts to e-mail and call them. Eventually, I met one of them in the newsroom spoke to him about my research and extended the invitation to participate. The other staffer whom I could not reach was not included in this study because he never attended meetings and worked on his own schedule.

Participant recruitment for long interviews, on the other hand, was scheduled after observations had been carried out. I invited potential participants, verbally and also via written letter, based on the hypotheses generated from my observations of the newsroom’s culture. I invited key people to be interviewed, and the key people are editors--the people who are directly involved in the newsroom culture and are "experts" of the culture itself, in comparison to writers who come in only for news meetings or just to pick up an assignment.

Nine participants were invited, and seven accepted my invitation to be interviewed. The other two declined because of busy schedules. I gave each participant a written consent form (see Appendix C) that had been approved by Western Michigan University’s HSIRB and that explained the purpose of the research, the risks and benefits, procedures for anonymity, and the voluntary nature of participation. At the beginning of every interview, I gave the written consent form to the participant to read and also explained once the purpose of the interview and the
may have about the research, and also to withdraw. As an incentive for participation, interviewees were given the option to enter a raffle drawing for a $25 gift card to Rave Motion Pictures Cityplace 14, the cinema in downtown Kalamazoo. The raffle drawing took place after all the interviews had been carried out. In addition, I provided a summary of my findings to all participants at the end of the project.

Protection of Human Subjects

One of the possible risks that participants could have encountered during the observation process is the sense of abandonment. In addition they might have felt resentful if they perceived that they had been “used” and exploited as a means to obtain data. In order to reduce the possibility of that risk, I constantly reminded participants that they were involved in a research study throughout the time I spent at the Western Herald. Other possible risks related to the observation process included other staff members being offended by the comments of their peers, and also embarrassment. As part of the HSIRB protocol, participants were allowed to review my field notes and interview transcripts to assess whether they had damaged themselves or others in what they had said or done in front of me. As an additional protection for participants, participants were given the option to ask me to exclude objectionable data pertaining to them after reading through the field notes and interview transcripts. No one made such a request.

In accordance with the approved HSIRB protocol, I also used pseudonyms with attempts to reduce direct references to any distinguishing characteristics to mitigate the possible risks that I identified. Participants are identified by their general
mitigate the possible risks that I identified. Participants are identified by their general assigned duties (i.e. Writer, Editor, Manager, etc), and a designated number by me (i.e. Writer #1, Editor #2, etc). Furthermore, the audio recordings and soft-copy transcriptions of the interviews were saved onto a mini portable drive, or flash drive, as MP3 audio files and Word documents. Then the soft-copy transcriptions and audio recordings, on both the iPod and my laptop, were erased. The flash drive will be stored under lock and key in the advisor’s office for the next 3 years. After 3 years, all the transcriptions and recordings will be deleted permanently from the flash drive.

Additional benefit to participants. The Western Herald hosts an annual banquet to appreciate all the staff and their contributions to the newspaper. This is a rite of passage for every Herald staffer to experience. I was invited to the banquet by the editor-in-chief as a way of appreciating me for my research efforts and helping her understand her newsroom better. I gladly accepted, as I had completed my data collection from the site and I felt attending the banquet would provide closure to my research as well as my relationship with the staffers. At the banquet, I spoke to the new editor-in-chief and told her that I wanted to share my research findings with her in hopes that they would aid in her future plans for the Herald. She accepted my invitation to meet, and we met along with outgoing editor-in-chief. We talked about the Herald – the joys, the pains, the laughter, and the inanity of it all. The incoming editor-in-chief began to query me about my studies. I told her that my findings revealed a negative newsroom culture, as illustrated through the various dialectical tensions. She seemed to listen attentively and then she asked, “What do you think we
need to change?” My first response was, “I am not one of the Herald staff members, and I can’t really say for certain what you need to change,” but the outgoing editor-in-chief said I have a different perspective on things versus someone who has been in the organization for a long time. In response I gave her a list of suggestions (See Appendix E) based on what I have learned about the Western Herald and tweaked it based on its feasibility according to both editors-in-chief.

Data Collection and Analysis

Conducting and Analyzing Observations

The observation process began Sunday, October 29, 2007, and ended Friday, December 7, 2007. Observations took place in the Western Herald newsroom, which is located in the basement of Faunce Student Services Building. I went in from Sunday through Wednesday for 4-5 hours per day to observe staffers at their busiest production time, which was from 6 p.m. till midnight; their news meetings were held on these days only. On Tuesday they scheduled a news meeting at 3:30 p.m., which I attended on a regular basis, and also stayed behind for several hours after the meeting to observe the newsroom during the afternoon in order to see possible differences in the newsroom interactions when compared to the evening newsroom interactions.

Nevertheless, to reiterate the purpose of conducting observations: It is to observe the mundane, everyday interactions and practices, like routines of the newsroom, to aid in understanding the newsroom’s culture. The observations were used as the basis for developing my hypotheses about sensemaking among the
Western Herald editorial staff members. During my observations, I asked staff members in the newsroom clarifying questions and also obtained copies of documents that would help me understand the Western Herald's procedures and policies. Furthermore, I wrote conceptual memos and also my observations of the newsroom as field notes in a notebook.

I conducted the observation process systematically based on Silverman's (1993) five stages of organizing observational research: beginning research, writing field notes, looking as well as listening, testing hypotheses, and making broader links. First of all, *beginning research*. Silverman (1993) wrote that premature definition of "variables" is dangerous in field research because early "operational" definitions offer precision at the cost of deflecting attention away from the social processes. In this sense the participants themselves create steady characteristics of their social world. In other words, selecting and defining variables early on in field research might have caused me to be rigid in my observations and overlook important forms of sensemaking that participants used to construct their experiences of change in the newsroom. However, this does not mean the beginning stages of field research were totally unguided. The attempt to describe things as they are is a recipe for failure. Furthermore, without some perspective or a set of animating questions, there is nothing to report. Therefore, Silverman suggested that one way to assemble data at the beginning of field research is to begin with a set of very general questions, such as the research questions I introduced in Chapter Two.
The second stage is *writing field notes*. I wrote field notes throughout the time I spent at the newsroom using traditional tools such as a pen and notepad. Electronic devices such as laptops or tape recorders are not necessarily ideal for observation because they may come off as an additional intrusion into the newsroom. Furthermore, the reliability of such devices is not guaranteed (e.g., the battery could run flat, or mobility could be a hassle). My presence in the newsroom was somewhat intrusive because I am not part of the staffers’ in-group and I do not perform any editorial functions that contribute to their work. In a sense, I was a stranger observing them and perhaps a nuisance that interfered with their work. Therefore, I tried to be as amicable as possible with all the staffers and not interfere with their work. If I had questions that needed clarification, I wrote them down and asked the participant being observed about them when he or she was available to entertain my questions. The field notes became descriptions of the communicative phenomena I observed. More specifically, I wrote down: majority of the conversations held in the newsroom, especially conversations in relation to editorial functions; the nonverbal cues accompanying the conversations; the movement of participants in the newsroom (e.g., walking to editor’s office, stepping out of office to get drink of water, etc); descriptions of the space and artifacts that were on the walls, tables and bulletin boards; and evidence of monitoring by participants (e.g., talking directly to me, asking questions about my notes, watching me take notes, etc). Observation data are not usually immediately accessible for analysis and require some processing (Miles &
Huberman, 1994), however. In this case, I expanded and transcribed my field notes systematically on a separate document.

The third stage is looking as well as listening. Silverman (1993) wrote that it is important to capture both what we saw and heard, as such descriptions will aid the coding frame. He provided as an example the spatial arrangements in hospital wards and how these differentiated groups of people. For example, there are wards and patient rooms that staff may enter anytime they need to. Then there are patient lounges and the like, which are a type of public space. He explained that these areas are quite different from areas such as the nurses’ room and doctors’ offices, where patients enter only by invitation. Finally, if there is a staff coffee room, you never see a patient there. Writing down such details by looking and listening provided a contextual picture that may not have been captured distinctly by interviews alone. In addition, the written details contributed to the development of interview questions.

Fourth, testing hypotheses as interesting new data become available. Silverman (1993) considered this stage as one of the strengths of observational research – the ability to shift focus. However, he noted, “A strength can also be a weakness” (p. 43). Some qualitative research can resemble a disorganized stumble through a mass of data, full of insightful observations of an anecdotal nature. Silverman wrote that, in a survey of qualitative papers in health and social science journals, the number of articles that were written based on one or two convincing examples took him by surprise. To the contrary, he argued that there is absolutely no reason why observational research cannot combine insight with rigor. In other words,
it is right to expect that such research should be original and valid; this will involve testing hypotheses that have been generated in the field. Testing hypotheses involves going back into the field, but this time around using the developed hypotheses as a guide to observing the site to confirm or disconfirm them. After completing my observations at the Western Herald, I took a few weeks off from the research site to reflect on my field notes and develop an interview protocol. After examining my observation data, I concluded that the Western Herald staff members made sense of their change experiences in the newsroom through narratives; specifically, they used narratives as a way to understand newsroom routines and practices. I also found that the changes experienced at the Herald primarily revolved around leadership in the newsroom. I developed a semi-structured interview protocol to draw out more complete narratives from the participants and to explore whether leadership was truly the nexus of change.

Last but not least, making broader links. After conducting the interviews, I tested the preliminary hypotheses by analyzing the interview transcripts to create some broader links. Silverman (1993) noted that, during the process of making broader links, no hypotheses are ever theory-free. As such, data collection, hypothesis-construction and theory-building are not three separate things, but are interwoven with one another. Silverman wrote that we have come to look at things in a certain way because we have adopted certain ways of seeing, directly or indirectly. Silverman used the analogy of a funnel to describe this final stage. In other words, over time the research becomes focused, and the research problem is developed or
transformed. In this sense, he noted that frequently it is only over the course of the research that one discovers what the research is really about, and it is not uncommon for it to turn out to be something quite different from the initial foreshadowed problem. In this study, Silverman's observation came to pass when the hypotheses I developed initially from my observation data turned into something different by the end of my research. I will discuss this process further in a later section.

*Long Interviews*

The long interviews were conducted after the observations were completed with the aid of an interview protocol (See Appendix D). One-on-one interviews were scheduled from February 7, 2008, through February 12, 2008, with the seven participants who agreed to participate. The long interviews complemented the newsroom observations by providing a discursive space and time to pursue the hypotheses that emerged from the observation data and at the same to gather complete descriptions of sensemaking strategies in use in the newsroom. At this juncture, it is important to note that the main purpose of a long interview is not to discover how many, or even what kinds of people share a certain characteristic, but rather it is to gain access to the cultural categories and assumptions according to which one culture construes the world (McCracken, 1988). This method can take us into the mental world of the individual to help us get a glimpse of the categories and logic that an individual uses to see the world. In other words, a long interview gives us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as he or she does (McCracken).
Each participant was interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix D) in order to keep the interview conversational and to encourage participants to describe their experiences in their own words. In addition, to ensure consistency reliability of the interview protocol, each participant received the same type of questions. The interviews were recorded on my iPod and then uploaded to my laptop for transcription. A graduate student was recruited on a voluntary basis to help transcribe some of the interview recordings.

After transcribing the interviews, I replayed all the recordings while following along each interview transcript to ensure accuracy of the transcription. An ellipsis (...) was used to illustrate pauses and hedges that the participant used during the interview and also certain words were typed in upper-case letters to show the participant’s emphasis on certain words or phrases. This method of using ellipses and upper-case letters refers to one of Owens’ (1984) criteria for emergent themes: forcefulness. Forcefulness refers to the importance of the words and/or phrases, and this includes “vocal inflection, volume, or dramatic pauses which serve to stress and subordinate some utterances” (p. 275). Furthermore, the pauses and hedges demonstrated participants’ sensemaking process as he or she conversed with me throughout the guided interview.

**Coding the Interview Data**

After conducting the interviews and transcribing each one, I started reading the interview transcripts and familiarizing myself with the data. Even though the interview protocol was set up to draw out more complete narratives, the dominant
form of sensemaking that emerged from the interview data was dialectical tensions. I would note here that due to the narrative-based interview protocol, several of the dialectical tensions are encompassed in a narrative form. Analytic coding (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) was used to identify perceived contradictions in newsroom staffers' communication. Analytic coding involves deriving codes and categories to capture major themes of relevance to the study (Braithwaite & Baxter, 2006). This inductive process involved two stages of analysis. In the first stage of analytic coding, I wrote down a tentative description of each contradiction on a note card, along with discourse excerpts containing that code, the number of discourse segments coded for that contradiction, and the location of each segment in the transcripts. Each time a paragraph or excerpt in the next transcript was perceived as different from prior transcripts' coded paragraphs or excerpts, a new coding category was added. The process of adding coding categories, combining and revising them in an emergent manner, went on until the coding categories did not require further modification with additional cases. I developed 18 categories, which will be discussed in detail in the analysis chapter.

The second stage of the analytic process was finding connections among the coded categories. The codes developed in stage one were grouped according to the six different dialectical tensions identified by Baxter and Montgomery (1998). In a dialectical tension, two opposing poles form a contradiction that is simultaneously and concurrently linked to each other. The six dialectical tensions are: autonomy v. connection, predictability v. novelty, openness v. closedness, inclusion v. exclusion,
conventionality v. uniqueness, and revelation v. concealment. For example, during stage-one analytic coding, one code identified was school work v. Herald work, which basically refers to staffers’ experience of contradictory priorities in the newsroom, as Editor 9 said:

I don’t know... you know we take the paper pretty seriously still, but at the same time... I don’t know if that’s always necessarily been the case. I mean I remember when I was getting trained to be the news editor, the old news editor was like, “I miss class all the time for this job,” I’m like, I mean, I told the editor-in-chief straight up when I started, “I’m not missing class for this job,” you know, like I’m here to go to school and get a good grade... This is for experience and to work, you know, and I think that’s slowly become more of the focus... you know.

I noted that participants’ simultaneous need to prioritize schoolwork and Herald work reflected the notion of predictability, where staffers expect priorities of schoolwork and the Herald work to conflict constantly, and also novelty, where the circumstances are unique to the nature of the job in the newsroom. The contradictory notions reflect Baxter and Montgomery’s (1998) dialectical tension of predictability v. novelty. Further discussion and analysis of the second stage will be discussed in the following chapter.
rigorous, critical and objective in its handling of data” (p. 144). In other words, the way a study is operationalized is a reflection to some extent of how reliable and valid the study is.

Reliability

To ensure reliability for the observation portion of my study, I used Spradley’s (1979) suggestion of keeping four separate sets of notes: 1) short notes made at the time, 2) expanded notes made as soon as possible after each field session, 3) a fieldwork journal to record problems and ideas that arose during each stage of field work, and 4) a provisional running record of analysis and interpretation. The latter two sets of notes were typed up on a private online journal. As for the two former sets of notes, those were written in a separate notebook. Unfortunately, after expanding my field notes, my computer encountered a hardware malfunction, and all my expanded field notes were corrupted with no hope for recovery. I spent weeks trying to recover by memory what was lost in hopes of providing a more comprehensive look into my observation data. Nevertheless, I reflected on my handwritten field notes and conceptual memos several times, and also further conceptualized my reflections with my thesis advisor.

Reliability for the interviews, as discussed earlier, was achieved by following an interview protocol to ensure some level of consistency in the experience of the participants. The interviews were transcribed using a consistent set of conventions to ensure reliability. Coding reliability of the interview data was achieved by intracoder reliability. Intracoder reliability refers to the ability of the coder to replicate his or her
own decisions after a period of time (Kaid, 2004). In my study, I was able to get the
same coding scheme by going through the same process of coding two transcripts as a
sample after distancing myself from the data for almost a month and a half. In
qualitative research, standardizing interpretation of data is not of primary concern.
Instead, the goal is to develop a complex cataloguing and retrieval system that retains
good access to the words of the subjects, without relying on the memory of
interviewers or data analysts (Silverman, 1993).

Validity

Validity in field research, on the other hand, was achieved in two ways. First,
one can compare different kinds of data (i.e. quantitative and qualitative) and different
methods (i.e. observation and interviews) to see whether they corroborate one another.
Kirk and Miller (1986) argued that the value of triangulation is that it forces the
researcher to imagine how multiple, but somehow different, qualitative measures
might simultaneously be true. As Silverman (1993) wrote, triangulation “derives from
navigation, where different bearings give the correct position of an object” (p.156).
The second form of validation is taking one’s findings back to the subject being
studied, otherwise known as respondent validation or member checks. After my
analysis was complete, I took my findings back to three staff members of the Western
Herald to see whether my interpretation of the participants’ newsroom culture was
plausible to them. The three staffers were selected based on their length of experience
with the newsroom and also their intimate knowledge of how things are run in the
Western Herald. As far as the coding, I assessed its validity based on the
object” (p.156). The second form of validation is taking one’s findings back to the subject being studied, otherwise known as respondent validation or member checks. After my analysis was complete, I took my findings back to three staff members of the Western Herald to see whether my interpretation of the participants’ newsroom culture was plausible to them. The three staffers were selected based on their length of experience with the newsroom and also their intimate knowledge of how things are run in the Western Herald. As far as the coding, I assessed its validity based on the generalizability of my findings to the bulk of the data, its plausibility in comparison to other alternatives, its accuracy in terms of textual details in the transcript, and their internal consistency.

One of the great strengths of qualitative studies is data collected from the field can feed directly back into the process of analysis. In other words, researchers can take advantage of new data to check the quality of categories and explanations (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). This method of ensuring the quality of categories and explanations is known as negative case analysis. According to Lindlof and Taylor, as a researcher develops theoretical explanation, more data are generated in the field. If the new data confirms the explanation, it grows stronger. On the other hand, if the new data seem to refute it, then the analyst must revise the explanation and return to the cycle of using new data to test it until there are more negative cases to account for. For this study, two negative cases were found and will be discussed further in Chapter Four. Lindlof and Taylor also noted that the negative case analysis procedure is stringent one, but not every analyst has the time or the patience to follow through
on it. Furthermore, negative case analysis does not provide the criteria for telling when we have come to the end of the data-testing cycle. Nevertheless, it is an effective and widely recognized way to do checks of explanation.

Limitations of Methods

Each method that I have chosen has its individual limitations if used by itself. First, conducting observations in a newsroom or in any organization is never easy, as it requires a large commitment from the researcher, both mentally and physically. The chance of experiencing fatigue is evident: A researcher may feel distracted, which may cause the researcher to overlook certain communication patterns, for example. Regardless of fatigue or clear-mindedness, capturing observations on paper can be exhausting and emotionally draining. As a researcher you are actively attempting to make theoretical connections as you observe, yet you are still part of the environment, and a certain amount of interaction is needed with other members of the observed space – the newsroom in this case (Silverman, 1993). My decision to ask clarifying questions at a later time, rather than when they arose during my observations, also may have interfered with participants’ recall or even possibly triggered retrospective sensemaking. I took these limitations into account when I was interpreting the data. In comparison to other qualitative research, the length of time for the observation process was relatively short. This short period of time – two months -- is a limitation especially in terms of fully grasping and submerging myself into the Herald’s work routine and culture. Nevertheless, the short observation time provided a surface-level
understanding of the Western Herald’s routines and practices, as well as cues for further investigation in the long interviews. As such, the long interviews constitute a complementary method in terms of further understanding the newsroom’s culture based on the staffers’ own words. In comparison to a quantitative study, observations do not seek to quantify variables or generalize findings to other settings.

Second, long interviews require a certain amount of skill and expertise in crafting an interview protocol that will help draw out rich and thorough answers from participants. No one can possibly master such a skill overnight, but through time and practice, an individual researcher can hone this skill and possibly yield a wealth of valuable data. In my study, the interview protocol was developed alongside my thesis advisor and committee members to ensure relevant questions addressed the hypotheses found in the observation data and would be likely to prompt useful descriptions of the participants’ experiences. Another limitation of long interviews is that open-ended questions are a form of social control because they shape what people say (Silverman, 1993). For instance, a researcher may maintain a minimal presence and ask few questions, but this can create an interpretive problem for the interviewee about what is relevant. Furthermore, an interviewer who is passive can create a constraint on the interviewee to talk (Silverman, 1993). Thus, open-ended questions are intended to prompt for certain elements that the researcher is exploring specifically. In this sense, I tried to keep the interview more conversational to enable the participant to talk about what they were comfortable with and also to allow the participant to discuss an issue in detail even if it veered away from my own interests.
Finally, conducting long interviews exclusively with editors may mean that the dialectical tensions I have identified do not reflect how the “rank and file” experience change at the Herald.

The three methods used are complementary, minimizing these evident limitations. Loopholes in observation data can be filled with data from the interviews, as both methods capture aspects of a phenomenon differently. In addition, analysis of the interview transcripts provided detailed explanations as to why a certain phenomenon happened during the observations or how a dialectical tension was enacted. Overall, the methods chosen were ideal for gathering data on organizational culture and change at the Herald.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter is organized around my two research questions discussed earlier in Chapter Two. For research question 1 - *What cultural changes have student journalists at the Western Herald experienced?* – I present my findings on the various cultural changes that I found students journalists at the *Western Herald* experienced through my observations and interviews. The changes range from structural changes to newspaper design changes. Next, for research question 2 - *How do they make sense of these changes discursively?* – I will provide my findings, as well as textual evidence from the long interviews that illustrate how the *Western Herald* staff members made sense of change discursively through dialectical tensions. After presenting my findings for research question 2, I will provide textual evidence for the praxis that were found in the data. Praxis are the strategies for managing dialectical tensions. After that, I will address the negative case analysis that further supports my coding categories.

Cultural Changes Experienced by *Herald* Staffers

Prior to the commencement of my study, the newspaper had hired new leaders in various departments, including a new editor-in-chief, business manager and advertising manager appointed at the beginning of summer 2007 and a new general
manager appointed in late 2006. Several structural changes were introduced into the *Western Herald* newsroom by the editor-in-chief and general manager in the summer of 2007, specifically:

1) The news desk positions consisting of a news editor, co-news editor and two news assistants were reduced down to one news editor.

2) The opinion editor position was eliminated, and those duties were assumed by the editor-in-chief.

3) The production manager position was renamed design editor, and its former responsibility of editing advertisements in the newspaper was reassigned to a representative in the advertising department, so that the design editor could focus solely on page layout.

4) Two new positions, managing editor and photo editor, were introduced into the organization’s structure.

5) An additional copy editor position was added.

6) Two assistant positions for page layouts, focusing on the Weekend Scene (a weekly entertainment tab pullout section) and general broadsheet layout, were eliminated.

7) An editorial board was formed consisting of representatives from the *Western Herald*, the university and the community at large. This body, however, fell through over the summer and its editorial duties were later assumed by the editor-in-chief.
During the summer when all these changes took place, the photo editor and one of the copy editors quit due to personal reasons. A replacement photo editor was hired in September 2007, and the remaining copy editor quit at the end of fall semester in December 2007. Two new copy editors were hired during the spring semester in January 2008 to fill the two empty positions. Furthermore, the number of staff writers has fluctuated greatly from the beginning of summer 2007 until the present, with a handful of writers who have remained in each various sections (News, A&E, Sports, and Opinion). In addition to these structural changes and fluctuations in staff composition, the newspaper underwent a re-design, specifically:

1) The standardization of the paper's font type.

2) The inclusion of teasers (one-liner previews with photos of articles in other sections) at the top of the front page.

3) A Briefs vertical bar on the left margin of each section, highlighting current news stories that have been summarized and are related to the individual sections.

4) An On Top vertical bar on the right margin of the A&E section, highlighting top albums and songs on iTunes, YouTube videos, box office movies, and free songs on iTunes.

5) Other subtle design additions, such as lines to divide stories, photos or headers on a page.

These were all basically surface-level changes that affected the organizational structure and newspaper design. The two affected areas are key artifacts when it
comes to studying organizational culture, specifically organizational structure affects the way things get coordinated and communicated in the newsroom. The newspaper design is the product of their work, which is coordinated through the structure. One of the major organizational structure changes was the introduction and removal of staff positions. For example, the managing editor position was added to transfer editing and proofreading duties from the layout/design desk. In addition, the managing editor reads and edits the stories after the copy editors have gone through them. This was supposed to create an additional gate for the stories to go through prior to publication, according to my interviews, observations, and member checks. An example of positions that were eliminated are co-news editor and news assistants. The co-news editor and news assistants were eliminated based on the assumption that there are too many people working at the News Desk, according to my interviews and member checks. Unfortunately, this was proven otherwise in my observations and interviews because the news department was overwhelmed with work, and the coverage of several news beats were dropped or not covered at all. The editor-in-chief and news editor attempted to bring back one news assistant position in the summer, but the attempt was put aside due to budget constraints.

Changes design-wise were a way of improving the Western Herald's visual appeal to attract readers and also to be like a professional newspaper. For example, teasers were introduced into the design as a way to attract readers and adopt the design of professional newspapers. This change was meant to be a positive one, but as Editor 6 recounted:
We did used to have, like, different headlines for the teasers than what were really on the headlines of the story, and no one does that anymore... and it’s so annoying to me because when you run the teaser after a while, you have to wait for people to think of a teaser, you know, whatever and... I hate doing it... I wished I didn’t even invent them because I hate doing them but... I think it makes our paper look a lot better though.

Overall, the changes were a way of improving the final product and cut excess costs. What was not taken into consideration was how things were getting done to make those changes work. The changes required the staffers to change how things were done previously and also to adopt a different approach to working on the paper. In other words, these changes affected not only the artifact (the paper) itself, but also the values and assumptions that were held strongly by staffers from previous years. For example, in the departments experiencing cuts, the remaining staffers had to re-learn how to manage their job without the assistance to which they had become accustomed. Because there was not enough support (i.e. instrumental, informational, or social) for the individual staffers’ department from the people who implemented the change, and because there was no follow-through on the changes, the staffers soon reverted back to how things were done previously and compromised the quality of the newspaper collectively and individually. Member checks confirmed the validity of this interpretation of the state of the Western Herald’s newsroom culture.
Before I conducted my interviews, I had to develop an interview protocol based on the hypotheses I developed based on my observations. My field notes were as detailed as they could possibly be after spending some time trying to recover most of my expanded notes. Nevertheless, after reviewing my field notes several times, two key themes emerged overall. The first one was the constant usage of narratives, especially the usage of distinct beginning phrases (e.g. “Back in the day…,” “When I was the editor…,” “Remember this same time last year when…,” “Last time we did that…,” etc). The following are a few excerpts taken from my field notes that illustrate the use of narratives by Herald staffers:

*Excerpt 1*

Editor 9 to Editor 2: Make sure you get a photographer for the City Commission induction. When I was news editor, there’s usually some fancy thing going on.

*Excerpt 2*

Editor 2 to Editor 7: Apparently 2 years ago CMU-Western pullout has been 8 pages

Editor 7 to Editor 2: Don’t go off previous papers… Remember what happened when we went off previous years’ papers?

*Excerpt 3*

Editor 9 to Editor 7 (news meeting): Not another one! We had [that story] in summer last year, fall, spring… (About writing an editorial piece on the military care packages). Something else… seriously…
These excerpts are fragmented because the staffers never completed their sentences in conversations. They more or less assumed that the other person knew what he or she was talking about in the first place. In addition, they used non-verbal cues (e.g. tilting eyebrows, facial expression, hand gestures, etc).

The second theme that emerged from the observation data was that changes experienced in the newsroom revolved primarily around leadership. The changes included cutting pages, changing design, and starting potlucks. The following excerpts demonstrate how the changes were perceived to be enacted through leadership:

Excerpt 1

Editor 7 (news meeting): Next time we need approval from [Manager 2] or [Manager 3] before cutting pages. We usually leave page 7 and 9 open for classifieds, but it was missing from Thursday’s issue (staffers mumble to themselves). Well, basically, we shouldn’t be the ones cutting down pages. The advertising department is right now very angry at us.

Editor 1: It shouldn’t be our fault… cutting out Weekend Scene pages

Editor 7: No more cutting pages

Excerpt 2

Editor 7: [Editor 6], can you change the masthead for WMU-CMU Day front page? Just put a flag or change it anyway you want it. I just want it to look different from the usual.
Editor 6: What do you mean? I don’t have time to make something different. What do you want me to change it to? What kind of flag? It’s going to take a long time to do it

Editor 7: Okay, I just want it to be different (pointing at Herald newspaper masthead) because it’s WMU-CMU special. I don’t really care what you do, just something different from the usual... like a flag or something...

*Excerpt 3*

Editor 1 to Editor 7: I wish we had more of this (potluck/Secret Santa) in the past few years. Then we would have had more cohesion among us... Thanks for putting this together (hugs Editor 7 and gives Secret Santa gift)...I know what I would give to [Editor 11] if he had this, a lump of coal...

These excerpts illustrate how the changes were implemented. Whether it is for creative reasons or to rectify a problem, the leader took charge in managing the changes and executing them. Often the changes implemented affected everyone in the newsroom, and the way they experienced or even managed was unclear at the end of my newsroom observations. My analysis of the interview transcripts enabled me to better understand this aspect of the Herald’s culture.

**Making Sense of Cultural Changes: Dialectical Tensions And Praxis**

Based on my observations and interviews, I found that Western Herald staff members primarily experienced and made sense of the changes in the newsroom through dialectical tensions. The hypothesis about narratives being the dominant form
of sensemaking about change at the Herald was disconfirmed. Even though my interview protocol was set up to prompt for narratives, dialectical tensions were more prevalent in the interview data and ultimately explained the participants’ conflicted experience of organizational change sensemaking better than narratives. On the other hand, the hypothesis on leadership influences on newsroom changes was confirmed, and two tensions prominently emerged from the interview data that illustrated such influences: Student leadership differences v. Student leadership consistency and Non-student leadership v. Student leadership. Eighteen dialectical tension categories emerged overall:

1) Task certainty v. Task uncertainty

2) Veteran’s job experience v. Newbie’s job experience

3) Individual best way to do things v. Other editor’s/staff’s ways of doing things

4) Innovation v. Consistency

5) Changing the newsroom structure v. Keeping the status quo of the newsroom structure

6) Co-worker relationships v. Friendship relationships

7) Student leadership difference v. Student leadership consistency

8) Motivated concern for work quality v. De-motivated concern for work quality

9) Professional newspaper v. College newspaper

10) Herald work experience v. Real world experience

11) Central workspace v. Own workspace

12) Praising the Herald v. Criticizing the Herald
13) Strategic changes at the Herald v. Keeping the status quo

14) School work v. Herald work

15) Herald work ritual v. Herald social ritual

16) Herald work communication v. Herald social communication

17) Included in work conversation v. Excluded from work conversation

18) Non-student leadership v. Student leadership.

The categories were spread out across the interview transcripts, and no one category was exclusively represented by one person (See Table 1). I have organized the discussion of these tensions based on whether they may be found in newsrooms generally, college newspapers more specifically, or whether they are likely to be unique to the Western Herald. I determined the organization based on the literature. Some of the tensions found in my data showed similarities to what other scholars have concluded about newspapers in general, especially when managing change and organizational culture. Such tensions were categorized under general newsroom tensions. Since not many studies have been conducted on change and organizational culture at college newspapers, I relied on my own intuitions and experiences as a college newspaper writer to classify college newspaper tensions. As a result, these should be investigated at other college newspapers. The last category of tensions are basically exclusive to the Western Herald mainly because they did not seem to fit the other two categories, and the tensions were so specific that there is no reason to think they will necessarily be found elsewhere besides the Western Herald.
General Newsroom Tensions

Five of the tensions identified in the data have parallels in newsrooms generally, based on anecdotal evidence and empirical findings in the mass communications and organizational literatures (e.g. Daniels & Hollifield, 2002; Gade, 2004; Lowrey, 2003).

Task certainty v. Task uncertainty. Herald staff members need different pieces of a puzzle to do their own tasks well or get the newspaper done for the day. Often they know that a puzzle piece of some sort is needed, but what shape, size or color, no one quite knows until other staff members’ hand in their respective content. This tension fits in with Baxter and Montgomery's (1998) dialectical tension of predictability v. novelty; specifically, it is a predictable routine of putting pieces of a puzzle together that will constantly happen. At the same time it is unique to the nature of the newsroom where the newspaper broadsheet template is fixed and what is left is this waiting time for content and photographs to come in and determine how each newspaper page will look. The following excerpt from Editor 4’s transcript reflects this category best:

Quality-wise I think design’s good not because I work on it, I think it’s generally... sometimes, I mean... the quality of the newspaper depends on what they give us. Sometimes the content can be really bad, sometimes there’s no pictures. I mean sometimes it’s just so blah that when you pick up the paper you just want to throw it away... I mean there is... I mean you can’t make news if there isn’t enough
news you know... and so... the quality of the paper really depends on that time of day... what's happening in the world today, but generally I mean we try to do our best job to put good content. There are times you can't, and we have to get around it, and if there's good news and good stories, we'll put it in the paper... so I mean... overall quality is... good... good to decent... I can't say that the last time I picked up the paper and said, Wow this is really good content, you know... there's a lot of stuff that I don't really care about, you know... I mean local news and what not, depends on what it is... but I really generally... doesn't matter much to me.

The ambiguous nature of organizing newspaper content and images is a common experience in newsrooms generally. Editors depend on their writers and photographers to get the paper's content together, and sometimes they pull stories from wire services to fill space because a writer didn't pull through on a story or there was unexpected excess space that needed to be filled. This speaks to the predictability of putting a newspaper together, but yet the process of gathering content is also a unique routine that serves an important function in the newsroom.

Veteran's job experience v. Newbie's job experience. Over time, a veteran Herald staff member with more job experience would be able to do his or her job more easily and have a better understanding of how things work in the newsroom. A newbie Herald staff member, on the other hand, comes to the job with some pre-conceived notions or past job experiences, but no actual knowledge of how things
work in this particular newsroom. A newbie might feel that she already knows how things work in the newsroom, but veterans might correct her by reinforcing how things are done. This code reflects Baxter and Montgomery’s (1998) tension of predictability vs. novelty, where over the span of time more experience will lead to a more routinized way of doing things; there is novelty because the way things are routinized is exclusive to organizational members. An excerpt from Editor 9’s interview best describes this category:

The longer people are here... the more, the better they understand things and the smoother things work, I mean, obviously... [Editor 6] worked here long enough where she can just slide through design, but I remember her first year as design editor was my first year as news editor, and we were here even in the summer for extended periods long into the evening just because... ‘cause we were just getting a feel for stuff, you know, you’re new every year and... by the time you get the hang of things in one position, the year’s over, you know.

At the industry level, veterans’ and newbies’ experiences often are at odds with each other, yet this tension is a predictable ritual. This ritualistic process is a novelty in itself as a rite of passage that every staffer goes through in due time.

The individual best way to do things vs. Other editors'/staff's ways of doing things. Every Herald staff member has a theory on how other people should do their jobs to make their own jobs a little easier or more manageable. This is a constant contradiction for staff members because, on the one hand, they know that certain
strategies based on past experiences are useful in organizing their work process but other staff members do not, in fact, use those strategies. Unlike the previous category, this tension has nothing to do with one's seniority in the newsroom – it is an overall "micro-managing" lay theory. This tension illustrates Baxter and Montgomery’s (1998) predictability v. novelty.

To illustrate this category, Editor 6 recounts printing off the newspaper pages prior to sending it to the printers:

Like last year we did it every time, no questions asked... If it took 10 minutes to print we would wait... we would because you can see so many more errors on a printed page than you can on a screen, you can line the pages up and like this line is jumping to 4, we can flip to page 4 and easily see that that jump matches the jump on page 1 jump. We don’t do that anymore... so a lot of problems happen. I’ve complained about the printers, and since I’ve worked here nothing’s changed.

At any newspaper, individual staffers work out routines for doing things after a period of familiarization with their role. In other words, they individualize their job in a way that is comfortable and convenient for them.

Innovation v. Consistency. The desire to change the way things are done in the newspaper and at the same time to keep things consistent to reduce ambiguity is a predictable feature at the Herald, which illustrate Baxter and Montgomery’s (1998) tension of predictability v. novelty. What makes this a novelty is that it is routinized
into the *Herald*'s staff tenure cycle. An excerpt from Editor 7's interview transcript demonstrates this category:

I think people get bogged down with the day-to-day stuff with the paper and doesn't bother with the design, and I wished we did that more, and there have been times where we have looked really, really great. A lot of the times, it just doesn't happen, and it just doesn't stick to that formula, and that’s fine for day-to-day for a little bit, but every once in awhile, I wish we could mix it up.

At the industry level, and in organizations generally, plans for change are talked about constantly, but change of any form is disruptive and creates much uncertainty (Burke, 2002). Therefore, staff members strive to keep things stable, even as the top leadership attempts organizational change. This demonstrates how the needs and priorities of the organization vary quite substantially from those of groups and individuals within it.

*Changing the newsroom structure v. Keeping the status quo of the newsroom structure.* The *Herald* newsroom structure often encounters changes when a new editor-in-chief joins the newsroom, a transition that includes adding and removing positions in the organization. This causes a tension between keeping things the way they were versus truly embracing the changes. The ritual of having a new editor-in-chief every year is built into the *Herald*’s annual cycle (summer-spring). Baxter and Montgomery’s (1998) dialectical tension of *conventionality v. uniqueness* is shown in
this category. In Editor 4’s interview transcript, the following excerpt illustrates this category:

> It's ridiculous that they would put all these new job titles and
descriptions on something that in the past it hasn’t been... Generally,
they would know what to do but... I mean... I feel that last year there
wasn’t a lot of issues with a lot of the issues like waiting around for
people, not having a lot of content, not being able to do all this and
extra work that they shouldn’t be doing... I think that... I don’t know,
I just don’t like it... I mean it works to an extent, but there, I mean, it’s
generally pretty standard. Nobody has issues with it, but a lot of times
it would be nicer to have it the way it used to be.

At the industry level, there have been various attempts at changing the
newsroom structure by flattening the hierarchy or adding or removing positions to
best fit the need of the newspaper (Robertson, 2003). Examples include adding
positions such as a web department or merging sections together to reduce the
number of total positions.

*College Newspaper Tensions*

Six of the tensions reflect contradictions that might be experienced at other
college newspaper newsrooms, based on my experience and anecdotal evidence.
Once again, there has not been another study that combines organizational culture and
change in a college newspaper context. Therefore, my evidences for comparisons are
limited.
Co-worker relationships v. Friendship relationships. The need to be friends with one another is important for work efficiency and harmony at the Western Herald, yet at the same time there is a need for certain personal boundaries to maintain individual separateness from the group. This reflects Baxter and Montgomery's dialectical tension of autonomy v. connection. Herald staffers often take on multiple roles (e.g. student, staff worker, member of a student organization, friend, boyfriend/girlfriend, etc) that are of a temporary nature. Having some level of friendship in the workplace helps make work a little more bearable to manage along with their other role expectations, yet it is also helpful to keep some distance so that detaching from the workplace will be easier when they leave. This phenomenon is common among college students seeking diverse experiences within a university environment. To illustrate this category, here is an excerpt from Editor 9:

I remember when we were news editor, when I was news editor, people would do what they needed to do, and they would be gone, you know, and even, even we would sometimes... when we’d put it on [Editor 11] and the production team to make sure that nothing was wrong, and then people would come in the next day and stuff in their section would be misplaced or sideways and stuff would be wrong, and people would complain. But, hey, you know... you were home at 6 and we were here until 11... Sorry... but I think that... they take it upon themselves to be here later in the night and take pride in what they do and make sure the names aren’t wrong, and it helps with the
paper when people care more, you know, which I think is the case with just deadline stuff... improving.

It can be argued that this tension is applicable at the industry level, but based on family communication research, adults’ primary circle of friends includes co-workers, other parents through their children’s friends, and pre-existing friends from childhood. This alludes to the idea that friendships in the workplace are far more solidified for an adult than for a college student (e.g. Sias et al.)

Student leadership difference v. Student leadership consistency. Each leadership position at the Herald often has a new occupant every year, based on the annual turnover cycle (i.e. editor-in-chief, section editors, etc). Each person, of course, has a different working style and personality, even though there is a consistent leadership position that performs the same functions every cycle. For example, the editor-in-chief position is responsible for overseeing the overall production of the newspaper (e.g., removing or adding positions in the newsroom) and also serves as the newspaper's representative for various formal meetings and events. The concept of equifinality seems to fit this idea best. In other words, there are multiple ways to do this job. Editor 2 illustrates this category:

She had to deal with all year long, she didn’t implement this but... she had to deal with all year long, like, how the staffing positions have been re-arranged because, like, you have different people at different places ‘cause, like, before we had like ‘cause, with [Editor 11], he didn’t change up many of the staff positions from the year before. He
like... maybe like... I think the only change he may have implemented would be, instead of a day news editor and news editor, he changed it to co-news editor. That’s the only change he made, and [Editor 7] had to deal with all these changes, which weren’t really her idea, and she had to deal with figuring which people are going to do which tasks, so she had to deal with that the whole year basically... I don’t think she’s implemented a whole lot of different things, like, I mean, she’s just... been trying to... run the Herald as effectively as she should, and I think she’s done a pretty good job overall.

This is a constant contradiction because the nature of student leadership positions is predictable, but at the same time, differences among the people occupying those positions constitute a source of novelty. This tension could easily be seen at both the college level and industry level in terms of leadership differences, but in this case it is more specific to the college level because of the regular annual turnover.

*Motivated concern for work quality v. De-motivated concern for work quality.*

The Herald staffers work to the best of their ability to meet their personal quality standards, but because of the nature of the job at the newspaper, it is difficult to meet those standards regularly. Therefore, they often become frustrated, creating this de-motivated attitude toward their work. This tension reflects that staffers are openly concerned and motivated about their work quality, but yet they do not want to express their concern because of the nature of the college newspaper job: Deadlines are tight, content gets turned in late, not all writers are up to par on writing, staff gets turned
over annually, they are not remunerated for their work, etc. In the following excerpt, Editor 6 recounts an experience of lack of remuneration for tasks completed:

Every time I say I didn’t get paid, they say it’s going to be taken care of and it doesn’t… so… it’s just frustrating. Like, a lot of my friends say just don’t do it… just don’t do it this week, and I can’t just not do it but… at, the same time, it’s like I feel like you need to get paid for the jobs that you do. Like… I leave my other job early, where I make good money, to come here, and I only ask for 5 extra hours a week too. I don’t… I know our budget’s tight. I don’t ask… I’m not asking for 20 hours extra, I’m not working 20 hours extra on it. Like, I’m working maybe 5 extra hours on it, you know… It just stinks to not get paid, and I feel it’s like a broken record too. I feel like… I feel bad complaining about it because I know [Editor 2] works a lot, and I know [Editor 9]… Everyone works, and we all make pretty much the same amount of money, but at the same time, like… when I’m working diligently, they’re screwing around, like, making robots and looking at YouTube, and it’s like I don’t get to do that. Like, the reason they’re there is because me and [Editor 4] are still working and doing the [newspaper] is just… It’s a process and a half… It’s like I have to look for all the pictures and then organize it, and I have to make sure that the files are okay and all the images… there’s a whole lot more that goes into it than, like, you would even think, but they
don’t even know about, so it’s just really frustrating to spend a lot of time on something and not get paid.

College newspaper staffers may be less motivated to solve these sorts of problems because they will be done with their job at the end of the cycle. At a professional newspaper, your job is permanent, and if there is a concern about not achieving your full potential, the Human Resources Department would be able to help negotiate and manage these problems for you. Most college newspapers don't have a HR department to manage issues such as these, so this sense of helplessness may be more evident.

*Professional newspaper v. College newspaper.* Just the terminology "college newspaper" sets the *Herald* staffers apart from those at a professional newspaper. The *Herald* staffers experience this constant tension between aspiring to be like a professional newspaper and being “just” a college newspaper. Furthermore, the *Herald* staffers do not view this as a real job that they would commit to completely. Editor 4’s interview transcript demonstrates this category in the following excerpt:

I mean it looks more like a real newspaper, instead of a student-run newspaper… I mean, in my opinion, it looks a little bit more professional by keeping it consistent instead of having a lot of different… you know… Like, the teasers, it draws more people’s attention to the *Herald* every day when they see something that’s more appealing to them than just having the news on the front page.
Editor 4 talks about consistency in the *Western Herald* as a feature of professionalism. In the following paragraph, Editor 9 talks about having high turnover as a feature of a college newspaper that interferes with the *Herald’s* efforts to be more professional.

We signed a contract with College Publisher... They do a lot of websites for college newspapers around the country... In retrospect, that might have been a mistake. They make it easy to do a lot of things, but...they restrict what we can do a lot, especially with advertising and stuff, so probably looking to get away from that, and I personally think there should be a few people on a web design staff...

That would be a process, too, though we’d have to go into some web design courses and interview... and... I mean, it’s a student newspaper. The turnover’s so high, it’s hard to get stuff rolling like that ‘cause... you’re here for -- I mean, summer, if you want to count the summer, we don’t make that many newspapers, and then a lot of times students work from... September to April and then they’re done.

This tension is one that may be present at college newspapers generally. Using the terminology "college newspaper" itself is almost an excuse for all the mistakes, errors or mishaps that appear in the college newspaper itself. Of course, this is something that needs empirical investigation.

*Herald work experience v. Real world experience.* Many *Herald* staffers work at the newspaper as a stepping-stone to a real-world job. At the same time, the job is
taken seriously as a real job that helps pay for college. An excerpt from Editor 6’s transcript illustrates this tension:

It definitely teaches me to manage my time. Like, I know I’ve homework. I need to get it done, like, I’ve homework due on Wednesday, tomorrow. But I know have to work tonight, so I’m going to do it after I’m done here instead of waiting to do it tonight… teach me to be responsible, I’ve had to work Sunday through Wednesday every day, every week for, like, the past two years, so it’s like I can’t miss… I think I’ve only missed, like, I’ve only taken 4 or 5 days off in two years, and it’s, like-- it teaches me to be responsible. Like, when I get out in the real world, I’m going to know what it’s exactly like, and it’s definitely experience that I never want to work at a newspaper ever again for the rest of my life… when I’m done… I just don’t want a career, like, working late, working on weekends… I don’t want to do that.

School work v. Herald work. Another tension exists between prioritizing school work and Herald work. The Herald job entails a regular schedule with daily deadlines. Class schedules, on the other hand, vary every semester, and the demands of course assignments vary from class to class. This contradiction seems to be a predictable feature of the Herald culture, where staffers expect to perform this juggling act, which illustrates Baxter and Montgomery’s (1998) tension predictability v. novelty. Editor 9’s excerpt exemplifies this tension:
I don't know. You know, we take the paper pretty seriously. Still, but at the same time... I don't know if that's always necessarily been the case. I mean, I remember when I was getting trained to be the news editor, the old news editor was like, "I miss class all the time for this job." I'm, like, I mean I told the editor-in-chief straight up when I started, "I'm not missing class for this job," you know, like I'm here to go to school and get a good grade... This is for experience and to work, you know, and I think that's slowly become more of the focus... you know.

Two roles are in conflict – being a student and being a college newspaper staffer. Since this is the lot of all college newspaper staffers, we may expect to find this tension in many college newspaper newsroom cultures.

Herald Newspaper Tensions

Seven of the tensions reflect contradictions that reflect the unique features of the culture in the Herald newsroom because of specific room arrangements, hiring procedures, production routines, and individual personalities.

Central workspace v. Own workspace. The workspace is set up at the Western Herald with the design desk at the center of the newsroom, resulting in a spoke wheel-type of communication pattern (See Figure 1). More specifically, a pillar is situated in the middle of the room, and several desks are arranged facing the pillar. One of those desks belongs to the design department. In addition, the desks and chairs are situated relatively close to one another because the newsroom is quite small, about
the size of two badminton courts. Often, the staffers gravitate to the center pillar because they want to oversee the creation of the newspaper and use the better computers. This category illustrates Baxter and Montgomery’s (1998) tension *autonomy v. connection*. The following excerpt by Editor 7 illustrates how communication in this space resembles a spoke wheel pattern:

I mean, basically, it’s the center of the newsroom in more ways than one. I mean, design kind of brings all the different sections together, both figuratively and literally. Like, I mean, all sports, news, A&E — they’re all being designed on those two computers... So... editors are going to gravitate there to check out how stuff’s going, I’m going to come over, not only to check what’s in and what [Editor 6] and [Editor 4] are waiting on, which has more to do with the section editors than it does with [Editor 6] and [Editor 4],... but also that’s where [Editor 9] is, and he’ll be proofreading and editing stuff and everything like that and... Yeah, I don’t know... physically, it’s the center with the design happening there. It’s also the center... I’m trying to think if there’s a place we gravitated to last year... I don’t think we did, although I was in my little corner hanging out, so I don’t know if I would have known anyway... I feel it would have been more of the news desk last year, but the hours were different last year and the staff was different, so it’s hard to say. But... there’s also where the most gregarious personalities are: center in that room. So I think that has a little to do
with it... especially on those later nights. I mean [Editor 9] and [Editor
4] are crazy, [Editor 8] there and then [Editor 8] will get in the mix... and [Editor 6] yelling at everybody to shut up, so... it’s an interesting interaction, and that’s, like, when I walk out of my office, that’s the closest place to check out anyway... I think it just works as the center of everything.

This tendency to gravitate toward the middle of the newsroom effectively makes the center the staffers’ individual workspace at the same time that they share this workspace with everyone else. This sometimes leads to a conflict. For example, an editor may claim a computer or desk space as his or her own. When another staff member uses the editor’s space, the editor is annoyed, yet feels that he or she has to share because there is not enough space to go around in the first place. Here is an excerpt from Editor 8:

Well, at the end of the night -- keep in mind that’s when design is all going down, and that’s the design desk and that’s, you know, the managing desk is there... I mean that’s kinda where -- I don’t know, it’s like, it’s like where all the little streams come together, you know. So that’s where everything winds up, that center desk. I mean, literally, the last place the paper’s at before it gets sent to the Gazette to get printed is on [Editor 9’s] screen. So I don’t think it’s any coincidence -- I mean, it’s physically in the middle of the office. That helps too... I’m glad I have a cubicle, though.
Praising the Herald v. Criticizing the Herald. Herald staffers experience tension between praising the newspaper they have produced and criticizing it at the same time. When they praise it, they reflect the notion of teamwork or a collective effort to get it done as well as possible. This category illustrates Baxter and Montgomery’s (1998) dialectical tension of autonomy v. connection. When they criticize it, they disconnect themselves from the work by criticizing it and sometimes blaming the newspaper’s faults on others. Editor 9 illustrates this category:

I don’t think it’s a matter of them having more independence. I just think it’s a matter of them knowing more. You know... they know...[Editor 1] knows what to do. He’s done it for a year already, you know, and... like I said,... does know like...I guess this is less about [Editor 8] and more about [Editor 1] and... [Editor 2] and [Editor 5], but because the A&E section doesn’t have really anything, like, pressing, you know, we don’t cover plays you know at night... like we don’t wait around for a play to get over, so we can find out what happened and put it in the newspaper. That’s more feature-y stuff, but [Editor 1] and [Editor 2], I think, take a lot of pride in what they do, and, you know... [Editor 2] is usually here till the end of the night, and [Editor 1] is here if he has deadlines or anything at the end of the night. And that hasn’t always been the case, you know... I remember when ... when I was news editor, people would do what they needed to do, and they would be gone, you know. And even, even
we would sometimes... when we’d put it on [Editor 11] and the production team to make sure that nothing was wrong, and then people would come in the next day, and stuff in their section would be misplaced or sideways, and stuff would be wrong, and people would complain. But, hey, you know... “You were home at 6 p.m., and we were here until 11... Sorry”... But I think that... they take it upon themselves to be here later in the night and take pride in what they do and make sure the names aren’t wrong, and it helps with the paper when people care more, you know, which I think is the case with just deadline stuff...improving... I mean, [Editor 2] takes so much pride in what he does. He takes the time to e-mail me once a month about how many stories I had... how many local stories when we were news editors, as opposed to how many he’s had this month, you know... stuff like that... It’s a cool thing... Obviously, the paper can only be as good as we want it to be... and, fortunately, people want it to be better, so... That hasn’t always been the case, which is good.

Strategic changes at the Herald v. Keeping the status quo. In addition to the changes that take place annually at the Herald as a result of turnover, editorial staff sometimes propose more strategic, long-range changes to improve the newsroom or the paper. However, Herald staffers may not get behind these strategic changes because of the belief that nothing can change at the Herald due its volatility. This
category illustrates Baxter and Montgomery’s (1998) tension of predictability v. novelty. Editor 2 recounts some of the structural changes that have been tried:

Well, I guess, like with the whole news industry... the news industry is going through a lot of change, which is right now especially with the newspaper, but just the way things are being covered on the Internet, TV and everything like... the Herald... [Manager 3] doing a pretty good job, trying to have us be up to date with all the other changes...

So, I mean, like the Herald is going to be fine because it’s definitely going to go through [a] transitional period [more] than it has this year. The Internet’s changing and everything... I don’t know, though, it would be interesting to see what all newspapers look like in 10 years, especially the Herald. Like, who knows what it’s going to look like?

Or, like, even in a couple of years, like it can be completely different... But, like, it takes several years to make changes to, like -- and I keep pointing back to CM Life [another college newspaper] as an example. That’s because [Manager 3]... I’m really convinced that [Manager 3], like, loves that newspaper ‘cause I see the similarities of things that [Manager 3] wants us to do that they’re doing, which is not all bad. They’re a really good student newspaper, but, like, it takes several years, like, to be able, like, you’re... Like me, as a news editor, I’m limited by, like, first of all... like how can I raise my standards of my quality so much more and work so hard if Sports and A&E aren’t
doing the same thing, you know, what I’m saying? And... like, just
limited by what kind of writers I have and... ‘cause, like, at *CM Life*
you have the top people, like, who really work towards those positions.
I feel, like, ‘cause they are bigger and they are more competitive, I feel
like the people within *CM Life* would be more competitive, you know,
what I’m saying? So, like, getting to be a news editor is a bigger deal
or like becoming managing editor is like a huge deal, and they have
like senior reporters, which are like our news assistants, which is why I
like that it actually gives an extra little incentive to those people who
really work hard... which is something we don’t have now, which I
think is a bad change.

*Herald* work ritual v. *Herald* social ritual. One of the rituals at the *Herald* is
an end-of-the week "Friday" celebration that falls on every Wednesday. During this
time, the staff are working on the broadsheet newspaper and also the *Weekend Scene,*
which is the A&E pullout tab. They are much more relaxed and talkative than at other
times during the week. It is a time to socialize as well as eat. This is something that
has become part of their work, but it is also a social occasion. The ritual itself is a
predictable feature of the newsroom culture, yet some novelty also is present because
of the recent introduction of potlucks and gift exchanges for special occasions, which
illustrates Baxter and Montgomery’s (1998) dialectical tension of predictability v.
novelty. Editor 8 illustrates this tension:
I know a big social and, like, I guess, cultural time for the newspaper
is Wednesday evenings because that’s our last paper. It’s the latest
night, and they’re there the longest, and we’re all, like, excited because
we’re getting done with the Wednesday paper and the Weekend Scene
and everything, and it kind of puts you in a good mood, and you’re,
like, you know the weekend’s coming and you’re feeling a lot better,
everyone’s in a little higher spirits, and that’s when we have the
potluck… So, yeah, it’s a lot more chatty and social rambunctious. For
example, there’s a cardboard robot hanging from the ceiling because
last night was Wednesday. You know, that’s how it goes around here.

_Herald work communication v. Herald social communication._ A lot of
communication takes place in the newsroom, but, more often than not, it is of a social
type versus work-related. As such, there is this tension of having to communicate
with everyone in the newsroom to get work done, yet the communication is lacking in
terms of offering clarifying details about newspaper production or just effectively
communicating what the editors’ or managers’ expectations are for a given task. This
illustrates Baxter and Montgomery’s (1998) dialectical tension of _openness v.
closedness_; in other words, how specific and honest one wants to be and how vague
one wants to be in conversation. Editor 6 recounts an incident that helps illustrate this
category:

I think that’s a problem, too, ’cause sometimes, when they make the
dummies, if there’s… A lot of their handwriting is horrible, and when
they make the dummies and leave… it's like no one's cellphone ever works here except [Editor 7], so it's, like, if you really have a serious question you need to borrow [Editor 7's] phone 'cause you need to call… because everyone has out-of-town phone numbers. But it's also something, like-- that's why it's really important for the editors to stay till the end because, if she would have stayed, I wouldn't have done that, or if she would have clarified with [Editor 2], and I'm assuming it's in News, that this is what needs to go here, this and this and this… If he saw something amiss with the page, he would notice… So it's, like, I don't I mean sometimes, like, I'm to blame, but I feel other people are to blame, too, because, I don't know… They're all having fun while I'm working… I don't know what all these stories are about. It's just that I'm looking at something, and you're telling me to do it…so… I don't know.

*Included in work conversation v. Excluded from work conversation.*

Whenever a change takes place in the newsroom, or some form of planning or brainstorming is needed to implement a decision, *Herald* staffers wish to be included because it affects them directly. This illustrates Baxter and Montgomery's dialectical tension of *inclusion v. exclusion*. At the same time, they do not care much for being included because their tenure cycle is almost up. Editor 6 helps exemplify this category:
I remember saying that it shouldn’t go in there... that I think it wasn’t appropriate ‘cause, Weren’t they-- they were almost mocking someone... Or another story that said “queer” is okay was like... we’re rephrasing the word again, it seemed like, and putting it in the headline, but I don’t write any of the editorials. I’m not a writer, by any means. I’ve written one column, and it was terrible, and, so, I don’t really-- I’ll butt in and make it to their editorial meetings. Like, I’ll sit in on it and give them my viewpoints.

*Non-student leadership v. Student leadership.* At the *Western Herald*, the editor-in-chief has the ultimate say in most decisions, but the general manager interjects advice and suggestions. The tension that emerged was basically the contradiction of who was really in charge and who had the ultimate say in the newspaper’s production. On one hand, *Herald* staffers feel that the non-student leadership trumps student leadership because after all, as Editor 4 said, “we’re just a college newspaper,” and need an “adult” for guidance. At the same time, the editor-in-chief calls the shots in the newsroom. Editor 2 recounts an experience in the newsroom that reflects this category:

So when [Editor 7] was learning to do the editor-in-chief job, though, more of some of these things [Manager 3] interjected was, like, when [Editor 7] was kinda still not really realizing, like, how tough she might have to be and how firm she might need to be with [Manager 3] in order to really make sure he’s not overstepping his bounds... So,
and I think that’s when he did: wait, kinda, till the whole editors who were, the ones who were graduating and kinda going through that change at the end of the year, he like waited till then to do all his changes... And he was going to have a much better chance of getting, like, his changes across when he did it that way and you have all these new people stepping in... You’re not... I mean [Editor 7], worked all year in the newsroom last year as copyeditor, but, still, she wouldn’t know how exactly all these changes would work and everything, so he... definitely did have a pretty big influence... And [Editor 7] was talking about all the changes, and, like, she was telling about a conversation she had with [Manager 3] and where he was, like, presenting all the stuff, just like pages of the job descriptions and how he wanted everything to be changing and all this stuff. And she’s, like, “Do I get any say in this?” And he said something like, ”In the final part, you’ll get some say” or something...So is she actually getting a say then, or is she just gonna have to approve what you designed? So I don’t know. I didn’t personally witness any of that, so I can’t like completely speak for how things are run. But [Manager 3] definitely did, to answer your question, yeah, kinda interject on some editor-in-chief duties for sure.
Praxis: How Herald Staffers Cope with Dialectical Tensions

After coding the interview transcripts for dialectical tensions, I examined the data again to see if I observed any praxis in use at the Herald newsroom. I found six praxis that demonstrate how these tensions are negotiated: integration, disorientation, denial, reaffirmation, balance, and recalibration. However, three seem to be the most prevalent based on the member checks: reaffirmation, recalibration and integration. In this section, I will discuss these three praxis and provide excerpts as evidence of their use in the Herald’s culture.

Reaffirmation

Reaffirmation means acceptance by parties that contradictory polarities cannot be reconciled (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998). In other words, the tension is evident to staffers, but nothing can be done about it, and, thus, accepting it helps staffers to cope with it. Editor 2 illustrates this praxis in terms of negotiating Baxter and Montgomery’s (1998) dialectical tension predictability v. novelty, in the following paragraph:

Officially, the web editor and the design editor is supposed to sit in those meetings, but it hasn't really happened yet... [Editor 6] sat in on a few the whole year. It's not going to happen, though it's something I've just come to accept, and it's not that big of a deal. But I hate to ask her to be here when it's not that necessary, but, like, at the same time...

I really like [Editor 6], but I really get annoyed with her when I've worked here since 3:30 p.m., and she comes in, like, at 7 p.m., and
then we leave at 12, and she'll be like, “I hate being here for blah blah blah” or something, and I've been here for so many hours more.

**Recalibration**

Reframing a contradiction so that the polarities are encompassed within one another reflects the recalibration praxis (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998). In a way, this praxis demonstrates how both poles of the contradiction are blurred together. Editor 5’s transcript exemplifies this praxis the best in regards to managing Baxter and Montgomery’s dialectical tension of openness v. closedness:

I was mad about it... That's when we basically talked about how we need to put the filenames on the photos just to make it clear for everybody... because I know [Editor 4] is not a mind reader or whoever's doing the paper... [Editor 6]... I mean they don't know exactly what I'm thinking if I don't tell them specifically... I also try to if there's something like that or there's more than one photo or... I try to tell them before I leave, you know, “Hey, this is a little bit different... make sure... you know...” like for instance, “If you have to cut a photo, cut this photo because nobody took this photo. I don't care if you cut it, you know”... It's gotten better little bit more... more communication... for things that happen like that.

**Integration**

Integration refers to managing the tension without compromise or dilution and responding fully to all opposing forces at once (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998). Baxter
and Montgomery gave an example of a family dinner: Everyone was seated at the table to reflect connectedness; at the same time, talking about each other’s day was a way of retaining autonomy. Editor 7 provides a similar example at the Western Herald:

I think the interactions among the editors are about the same. Like, they kinda interact, but not really. The interactions between section editors have always been weird ‘cause they all kinda… they're all the same kind of positions, but they have such different roles. Their sections are separate, but they're in the same paper. They're bound to come together in the newsroom in the paper.

In the final section of this chapter, I will address the negative case analysis I conducted to confirm the validity of my coding categories. The categories that emerged from the data seemed to reflect a negative orientation to organizational change. Specifically, my findings at the Western Herald suggest that the newsroom culture is characterized by a sense of helplessness, stressful adjustment to changes in the newsroom, a pessimistic outlook on the organization, and a jaded attitude toward work. The negative case analysis gave me an opportunity to make sure that I was not mischaracterizing the Herald’s culture.

Negative Case Analysis

When I examined all the transcripts for evidence of negative cases that might cast doubt on my coding categories, I found an excerpt that appeared to counter the
generally negative undertone of my categories. Specifically, Editor 6 told about a positive experience resulting from strategic changes in the newsroom. Editor 6 recounts:

I have no idea. [Manager 3] got hired in... our old manager [Manager 4], he wasn’t my favorite; we butted heads a lot. But, once he was gone, it felt like a huge weight was lifted off of the Herald, like everyone had new positions. Me and [Editor 4] had actual titles, and everyone had their desks. Like, when I was [a] manager, my desk was down the hallway, you know, where [Manager 1’s] desk is... down where [Manager 2’s] office is now... I was sort of away from all the editors, so... they would have to come in and like... “Wait, what are we doing for this page?” Whereas now, I’m right in the middle of it all. I can talk to anyone, and I think that’s been the best thing that’s happened.

On closer examination, however, this rare positive experience appears to reflect the praxis of recalibration. Specifically, both negative and positive experiences were encompassed within one another. In this case, the positive experience pole appears to be non-existent, and only the negative experience pole seems to be evident. Below is another excerpt from Editor 6’s transcript that illustrates this praxis:

I’m going to tell [Manager 3] that they should ask someone else to do the [paper] for next year because it’s a lot of work, and, for people who are new—like, I didn’t do it my whole first year... There was no
way I was able to do it, but now, with [Editor 4], [Editor 4], as well as he is working, a lot of the things are going a lot better at night… The [paper] I can do it; it’s fine… I don’t care [if I have to come] in here at 4 on Wednesday, but it does suck when I don’t leave till 1 in the morning, and everyone is just sitting around and watching TV the whole time waiting, and me and [Editor 4] are working… I mean, that gets frustrating sometimes… I mean it’s fun and all, being in the center of everything… so… but at the same time, what can they do to help me? Nothing… so, it’s not their fault you know.

Recalibration takes place often at the Western Herald because staffers work with a lot of ambiguity, not only regarding newspaper content, but also within their roles at the organization. On top of day-to-day work routines, changes introduced in the organization are a frustrating experience because it brings more ambiguity. After reviewing the transcripts again, I found an excerpt in Editor 7’s transcript that best illustrates the frustration and ambiguity experienced at the Herald:

[Manager 3] has been a big part of the changes, and, like, it’s not all negative. Like, a lot of the stuff [Manager 3] suggested has been a really good idea that I might not have thought of because I don’t have that experience. So it’s good. I mean, as an advisor, for the most part, he knows his stuff. But… I think there are a lot of the times he looks at us more as a regular functioning newspaper more than a student
newspaper, and I think that distinction is important, so... that's frustrating sometimes.

In other words, changes all sound great in theory, but not necessarily when implemented because management just leaves it up to the staffers to stick to the changes. This interpretation was brought to my attention during member checks. One participant put it this way during a member check: Although there were several great times at the paper, these were outweighed by all the things that went wrong. This participant said that staffers did not have the time to deal with problems or even to revel in their day-to-day successes.

In the next chapter, I will summarize my findings and discuss the implications of this study. In addition, I will discuss some of the limitations of this study and considerations that should be taken into account when conducting such a study in the future. Finally, I will discuss some areas for future research related to the college context, which emerged from my findings.
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

To summarize my findings, 18 dialectical tensions emerged from the data I collected that may characterize newsroom culture at newspapers in general, college newspapers more specifically, and the Western Herald in particular. The dialectical tensions that I found could be collapsed into Baxter and Montgomery's (1998) six core dialectical tensions. In this study, only five of the six core dialectical tensions were used to collapse the 18 dialectical tensions, specifically autonomy v. connection, predictability v. novelty, openness v. closedness, inclusion v. exclusion, and conventionality v. uniqueness. The core dialectical tension that was not used was revelation v. concealment, which refers to the balance between how much relationship information one intends to share or keep private (Baxter & Montgomery). An explanation for this absence is that, if the participants chose to keep something private in regards to their relationship with other staffers at the Herald, I would not know about it, and participants would not necessarily share it with me. In addition, my interview protocol may not have prompted for discourse that displays this core tension. After all, the interview protocol was developed on the premise that Western Herald staffers made sense of changes in the newsroom through narratives, but instead dialectical tensions emerged more prominently in the data.
In this chapter, I will discuss the limitations of the study and some possible directions for future research that are pertinent to the college newspaper tensions that have been identified. This discussion includes the following possible areas that could be explored further: college workplace friendships, multiple temporary roles, college student leadership, human resources departments in college newspapers, the dialectical tension between professional newspapers and college newspapers, and college students’ understanding of a “real job.”

Limitations of the Study

I made every attempt to reduce the effects of this study’s limitations. Nevertheless, one of the unavoidable limitations was the time spent in the field. I spent a total of four months at the Western Herald, which may be deemed by many qualitative researchers as insufficient to truly understand that newsroom’s culture. For the purposes of this study, as discussed in Chapter Three, the short amount of time was sufficient, however, to capture some of the cultural features of the newsroom, especially considering that the Herald only publishes for roughly eight months out of the year. Using long interviews in combination with the observations also helped strengthen the data-gathering process through triangulation. Of course, if given a chance to re-do this study, I would allocate more time in the field and also take on a participant observation role in the newsroom instead of just an observer. Both roles have their pros and cons, but I felt, as a participant observer, I would have gained more insight into the culture as a reflective co-worker. In addition, I would
recommend spending more time in the field if future research were to be conducted, not only to understand the cultural features of the organization, but also to earn the trust from the members of the organization. More time would have also provided more opportunities to refine the hypotheses generated in the field and to test the interview protocol developed for this study.

Another limitation of this study, which is more of my own fault, is managing the bulk of data generated from field observations. During my research process, my computer experienced a malfunction that caused me to lose all my expanded notes that I wrote based on my field observations. I did not back up the data. From this experience, I realized that technology is our friend in more than one way, but also your worst enemy if you do not use it prudently. Nevertheless, I feel that the advice of backing up your data or even your research papers is not reiterated as often as it should to graduate students or just researchers in general. I learned this the hard way and was forced to rely primarily on my handwritten field notes while attempting to reconstruct my expanded field notes from memory. Losing my first round of written interpretations may have caused me to err in concluding that Herald staffers made sense of the change they experienced narratively and that they experienced change primarily as a result of leadership. Nevertheless, these were only preliminary hypotheses, and I went back to my raw field notes to seek confirming evidence before developing the interview protocol.
Suggestions for Future Research

The findings from this study suggest a number of areas that need to be addressed in future research. Most of them can be found in the literature, but previous research has taken place in contexts other than college newspapers, or has dealt more narrowly with topics such as workplace friendships and leadership. The next few paragraphs are dedicated to encourage the exploration of newsroom culture and change in a college newspaper context.

*College Workplace Friendships*

Workplace friendships is an area of research that has been explored in great depth by various communication scholars (e.g. Pettinger, 2005; Riordan & Griffeth, 1995; Sias & Cahill, 1998; Sias et al., 2004). Often, this research addresses corporate organizations or larger-scale organizations, rather than colleges and universities. I think the college context is understudied. College workplaces are one of the first few places that college students learn how to conduct themselves professionally by working in an organizational setting and also learn to make friends in the workplace. Workplace friendships are a unique set of friendships in comparison to friendships made in school or religious organizations because they function as a form of glue for workplace solidarity and harmony. The question that beckons to be answered is: Are college workplace friendships different from other workplace friendships, and if so, in what ways do they differ? Furthermore, do the purposes of friendship in a college workplace serve the same purpose as friendships in a regular workplace? For example, friendships among the *Western Herald* staffers are often referred to as a
means to build cohesion and to ease work production. Is this true at other college newspapers or even at other student organizations? Do such friendship expectations extend into the professional workplace?

*Multiple Temporary Roles*

In my perception, children go to college merely for an education and then move on to get a job, which is in line with what my parents had hoped for me. Many college students today have numerous roles that they have to juggle, however, and often those roles are of a temporary nature. The number of roles, if anything, is constantly growing and has become an expected part of college life. The variety of roles that college students hold helps them to negotiate their daily life (e.g., earning money for rent or bills, socializing to maintain psychological and physiological health, etc.) and plan for their future (e.g., networking through internships, building a portfolio, scouting career prospects, etc). This area needs further research, especially in terms of exploring the temporary nature of roles and how this affects the newsroom culture of college newspapers. For example, *Western Herald* staffers hold a variety of roles in addition to being students and *Herald* staff workers. However, they may put more effort into one of these many roles due to exhaustion or time limitations. Why do college students push themselves to this point? Is this a trait of college life, a national trait, or more of a strictly personal choice? It may be helpful to research how college students negotiate these stresses communicatively by seeking out social support, and how their strategies compare with those used by professional journalists.
Leadership is a well-developed body of literature, especially in corporate and non-profit organizations. My suggestion for further research is for contextually driven examinations of college student leadership. In college, there are a number of registered student organizations, and each one makes provisions for some form of traditional leader who manages a group of people. College student leaders often have not had the opportunity for leadership training or leadership experience. The budding question is, How is leadership learned and implemented in a student-run newspaper, and how does it affect the culture of the newsroom? For example, at the *Western Herald*, many staffers were veterans who had two or more years’ experience working at the *Herald*. Often they compared their current leadership experiences with past experiences they had with other leaders. Past leaders, thus, became a yardstick for measuring the current one. The aspect that should be researched further in this case is short-term student leadership and how it influences newsroom culture. At other college newspapers in the region, according to the outgoing editor-in-chief, one year is typically the length of an editor-in-chief’s term. He or she has to learn how to manage a newspaper to professional standards within this span of time. Most leaders have more than one year to foster professional and organizational standards among their staffers.

*Human Resources Departments in College Newspapers*

Based on my findings, some staff roles at the *Western Herald* are either over-worked or under-worked. There is no, there are no guidelines for each job in the
newsroom. The notion that staff positions get removed or added by whoever holds the helm as editor-in-chief makes this organization very volatile and in constant need of reinventing itself. If a college newspaper is supposed to run like an actual business, then why does it not have all the components or departments of an actual business? Specifically, in this case, a human resources department. I think, traditionally, college newspapers are viewed as just training grounds for college students and not as businesses, especially since resources (e.g. monetary, mentoring, talent, etc) are not abundantly available to college newspapers. In addition, the staffers are probably busy trying to learn their jobs and working on the content of the newspaper to the extent that there is no time to explore the possibility of expanding the organization’s capabilities.

At the Western Herald, hiring and recruiting are initially conducted by the editor-in-chief for the section editor positions, and then subsequently the section editors hire staff writers. More often than not, all the editors have so much on their plate, especially working on a daily newspaper, that to spend time hiring and recruiting staff members is not really a good use of their time. This could be said of professional newspapers too. Editors of such newspapers are swamped, creating and developing content for the newspaper. Taking time to figure out who would be a good match for the organization requires a different set of skills. An HR Department could provide training to editors and screen applicants. In addition, the Western Herald’s recruitment process is a passive one (e.g., advertising in the newspaper, announcements in journalism classes) and thus does not attract enough talent, either
in quantity or quality. Other functions of HR include managing payroll, training and development, mediating employees concerns, and performance feedback.

Another option is to make personnel matters the responsibility of the advisor. The advisor or general manager, the only non-student in the organization, is supposed to guide the staff members in all departments and help mediate situations beyond the college student’s capability. Could the advisor or general manager proactively help manage the human resources aspect of the college newspaper? The roles and boundaries of a college newspaper advisor should be explored as well.

*The Dialectical Tension Between Professional Newspapers and College Newspapers*

The tension between aspiring to be like a professional newspaper and between the reality of being a college newspaper should be explored further. Why is this tension so prevalent? What makes the term “college newspaper” so distinctive that it affects the daily functioning of the newspaper, aside from the obvious fact that it is run by college students? After all, the college newspaper is a place of business, and staff workers get paid for their time and work at the newspaper. What are the staffers’ perceived expectations of a professional newspaper and a college newspaper that make them so different, as far as one being much more reputable than the other?

Some college newspapers are as old, or even older than some professional newspapers (e.g. *The Harvard Crimson*, Harvard University’s newspaper, was established in 1873, while the *Chicago Tribune*, a professional newspaper, was established in 1847 – a 26-year difference). Why, then, do college students view the college newspaper as a non-respectable workplace that is not equivalent to a
professional newspaper? Perhaps professional culture, as discussed in Chapter Two, plays a role in a college student’s ability to identify a professional newspaper. In various professions, a set of rules, values and assumptions are tailored to the profession (e.g. lawyer, doctor, journalist), and these characteristics are further reinforced in college through taking classes that relates to those areas. For example, in journalism classes, students are taught the Society of Professional Journalists’ code of ethics as an expression of professionalism. In addition, professors (most of whom have worked as journalists) tell “war stories” about getting a scoop or defending truth against the odds. It would be interesting, then, to explore what type of memorable messages do journalism college students remember from their classes and how these affect their interpretation of the college newspaper environment.

Defining a College Student’s Understanding of “A Real Job”

Clair (1996) provided us with an understanding of how “a real job” is defined and where the sources of those definitions come from in her study on work socialization. The study was conducted more than 10 years ago. It should be re-evaluated, taking into account media influences and changing societal values over the last few decades. Furthermore, research on how college students understand “a real job” might help explain how they manage leadership, college workplace friendships, and the variety of temporary roles they hold at college newspapers.
Conclusion

Overall, my findings suggest that the *Western Herald's* newsroom culture is constantly trying to adapt to change, but ultimately is unable to do so. For one thing, staffers are not involved in planning the changes and are not effectively supported in implementing them. Also, staffers are unprepared for the mismatch between their expectations about working at a college newspaper and the reality of doing so. Another factor may be their limited experience in work organizations generally. This finding cannot be generalized to other college newspapers, of course, but other studies should be conducted at different college newspapers to explore whether the unique circumstances of these organizations, as well as of the newspaper industry more generally, contribute to negative experiences of organizational change. Under certain circumstances, this tendency can contribute to dysfunctional outcomes based on recent organizational behavior and management literature (e.g. Balthazard, Cooke & Potter, 2006; Goldman, 2006; Schweiger & Denisi, 1991). In Balthazard et al.'s study, mismatched expectations between organizational members and their organization resulted in several dysfunctional outcomes, including stress, job dissatisfaction, low trust in the organization, low organizational commitment, and increased intentions to leave the organization (Schweiger & Denisi). These same outcomes can be found in the *Western Herald's* newsroom culture. However, the aim of this study is not to evaluate the *Herald's* culture or prescribe recommendations for improvement. Rather, the aim is to better understand how this culture, and possibly
the culture of other college newspaper newsrooms, experiences change and why.

The *Western Herald*’s newsroom culture probably reflects a mismatch between the expectations that organizational members have and the reality that they experience at work. To some degree, this is a universal experience for members of all organizations. Student journalists come on board the *Herald* with assumptions that are based on what they have picked up in classes, newspaper internships, and perhaps how the media depicts newspaper organizations. Upon entering the organization, the student journalists’ assumptions are challenged, and there is no avenue at the newspaper to fully explore the implications of this adjustment. This results in a disappointing socialization process as far as communicating the organization’s goals and negotiating common assumptions regarding the *Herald*. The process of socialization is important for acculturating new staffers. When the socialization process is missing or inadequate, a new staffer may fill in the missing gaps in his or her perceptions with values and assumptions that are not compatible with the values and assumptions actually in use at the newspaper. Increased communication between staffers and management would encourage organizational members to take ownership of the cultural changes that are taking place within their organization. Given the crucial role played by leadership in this culture, it is reasonable to assume that management choices are a major contributor to the state of the newsroom’s culture at the *Herald*.

Organizational culture and change research should be heavily considered in college newspapers to promote newsroom cultures that are suitable for training future
journalists. This is not to say that a student journalist should be sheltered from all negative experiences, but, rather, the college newspaper should be a platform to encourage the exchange of ideas and also an avenue to help improve one’s craft. After all, the college or university environment is one that facilitates such exchange of ideas and offers the freedom to bolster such active engagement.
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ENDNOTES

\(^{i}\) I will use the word “college” throughout this document interchangeably with “university.” However, I realize that these terms have different meanings in other countries, such as Canada.

\(^{ii}\) I was supposed to put my observation field notes online at a username- and password-protected Web site for the participants to view and remove any information that they perceived as potentially damaging. However, a computer malfunction led to the loss of my expanded field notes, which I had typed up in Microsoft Word. To save time (and with HSIRB approval), I ended up blocking out all names and identifying position titles from my handwritten fields notes and photocopying a packet for each participant. In each packet of photocopied field notes, I highlighted sections in which the participant spoke or did something in front of me to help guide his or her reading of the field notes. Prior to giving them the packet, I gave them a new consent form (See Appendix B) to review the change in medium and had them sign it as well.

\(^{iii}\) Nevertheless, some of the tensions were occasionally displayed using sequencing.
Appendix A

Observations Consent Form
Western Michigan University
School of Communication
Advisor: Dr. Sandra Borden
Student Investigator: Sarah Ling Wei Lee

You have been invited to participate in a research project entitled "Understanding a college newspaper's newsroom culture." This research is intended to study how staffers make sense of newsroom culture in a dynamic, changing environment. This project is Sarah Ling Wei Lee's thesis project.

You will be asked to participate in an observation process, which will last no more than two months, where Sarah Ling Wei Lee will be an observer at the Western Herald newsroom. Some of the things she will be observing are: front-page meetings and any newsroom-wide meetings; interactions between editors and reporters, editors and editors, and reporters and reporters in the newsroom; and, interactions in informal settings (i.e. break/copy room, lounge, etc).

The observations will be written down in a form of field notes in a notebook that Sarah Ling Wei Lee will carry with her. Periodically, she will ask you and fellow staff members in the newsroom clarifying questions, and also obtain copies of documents that will help her understand the Herald's procedures and policies.

You will have the option to review the transcription of the observations at a username- and password-protected Web site, which will be given to you after the observations has been expanded and typed up. In addition, you will be able to request that Sarah Ling Wei Lee exclude objectionable data that may have damaged yourself or others in what you have said or done in front of her. Your privacy will be respected throughout the observation process.

As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to the participant. Some of the potential risks of participation may include other staff members offended by your comments and also embarrassment, if other staff members were able to identify you after reading the report. To minimize such risks, all of the information collected from you will be kept confidential and private. That means your name will not appear on any papers on which this information is recorded. Instead, a pseudonym will be assigned to you. The observations will be typed up and coded. Once the data has been collected and typed up, the written field notes will be destroyed. All other forms of data will be retained for at least three years in a locked file in the advisor's office.

Please initial to indicate you have read this page.
Some of the ways you may benefit from this activity is the chance to understand your newsroom’s culture, specifically its formal and informal practices and values among fellow staff members. Your contribution will help academicians and practitioners of journalism understand today’s college newspaper newsrooms as they continue to serve as a training ground for most student journalists.

As an incentive for your participation you may opt to participate in a raffle drawing for a $25 Rave Motion Pictures gift card, which will be held at the end of the study. If you would like to be part of the raffle drawing, please inform Sarah Ling Wei Lee after the interview, and your name will be included in the drawing. Additionally, you will be provided with a summary of the findings at the end of the project.

You may refuse to participate, quit at any time during the study, or refuse to answer any question without prejudice or penalty, including the chance to win the Rave gift card. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact either Sarah Ling Wei Lee at 269-598-6741 or Dr. Sandra Borden at 269-387-0362. You may also contact the chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293, or the vice president for research at 269-387-8298 with any concerns that you have.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is more than one year old.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and/or had explained to you the purpose and requirements of the study and that you agree to participate. Please sign, date, and print your name below in the space provided.

_________________________  ______________________
Signature                  Date
Print name here: ________________________________

Consent obtained by: ______________________________
                    Initials of researcher  Date
Appendix B

Re-approved Observations Consent Form
You have been invited to participate in a research project entitled "Understanding a college newspaper's newsroom culture." This research is intended to study how staffers make sense of newsroom culture in a dynamic, changing environment. This project is Sarah Ling Wei Lee's thesis project.

You will be asked to participate in an observation process, which will last no more than two months, where Sarah Ling Wei Lee will be an observer at the Western Herald newsroom. Some of the things she will be observing are: front-page meetings and any newsroom-wide meetings; interactions between editors and reporters, editors and editors, and reporters and reporters in the newsroom; and, interactions in informal settings (i.e. break/copy room, lounge, etc).

The observations will be written down in a form of field notes in a notebook that Sarah Ling Wei Lee will carry with her. Periodically, she will ask you and fellow staff members in the newsroom clarifying questions, and also obtain copies of documents that will help her understand the Herald's procedures and policies.

You will have the option to review a hard copy of the observations that highlights your conversation only, which will be given to you in a packet after the observations have been completed and names or identifying titles have been removed. In addition, you will be able to request that Sarah Ling Wei Lee exclude objectionable data that may have damaged yourself or others in what you said or did in front of her. Your privacy will be respected throughout the observation process.

As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to the participant. Some of the potential risks of participation may include other staff members offended by your comments and also embarrassment, if other staff members were able to identify you after reading the report. To minimize such risks, all of the information collected from you will be kept confidential and private. That means your name will not appear on any papers on which this information is recorded. Instead, a pseudonym will be assigned to you. The observations will be typed up and coded. Once the data has been collected and typed up, the written field notes will be destroyed. All other forms of data will be retained for at least three years in a locked file in the advisor's office.

Please initial to indicate you have read this page.
Some of the ways you may benefit from this activity is the chance to understand your newsroom's culture, specifically its formal and informal practices and values among fellow staff members. Your contribution will help academicians and practitioners of journalism understand today's college newspaper newsrooms as they continue to serve as a training ground for most student journalists.

As an incentive for your participation you may opt to participate in a raffle drawing for a $25 Rave Motion Pictures gift card, which will be held at the end of the study. If you would like to be part of the raffle drawing, please inform Sarah Ling Wei Lee after the interview, and your name will be included in the drawing. Additionally, you will be provided with a summary of the findings at the end of the project.

You may refuse to participate, quit at any time during the study, or refuse to answer any question without prejudice or penalty, including the chance to win the Rave gift card. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact either Sarah Ling Wei Lee at 269-598-6741 or Dr. Sandra Borden at 269-387-0362. You may also contact the chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293, or the vice president for research at 269-387-8298 with any concerns that you have.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is more than one year old.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and/or had explained to you the purpose and requirements of the study and that you agree to participate. Please sign, date, and print your name below in the space provided.

Signature __________________________ Date __________
Print name here: __________________________

Consent obtained by: __________________________
Initals of researcher __________________________ Date __________________________
Appendix C

Long Interviews Consent Form
Western Michigan University
School of Communication
Advisor: Dr. Sandra Borden
Student Investigator: Sarah Ling Wei Lee

You have been invited to participate in a research project entitled "Understanding a college newspaper's newsroom culture." This research is intended to study how staffers make sense of newsroom culture in a dynamic, changing environment. This project is Sarah Ling Wei Lee's thesis project.

You will be asked to attend an interview session with Sarah Ling Wei Lee that will last no longer than two hours. You will be asked to meet Sarah Ling Wei Lee for the session at a designated location in the Western Herald office. During the interview, you will be asked questions, based on Sarah Ling Wei Lee's observations at the Western Herald newsroom, regarding your work experiences at the Western Herald, communication patterns, work practices or routines, and the newsroom's culture.

You will also be asked to provide general information about yourself, such as age, seniority, and your major. If additional questions come up after the interview session that requires further clarification or explanation, a follow-up interview session lasting no longer than two hours will be scheduled at a designated location in the Western Herald, or over the phone. Both the initial interview and follow-up interview will be recorded on a digital recording device (iPod).

You will have the option to review the transcription of the interview at a username- and password-protected Web site, which will be given to you after the interview has been transcribed. In addition, you will be able to request to stop the recording at any time you feel uncomfortable. Your privacy will be respected throughout the interview process.

As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to the participant. Some of the potential risks of participation may include other staff members offended by your comments and also embarrassment, if other staff members were able to identify you after reading the report. To minimize such risks, all of the information collected from you will be kept confidential and private. That means your name will not appear on any papers on which this information is recorded. Instead, a pseudonym will be assigned to you. The interviews will all be transcribed and coded. Once the data are collected and transcribed, the audio recordings will be destroyed. All other forms of data will be retained for at least three years in a locked file in the advisor's office.

Please initial to indicate you have read this page
Some of the ways you may benefit from this activity is the chance to talk about your experiences working in the newsroom and also a means to cope with the stress of change at the Western Herald. Your contribution will help academicians and practitioners of journalism understand today's college newspaper newsrooms as they continue to serve as a training ground for most student journalists.

As an incentive for your participation you may opt to participate in a raffle drawing for a $25 Rave Motion Pictures gift card, which will be held at the end of this study. If you would like to be part of the raffle drawing, please inform Sarah Ling Wei Lee after the interview, and your name will be included in the drawing. Additionally, you will be provided with a summary of the findings at the end of the project.

You may refuse to participate, quit at any time during the study, or refuse to answer any question without prejudice or penalty, including the chance to win the Rave gift card. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact either Sarah Ling Wei Lee at 269-598-6741 or Dr. Sandra Borden at 269-387-0362. You may also contact the chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293, or the vice president for research at 269-387-8298 with any concerns that you have.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is more than one year old.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and/or had explained to you the purpose and requirements of the study and that you agree to participate. Please sign, date, and print your name below in the space provided.

Signature __________________________ Date __________
Print name here: __________________________

Consent obtained by: __________________________ Date __________
Appendix D

Interview Protocol
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. When did you start working at the Western Herald?
2. What jobs/positions have you held at the WH since you started?
3. Who was the editor-in-chief when you first began?
4. Have you noticed any major changes at the Herald this past semester? Can you give me an example?
5. Do you think any of these changes are the result of the personalities and working styles of the staff, or of their seniority at the Herald?
6. Any other reasons why you think these changes have occurred?
7. I notice a lot of activity in the newsroom takes place around the center pillar in the newsroom. [Editor 7] would walk out of her office to talk to everyone in that center area, [Editor 9] would be watching YouTube videos at times, and potlucks, etc.
   a. Why do you think this happens? Give me an example.
   b. Was it the same prior to Abby becoming editor-in-chief? (Why do you think there has been a change?)
8. What is the biggest change you have observed in the newsroom since [Editor 7] became editor-in-chief? / What have other staffers said is the biggest change in the newsroom since [Editor 7] became editor-in-chief?
9. What has changed since you started working at the Western Herald?
10. What changes do you see for the Herald down the road?
11. What has remained the same since you've been at the Herald?
12. What has remained the same since [Editor 7] became editor-in-chief, compared to previous editors-in-chief? / What have other staffers said has remained the same since [Editor 7] became editor-in-chief, compared to previous editors-in-chief? (This could be a person, a place, a conversation topic, a habit, etc)
13. What do you think will stay the same at the Herald down the road?
14. Is there anything else you would like to add about change or your experiences in the Western Herald newsroom?

The following are some of the prompts that was used:
- Can you tell me about an incident/story that illustrates that?
- Examples? Such as?
- What happened next?
- Who was there?
- What did they say?
- How did you react to it?
Appendix E

Top 10 Suggestions for the *Western Herald*
TOP 10 SUGGESTIONS FOR THE WESTERN HERALD

Created together with the incoming and outgoing editors-in-chief

1) Having a Human Resources Department to help with training, development, hiring, recruiting, payroll, mediating conflicts, etc. This would help the editor-in-chief to focus on the overall goal of managing newspaper production.

2) Getting a specific team to work on editorial and opinion to avoid imposing on staff during news meetings for ideas when they have their own sections to produce.

3) Getting everyone on board with your goals and plans - make sure they know the thought process and have a chance to contribute their own ideas. In other words, get them excited and give them “ownership.”

4) Planning a master calendar for all events that must be covered (they fall around the same time every year and you can check online for them) and ensuring that everyone has a copy of it.

5) Setting long-term deadlines for occasional special sections (i.e., WMU v. CMU, Back to School, etc) and short-term deadlines for daily papers that include minor design and content changes.

6) Constantly follow up on all ideas, projects, suggestions, plan of actions, staff, etc., to ensure progress.

7) Complimenting staff on a job well done, no matter how miniscule. In most organizational communication studies, researchers found that employers do not compliment their staff as often as they should for a job well done. This often leads to de-motivation of staff and stagnant performance.
8) Socially integrating the general manager/advisor with the staff to improve communication between the two and to encourage staff to seek the advisor out as a resource, rather than viewing him as an unapproachable figure.

9) Getting a whiteboard in the conference room for planning purposes. Some people are visual learners; a white board helps facilitates discussion and helps everyone keep on track at meetings.

10) Having at least one manageable goal for the entire year to be attained by spring semester that establishes your legacy and distinguishes you from the past editor-in-chief. The staff may individualize it or modify it. As long as that goal is met at the end of the year, you have something to talk about in terms of significant achievements as editor-in-chief.
Appendix F

Approval Letter for Research Project from Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Date: October 22, 2007

To: Sandra Borden, Principal Investigator
    Ling Wei (Sarah) Lee, Student Investigator for thesis

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D. Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 07-09-17

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled “Organizational Culture and Change: Understanding a College Newspaper’s Newsroom Culture” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: October 22, 2008
Appendix G

Approval Letter for Hard Copies of Observations Notes From Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Date: January 28, 2008

To: Sandra Borden, Principal Investigator
    Ling Wei (Sarah) Lee, Student Investigator for thesis

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 07-09-17

This letter will serve as confirmation that the changes to your research project "Organizational Culture and Change: Understanding a College Newspaper's Newsroom Culture" requested in your memo dated 1/26/2008 (hard copies of observation notes with identifiers blacked out will be provided to subjects for editing) have been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

The conditions and the duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: October 22, 2008
Appendix H

Approval Letter for Interview Protocol from Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Date: February 4, 2008

To: Sandra Borden, Principal Investigator
    Ling Wei (Sarah) Lee, Student Investigator for thesis

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 07-09-17

This letter will serve as confirmation that the changes to your research project "Organizational Culture and Change: Understanding a College Newspaper’s Newsroom Culture" requested in your memo dated 2/1/2008 (interview protocol added) have been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

The conditions and the duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: October 22, 2008
Table 1

Number of times dialectical tensions were coded for each participant
Table 1

Number of times dialectical tensions were coded for each participant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding categories</th>
<th>Editor No.</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task certainty v. task uncertainty (B&amp;M: Predictability v. novelty)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran’s job experience v. Newbie’s job experience (B&amp;M: Predictability v. novelty)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The individual best way to do things v. Other editors’/staff’s ways of doing things (M&amp;B: Predictability v. novelty)</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation v. consistency (B&amp;M: Predictability v. novelty)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing the newsroom structure v. Keeping the status quo of the newsroom structure (B&amp;M: Conventionality v. uniqueness)</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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Table 1 (continued)

Number of times dialectical tensions were coded for each participant

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Table 1 (continued)

Number of times dialectical tensions were coded for each participant

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Figure 1 & 2

Western Herald newsroom layout
Figure 1 Western Herald newsroom layout

- WIDR Radio Station
- Conference Room
- Administration Room
- Copy Desk
- News Desk Area
- Waiting Area
- Mailbox
- Receptionist
- To Advertising department, Circulation department, Archival room, and Copier room
- Photo/Design Desk
- Design Desk
- Pillar
- Managing Desk
- Editor-in-chief's Office
- General Manager's Office
- Bulletin Board
- Microwave & toaster
- Stack of old newspaper
- Stack of old newspaper
- Trash bins
Figure 2 Organizational chart of the Western Herald's newsroom staff