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DIAGNOSING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE THROUGH METAPHORS AND TASK AND RELATIONSHIP ORIENTATIONS

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Abstract

Organizational culture is a system of meanings that are shared to various degrees inside the organization. Several surveys have been conducted to measure the different factors of organizational culture, but not many surveys have aimed to demonstrate the essence of organizational culture. Thus, the main contribution of the current paper is to diagnose organizational culture by highlighting connections between orientations (task and relationship) and metaphors. Task and relationship orientations are suitable for the research of organizational culture as they highlight the most general aspects in social groups. Metaphors make it possible to capture the mutual interaction between the individual and the organization by mediating peoples' ideas and thoughts about its culture. It has been shown that estimations of both orientations are related to which metaphor is being used to characterize the organization.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational culture is a complicated phenomenon, as it includes several unconscious and emotional mechanisms. It also consists of many layers, which differ from each other mainly in terms of their visibility. Some levels are tangible whereas others are so emotional and unconscious that it is a challenge to investigate how they are related to consciously given judgments. Learning more about organizational culture assumes knowing how people actually perceive organizational culture. A broader knowledge of organizational culture makes it possible to take more aspects into account while managing the culture. Thus, the diagnosis of organizational culture is an important issue. It provides the basis for more effective functioning of the organization and makes it possible to compile recruiting systems in accordance with the organizational culture. Therefore, the need to interpret and characterize organizational culture is becoming more relevant.

Usually organizations are designed to achieve certain goals, and therefore, the organizational task must be known and highly accepted by all organizational members. Aside from the organizational task, the importance of mutual relationships is crucial. Relationships enable the creation of synergy between organizational members and add value to the working environment. Therefore, on the one hand it is necessary to know how important the organizational task is for its members, and on the other hand, how important mutual relationships are.

Current research is crucial as it outlines connections between peoples' estimations of task and relationship orientations and how people describe the organization. Task and relationship orientations are suitable for researching the organizational culture as they highlight the most general aspects in social groups. To highlight perceptions, metaphors can be used, as they are excellent auxiliaries for people to express their unconscious thoughts and perceptions about their organization. Therefore, it provides an opportunity to focus on peoples' perceptions about the organization in general and consider these in managerial decisions.

The current paper aims to diagnose organizational culture by highlighting the connections between organizational orientations (task and relationship) and metaphors. The paper starts by providing an overview of previous findings about organizational culture, organizational culture orientations and metaphors. This is followed by a description of the study design and the methods used, which introduces the results, and finally, the discussion section.

2. LITERATURE OVERVIEW ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND METAPHORS

The concept of organizational culture is broad-based, somewhat ambiguous and abstract, and therefore, it can be difficult to perceive and characterize. Many authors have defined organizational culture over the last 30-40 years (Pettigrew, 1979; Smircich, 1983; Schein, 1984; Harrison, 1995) and as a result, the variety of approaches and definitions of organizational culture is considerable. Different definitions stem from the complicated pattern of organizational culture and the various mechanisms through which it could be demonstrated and researched.

The beginning of formal writing on the concept of organizational culture started with Pettigrew (1979) when he defined organizational culture through the notion of publicly and collectively accepted meanings, which operate for a given group at a given time. Organizations are systems created by humans, and organizational culture is an outcome of human activity. It is socially constructed. People create, shape, change and manage the culture according to their beliefs, values, knowledge and needs (Pettigrew, 1979).

Organizational culture has several distinctive features (e.g. a system of shared norms and values); it performs different functions in the organization (e.g. provides stability and structure for its members) and could be expressed in several ways (e.g. through

organizational symbols, myths, stories). Every approach has its own focus and combination of aspects that authors have considered to be distinctive while analyzing organizational culture. There is still no consensus on the definition of organizational culture, but there are certain aspects that most researchers agree on.

Schein (1992), Alvesson (1987, 2002), Pettigrew (1979) and Smircich (1985) argue that one of the most important features of organizational culture is that certain things are shared and held in common by groups. In his definition, Pettigrew (1979) already brings out the collective nature of organizational culture by referring that the human collective accepts certain things and this collective knowledge is used by them to interpret the processes and relationships that evolve in the organization. It presupposes that organizational members share similar values and assumptions in order to be ready to accept common meanings.

Schein (1992) stresses that the main shared element in culture is basic assumptions, which are interconnected with values that have over time become taken for granted, and therefore, are no longer questioned and discussed (Schein, 1990). These basic assumptions exist at the most unconscious level, and therefore, are among the most difficult characteristics of organizational culture to be captured. Shared values, assumptions and understandings are key elements of the functioning and sustainability of organizational culture, creating a whole that makes people differ from members of other organizations and social groups. As organizational culture is a system where values, assumptions and publicly accepted meanings are shared and held in common, it is important to understand the meaning of that sharing when discussing the concept of organizational culture.

The term "shared" in the context of organizational culture represents people's connectedness through some common process, activity or ritual in the organization, thus referring to common experience, but also stressing the value of individual contribution to the overall pattern of organizational culture (Hatch, 1997). This knowledge becomes important when the organizational culture is being either characterized or interpreted. Characterizing

organizational culture means giving an overall description of the concept, and this could be done through common understandings and assumptions about the phenomenon. One aspect, among the others, that influences estimations of organizational culture is socio-demographic characteristics. Organizational culture can be characterized by observing how it is seen by different groups (Schein, 1992). Socio-demographic groups are informative when describing organizational culture, as they help to reveal which characteristics elicit differences in the estimations of different organizational aspects. Therefore, socio-demographic characteristics can also influence members' perceptions of organizational culture.

Interpreting the culture means going deeper and trying to find the reasons why organizational culture in the current organization can be characterized accordingly. Here the individual contribution of organizational members should be taken into account. Explaining the symbols give directions in opening the organizational culture.

According to Smircich (1983), the metaphoric process, seeing one thing in terms of another, is a fundamental aspect of human thought in order to come to know the world. The use of a particular metaphor is often not a conscious thought, nor made explicit, but organizational members can infer it from the way the subject in the organization is approached, by discerning the underlying assumptions that they make about the subject. Alvesson (1995) also stresses the power of metaphors to highlight people's unconscious ideas and thoughts about the culture in their organization. Davenport (1998) claims that metaphors enable people to speak about complicated phenomena in organizations. They are used to characterize culture because they draw attention and are dense with meaning, and interpreting metaphors stays in peoples minds for a longer time. Using metaphors also narrows the concept of culture and there is a clearer distance between culture and organization (Alvesson, 1995).

The metaphorical approach has existed in management and organizational theories for a considerable time. In 1873, Herbert Spencer ascribed the organism metaphor to the organization. In

this biological structures were likened to organizational structures (Grant and Oswick, 1996). Appling the machine metaphor to organizational culture was started when the first machines were taken into use. Then it was found that organizations should be treated as machine-like structures (Morgan, 1986). Since then, two metaphors: machine and organism metaphors, have dominated in management and organizational theories (Grant and Oswick, 1996). According to the machine metaphor, the organization consists of parts that are assembled in order to function smoothly and to fulfil certain assignments. In the case of the organism metaphor, the organization is perceived to be struggling to stay alive in a changing environment (Smircich, 1983). Kendall and Kendall (1993) claim that if a respondent uses the *organism* metaphor rather than the *machine* metaphor, this reflects the involvement and ambiguity of the business world.

Even though metaphors are used more and more to characterize organizational culture there has also been some criticism of this method. Tsoukas (1993) highlights a critical aspect according to which the suitability of metaphors is impossible to measure. The aim of the current research is not to identify which metaphors describe the organization best, but to highlight the connections between metaphors and orientations of organizational culture. Alvesson (1995) provides five critical aspects related to metaphors in his book *Cultural Perspectives of Organizations.* Among others he mentions the risk of using inappropriate metaphors and the danger that a metaphor may characterize only one aspect of organizational culture while others are overlooked. The risks mentioned by Alvesson (1995) could be partly avoided by collecting a considerable volume of data from the organization. This would then reduce the probability that some aspects of the organization are overlooked.

Organizational culture can also be characterized through its orientations. These make it possible to identify the extent to which different aspects are considered important by the organization. Several researchers (Schein, 1992; Schultz, 1995; Harrison, 1995) discuss task and relationship orientations, which are considered to be most important orientations of organizational culture. Task

orientation refers to a focus on the work and the aims of the organization. Relationship orientation refers to the human side of the organization and how much mutual relations are valued in the organization (Vadi, Allik, Realo, 2002). Task and relationship orientation are suitable for studying organizational culture, as they bring forth the most general aspects in social groups. These orientations are also analysed when investigating leadership, group processes and conflict management. The way organizational members value these orientations in a certain organizational culture depends on the extent to which their assumptions overlap with the general assumptions upon which the organizational culture is based. These general assumptions are created through mutual interaction between the individual and the organization and are not easy to capture as they are the unconscious level of organizational culture. Metaphors provide access to that level.

Consequently, the authors believe that the triangulation[3] of orientations of organizational culture and metaphors is a suitable method for measuring such a multifaceted phenomenon as organizational culture. Triangulation helps to identify and analyse the nature of the organization's culture by capturing a more complete, holistic, and contextual picture of the dimensions

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[3] The concept of triangulation mentioned by Denzin (1978) is the most widely known possibility for combining different research methods. In social sciences the concept of triangulation starts with the year 1959 when Campbell and Fiske proposed the term *"multiple operationism"*. It was drawn from the necessity to use different research methods for validation so that the variety in the research results would not be elicited by the method (Campbell and Fiske, 1959). The concept of triangulation comes from the strategies of military navigation and army, where several methods are used to locate the exact destination of the objects. Denzin (1978) distinguishes several types of triangulation among which are also triangulation of data and methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation is the most widely used form of triangulation and for organizational researchers this means using several different methods to research the same phenomenon (Jick, 1979). According to Laurie and Sullivan (1991) the triangulation in its broadest sense is the combination of different methodologies and theoretical perspectives in the study of the same phenomena.

researched, and the use of multiple measures may also uncover some unique variance, which may have remained neglected when applying single methods. It is particularly at this point that qualitative methods have an important role to play by eliciting data and, through an illumination of the context, bringing researchers to conclusions not referred to which by other methods. In this sense triangulation can be applied not only when researching one phenomenon from different perspectives, but also to enrich ones understanding of a phenomenon through the emergence of new and deeper dimensions (Jick, 1979).

Similarly, more exact decisions in research into organizational culture can be made if different methods are used (Jick, 1979) – in other words, more than just repeated measurements of a single phenomenon. In addition to using different data, it also incorporates a combination of different theories, methods and perspectives. Previous research (Hämmal, 2004) has provided reason to believe that metaphors combined with orientations of organizational culture are able to lead to a deeper and more fundamental understanding of and conclusions about organizational culture.

In conclusion, it can be said that organizational culture is a diverse phenomenon that can take on different roles, perform different functions and be expressed in different ways. The idea of the current article stems from the concept of the unconscious aspects of organizational culture and how organizational members perceive and express their unconscious thoughts. Applying triangulation to this phenomenon makes it possible to highlight the connections between orientations of organizational culture and metaphors, and characterizes organizational culture by interpreting these connections. Metaphors make it possible to highlight peoples' unconscious thoughts about organizational culture, and therefore, provide interpretations for orientations of organizational culture. A deeper understanding of cultural issues in organizations is necessary to decipher what goes on within them, but even more important, to identify what may be priority issues for leaders and leadership.

3. DATA AND METHOD

The survey was implemented according to the principles of the concept of methodological triangulation. The study was designed in order to apply triangulation between orientations of organizational culture and metaphors,. The research set includes two methods. First, the self-reported questionnaire as a quantitative research method, which aims to measure orientations of organizational culture. The questionnaire provides constant variables and scores for task and relationship orientations, which in the current research are implemented as dependent variables. Secondly, interviews were used as a qualitative research method. This aimed to highlight organizational metaphors. The interviews provided discrete variables and 14 groups of metaphors, which in the current research are implemented as independent variables. Socio-demographic characteristics, such as age, education, tenure, position and gender are implemented as control variables.
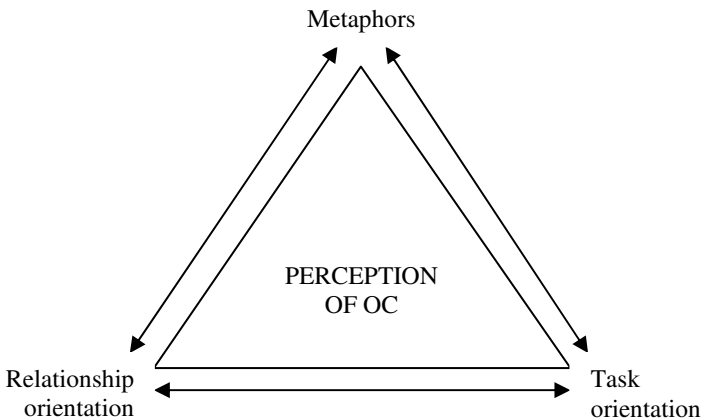
Figure 1. Connections between metaphors, orientations of organizational culture and organizational culture in the study design. Source: compiled by the authors.

The methods chosen are strongly connected to the theoretical framework. Several organizational researchers discuss task and relationship orientations as informative aspects of organizational culture. The need to add metaphors to the research design is based on their characteristic features, which make it possible to expose people's unconscious thoughts about organizational culture, and therefore, provide interpretations for orientations of organizational culture. This refers to the essence of triangulation: to enrich understandings of organizational culture through the emergence of new and deeper dimensions as a result of the combination of methods. Figure 1 illustrates the study design and the variables. The figure shows that the term organizational culture is used in the current study to symbolize the outcomes of the triangulation between metaphors and orientations of organizational culture.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics

Category	Sub-category		
Age	21-40 (A<40)	41- 71 (A>40)	Missing
	39 (52%)	33 (44%)	3 (4%)
Education	High school	Higher	Missing
	37 (50%)	31 (41%)	7 (9%)
Tenure	1-10 years (T<10)	11-… years* (T>10)	Missing
	51 (68%)	17 (23%)	7 (9%)
Position	White-collar	Blue-collar	Missing
	33 (44%)	41 (55%)	3 (4%)
Gender	Females	Males	Missing
	33 (44%)	40 (53%)	2 (3%)
Nationality	Estonian	Other	Missing
	70 (93%)	2 (3%)	3 (4%)

Notes: white-collars are office staff and blue-collars are factory staff. A<40 – age less than 40 years; A>40 – age 40 and more. T<10 - tenure less than 10 years; T>10 – tenure 10 years and more. Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of 75 questionnaires.

The sample consists of 75 members from two industrial enterprises from the Saint-Gobain Group in Estonia: Saint-Gobain Sekurit in Elva and Saint Gobain Baltiklaas in Tartu. The survey was conducted in 2006. SG Group industries, SG Sekurit and

Baltiklaas, have been operating in Estonia for 17 and 12 years respectively. The average age of people in the sample was 37.6 years (sd[4]=10.1), varying from 22 to 63 years. Average tenure was 5.7 years (sd=4.8), varying from 1 to 15 years (table 1). Socio-demographic characteristics are implemented as control variables.

The research set is a combination of two methods, quantitative and qualitative. First, the Organizational Culture Questionnaire (Vadi, Allik, Realo, 2002) was applied to the whole sample in order to receive estimations of task and relationship orientations of organizational culture. This consists of 43 statements about the organization and respondents can indicate their attitudes towards each item on a 10-point scale ranging from "completely disagree" (1 point) to "completely agree" (10 points). Eight statements out of 43 form the task orientation scale (OC1) and eight statements form the relationship orientation scale (OC2) (Appendix 1). The reliability coefficients for the current sample were found to be 0.79 for OC1 and 0.74 for OC2, which can be considered relatively high.

Secondly, a structured 5-question interview (Appendix 2) was compiled. Five interview questions aimed to highlight whether respondents perceive their organization as being like a machine or an organism, and which animal, machine, season and colour respondents use to characterize their organization. The approximate length of each interview was from ten to twenty minutes, and they were conducted with 43 randomly chosen respondents. The interviews were conducted by the authors and all answers were written down during the interview. Interviewees gave their completed Organizational Culture Questionnaires to the researcher at the beginning of the interview, and the questionnaire and interview received the same unique number so that answers could be matched during the analysis.

In order to treat metaphors as independent variables, a qualitative analysis was implemented. All metaphors and the explanations provided by the respondents were collected in the database. The

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[4] Standard deviation is a measure of variability.

explanations of the metaphors represented people's reasoning as to why they used the respective metaphor to characterize their organization. The authors brought out the core ideas behind each of these explanations and eliminated the rest. This process made it possible to concentrate the meanings behind the explanations and make them more fathomable.

All explanations were repeatedly reviewed until a certain pattern of groups under each interview question started to form. As a result, 14 subgroups, each with a numerical value, were formed. Every group was named after the majority of metaphor types in that group (i.e. domestic animals; fast wild animals; vehicles; autumn-winter). Therefore, every interview question that asked respondents to name some metaphor resulted in two to three subgroups, which could now be treated as independent variables. Metaphor groups and their contents are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Metaphor groups in SG Group industries.

Groups / number of respondents	The contents of groups
Machine vs. organism metaphor	
1. Organism / 20	There is no strict conformity. Constant irregular changes and unexpected events. The organization is alive and active. It acts chaotically and unexpectedly. Mechanisms are more precise than this organization. There are also mistakes and sicknesses, which nobody at the top-level knows about. People's emotions are important. The organization grows, develops, changes, emanates from the emotions and starts to get old in one moment.
2. Machine / 23	Organization does not pay attention to people's feelings and is focused on fulfilling the plan and giving orders. Organization consists of different parts that all have their task. Constant routine and very strict rules, accuracy and coordinated activity. Employees are considered to be flawless and their power is turned on like a machine. Employees cannot make their own decisions because the work is like clockwork, constant speed and to the plan, no wellbeing, tedious.
Animal metaphor	
1. Fast wild animals (tiger, bear, wolf, lion, cheetah) / 13	Organization develops quickly and is very flexible, trustworthy, innovative and precise. Organization makes considered decisions and investments.
2. Hardworking domestic animals (dog, horse, ant, bees) / 17	Organizational members are very hard working and well aware of what needs to be done. Organization is honest and obeys the rules. In case of problems, the workers are to be punished and in case of necessity the workers must be available.

Groups / number of respondents	The contents of groups
3. Slow and dim-witted animals (donkey, turtle, camel, cat, octopus, panther, hyena) / 10	Organization is big and very slow in making changes. It can be guileful and dangerous to the human psyche. Everything is not as it seems. Employees are not well aware of the organization's task and there is lot of struggling without knowing what direction is best.

Machine metaphor

1. Complicated mechanisms (clock, computer, bicycle, fridge) / 18	Organization is a complicated structure with many functions and parts that have their own task. All the processes must be in series. The outcome is all the same products.
2. Robots / 14	Organization has no flexibility and employees are like robots, which can be put to work according to necessity. Employees are considered to be tireless and production is the priority. People are psychically repressed.
3. Vehicles (car, machine with wheels) / 7	Organization is dynamic, quick and steady. It moves on, develops and changes. Organization is innovative and it has wider goals.

Season metaphor

1. Spring / 13	Something is happening in the organization all the time – moving, developing and changing. There are a lot of young people who bring brightness and a positive ambience. Relationships between workers are good, but not so good between the hierarchical levels.

Groups / number of respondents	The contents of groups
2. Autumn-winter / 21	There is too much struggling in the organization. Relationships are not good, too much envy and apathy. Workers are tired, depressed and feel inequity.
3. Summer / 10	Organization is strong and has a stable tempo. It is of an advanced age.
Colour metaphor	
1. Green-yellow / 12	Organizational climate is calm and positive. From time to time there are some changes and struggling, but generally relations are good.
2. Grey-blue / 18	The mood in the organization is depressing and tiring. A lot of tension, routine and no changeability. People are more tired.
3. Varicoloured-red /14	The pattern of OC is so various that it is hard to characterize. There are good and bad sides. Constant anxiety and instability. Relationships are changing and employees are very different. From time to time emotions mount up and the situation gets close to exploding, but usually talking can resolve these situations.

The number of responses to interview questions may vary slightly due to missing data.
Source: 43 interviews in SG Group industries. All metaphors and interpretations are translated from Estonian into English.
Compiled by the authors.

Data analysis was performed using STATISTICA 5.5. The main effects on dependent variables were analysed in the module *Breakdown and One-way ANOVA*. Interactions and their effects on dependent variables were analysed in the module *ANOVA/MANOVA*. Means were compared using the *post-hoc LSD test*. Socio-demographic groups were formed in modules *Frequency tables* and *Descriptive statistics*.

4. RESULTS

The current chapter will present the results of the analysis. First, estimations of task and relationship orientations by different socio-demographic groups and metaphor groups are analyzed. Secondly, interactions between socio-demographic characteristics and metaphors, and their effect on estimations of task and relationship orientations are analyzed. Conclusive tables with the following results are presented in appendix 3. Analysis showed that estimations of task orientation (OC1) and estimations of relationship orientation (OC2) do not differ significantly being 5.27 and 5.51, respectively.

First, the analysis of the different socio-demographic groups showed that differences in position, education and tenure highlight differences in estimations of OC1. The results showed that OC1 scores by white-collar workers with a higher education and shorter tenure differed significantly ($F (1, 29) = .18$, $p < .01$) from OC1 scores by blue-collar workers with a lower education and longer tenure, 5.75 and 4.50 respectively. Analysis showed similar differences for OC2. OC2 scores by blue-collar workers with a lower education and shorter tenure differed significantly ($F (1, 29) = .45$, $p < .01$) from OC2 scores by blue-collar workers with a lower education and longer tenure, 6.08 and 4.64 respectively.

Secondly, the analysis demonstrated that differences in the metaphors used bring out differences in the estimations of OC1 and OC2. The m*achine vs. organism* metaphor ($F = (1,39) = 5.69$; $p < .05$) and the *season* metaphor ($F = (2,38) = 4.60$; $p < .05$) were

those that had the main impact on OC1 scores. Participants who used the *organism* and *spring* metaphors tended to perceive organizational culture as being more task-oriented, 5.84 (SD=1.11) and 6.13 (SD=1.18) respectively, than participants who used the *machine* and *autumn-winter* metaphors, 5.04 (SD=1.04) and 5.00 (SD=0.87) respectively. S*eason* metaphors also had the main impact (F=(2,37)= 4.58; p<. 05) on OC2 scores, which differed significantly between participants using the *spring* metaphor and participants using the *autumn-winter* metaphor, 6.25 (SD=1.25) and 4.93 (SD=1.30) respectively. People who used the *spring* metaphor tended to perceive organizational culture as more task- as well as relationship-oriented than people who used the *autumn-winter* metaphor (Figure 2).
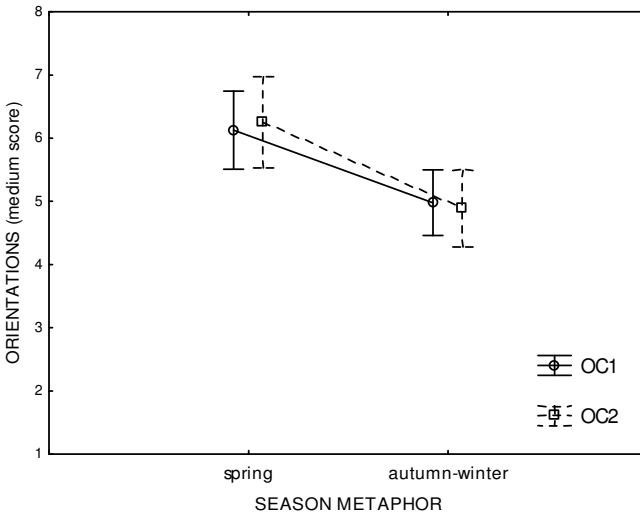
Figure 2. The main effect of season metaphors on task (OC1) and relationship (OC2) orientations

Thirdly, the MANOVA test showed differences in estimations of OC1 and OC2 due to several interactions between different socio-demographic and metaphor groups.

For OC1, an interaction appeared between age and the *machine vs. organism* metaphor (F=(1,37)=3.67; p<. 05) (Figure 3).
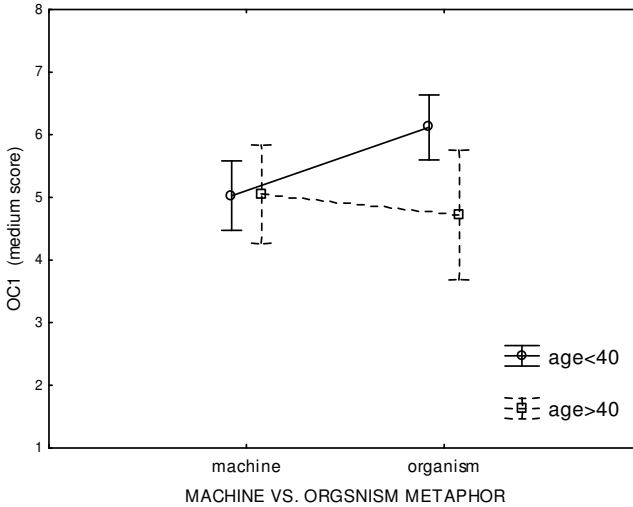
Figure 3. Interaction between age and the *machine vs. organism* metaphor for task orientation (OC1)

OC1 scores differed between the A<40 group using the *organism* metaphor and the A<40 group using the *machine* metaphor, 6.12 (SD=0.80, N=16) and 5.03 (SD=1.18, N=14) (p<. 01) respectively. OC1 scores also differed between the A<40 group using the *organism* metaphor to characterize organizational culture and the A>40 group using the *organism* metaphor, 6.12 and 4.72 (SD=1.61, N=4) (p<. 05) respectively. Younger members who used the *organism* metaphor tended to perceive organizational culture as more task-oriented than older members who used the *organism* metaphor.

The second interaction for OC1 appeared between education and the *animal* metaphor (F=(2,28)=3.96; p<. 05) (Figure 4). OC1 scores differed between the high-school education group using the *quick wild animal* metaphor to characterize organizational culture and the high-school education group using the *slow and dim-witted animal* metaphor, 6.31 (SD=0.88, N=4) and 4.38 (SD=1.26, N=6) (p<. 01) respectively. The scores also differed between the high-school education group using the *slow and dim-witted animal*

metaphor to characterize organizational culture and the higher education groups using either the *hardworking domestic animal* metaphor or *slow and dim-witted animal* metaphor to characterize organizational culture, 4.38 (SD=1.26, N=6), 5.97 (SD=0.79, N=4) (p<. 05) and 6.13 (SD=0.88, N=3) (p<. 01) respectively. Participants with high-school education using the *quick wild animal* metaphor tended to perceive organizational culture as being more task-oriented than members with high-school education using the *slow and dim-witted animal* metaphor.
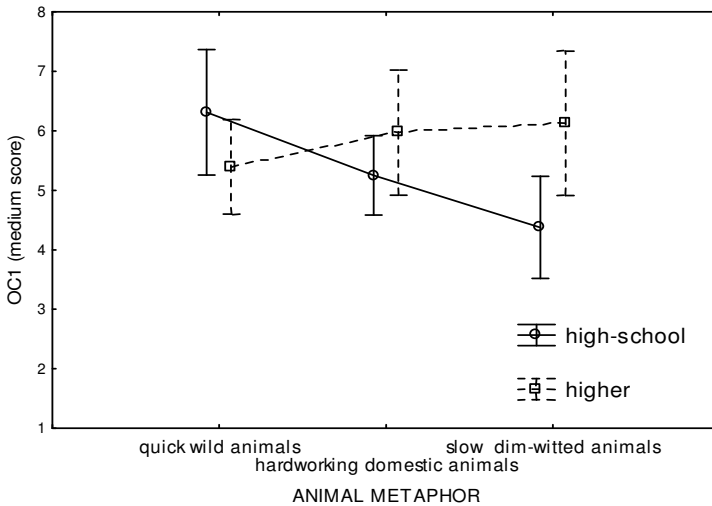
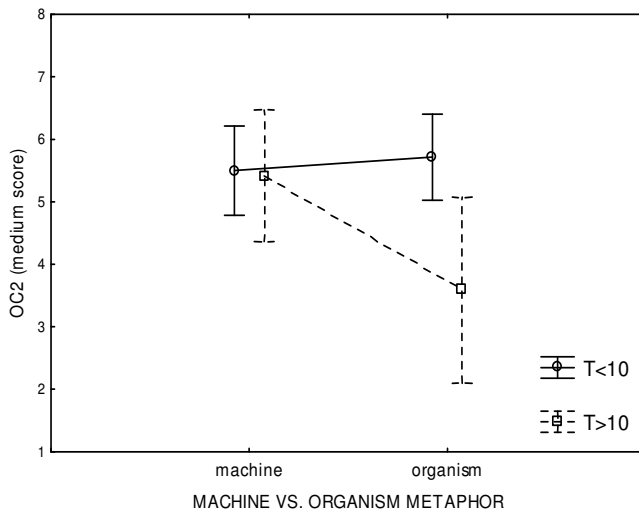**Figure 4.** Interaction between education and *animal* metaphors for task orientation (OC1)

Interaction for OC2 appeared between gender and *animal* metaphors (F=(2,30)=3.72; p<. 05) (Figure 5). OC2 scores differed between females using the *slow and dim-witted animal* metaphor (3.00) (SD=1.06, N=2) and all other groups: females and males using the *quick wild animal* metaphor 6.05 (SD=1.39, N=5)(p<. 01) and 5.60 (SD=0,92, N=6) (p<. 01); females and males using the *hardworking domestic animal* metaphor for OC, 5.98 (SD=1.35, N=10) (p<. 01) and 5.23 (SD=1.13, N=6) (p<. 05); males using the *slow and dim-witted animal* metaphor, 5.23 (SD=1.00, N=7)(p<. 05) respectively. Therefore females using the

quick wild animal metaphor tended to perceive organizational culture as being more relationship-oriented than females using the *slow and dim-witted animal* metaphor.
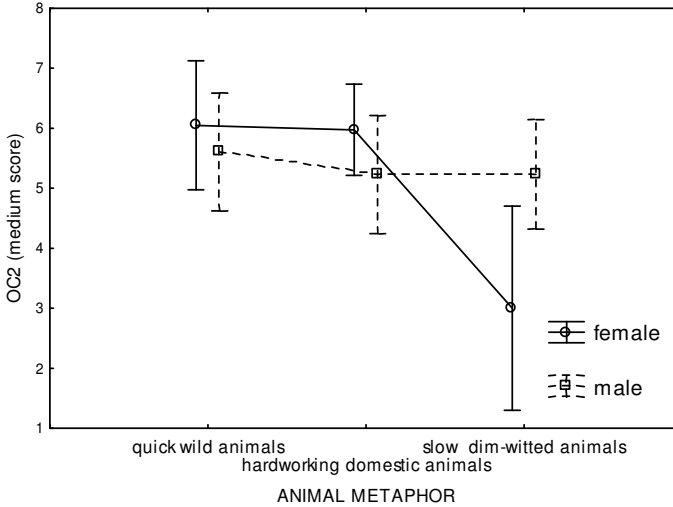

Figure 5. Interaction between gender and the *animal* metaphor for relationship orientation (OC2)

The second interaction for OC2 appeared between tenure and the *machine vs. organism* metaphor (F=(1,32)=4.02; p<. 05) (Figure 6). OC2 scores differed between the T>10 group using the *organism* metaphor (3.58, SD=1.26, M=3) and all other groups: the T<10 group using the *machine* metaphor, 5.50 (SD=1.31, N=13) (p<. 05); the T<10 group using the *organism* metaphor, 5.71 (SD=1.19, N=14) (p<. 05) and the T>10 group using the *machine* metaphor, 5.42 (SD=1.35, N=6) (p<. 05) respectively. This means that people with short tenure using the *organism* metaphor tended to perceive organizational culture as being more relationship-oriented than members with long tenure using the *organism* metaphor.

Figure 6. Interaction between tenure and the *machine vs organism* metaphor for relationship orientation (OC2)

Analysis showed an interaction between position, education and the *machine vs organism* metaphor for OC2 (Figure 7).
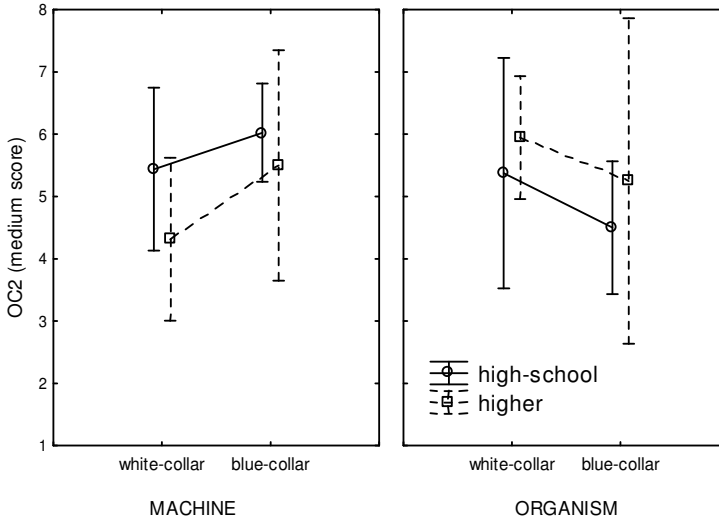
Figure 7. Interaction between education, position and machine vs organism metaphor for relationship orientation (OC2)

The estimations of relationship orientation differed significantly (p<.05) between blue-collar workers with a high-school education using the *organism* metaphor and blue-collar workers with high-school education using the *machine* metaphor, 4.50 (SD=1.65, N=6) and 6.02 (SD=1.41, N=11) respectively.

An overview of the previous results and some additional connections that were not presented among the results are presented in table 3.

Table 3. Socio-demographic characteristics and metaphors that influence the perception of OC1 and OC2 in SG Group industries in Estonia

	Higher orientation	Lower orientation
OC1	• Under 10 years tenure, higher education and white-collar workers • *Organism* metaphor • *Spring* metaphor • High-school education and *quick wild animal* metaphor	• Over 10 years tenure, high-school education and blue-collar workers • *Machine* metaphor • *Autumn-winter* metaphor • High-school education and *slow and dim-witted animal* metaphor
OC2	• *Spring* metaphor • High-school education and *machine* metaphor • Blue collar workers and *machine* metaphor • Women and *quick wild animal* metaphor	• *Autumn-winter* metaphor • High-school education and *organism* metaphor • Blue collar workers and *organism* metaphor • Women and *slow and dim-witted animal* metaphor

Source: composed by the authors on the basis of 75 questionnaires and 43 interviews.

The characteristics that influence task and relationship orientations are divided into the categories of lower and higher orientation. In the case of interactions between socio-demographic characteristics and metaphors, only the combinations that elicited the two most extreme results in the groups are presented.

Table 4 provides an overview of the pattern of organizational culture in SG Group industries.

Table 4. Organizational culture in SG Group industries in Estonia

	Higher estimations	Lower estimations
OC1	Organization is perceived to be… …developing, growing, considerate towards employees, positive, full of ideas and having good relations. …flexible, trustworthy, innovative, considerate and precise.	Organization is perceived to… …have strict rules, constant routine, bad relations, accuracy and coordinated activity. Employees are considered to be flawless and they cannot make their own decisions, they have little wellbeing and find their organization tedious. …be big, slow and having an incomprehensible task.
OC2	Organization is perceived to… …be developing, positive, full of ideas and having good relations. …flexible, trustworthy, innovative, considerate and precise. …have strict rules, constant routine, bad relations, accuracy and coordinated activity. Employees are considered to be flawless and they cannot make their own decisions.	Organization is perceived to be… …developing, growing, considerate towards employees. …depressing, tiring and having bad relations. …big, slow and having an incomprehensible task.

Source: composed by authors on the basis of 75 questionnaires and 43 interviews.

5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The analysis demonstrates that orientations of organizational culture and organizational metaphors are connected in certain ways. These connections make it possible to obtain a broader understanding of the estimations of task and relationship

orientations. In the following section the connections between organizational orientations and metaphors within organizational culture will be discussed. Based on the connections and their interpretations, managerial implications can be drawn.

Several significant differences in reference to orientations of organizational culture were revealed when metaphors were applied. Organizational culture in the SG Group industries in Estonia exhibits a rather multifarious pattern. Analysis enabled us to connect higher estimations of task orientation with the *organism*, *spring* and *fast wild animal* metaphors, and higher estimations of relationship orientation with *machine, spring* and *fast wild animal* metaphors. The analysis demonstrates that it is possible to "translate" the tacit level of organizational culture via explaining the estimations given for two substantial orientations of organizational culture. This is important when managerial decisions are being applied in the organization because it helps to direct the implications to certain groups in the organization. The current research enables us to arrive at quite considerable explanations of task and relationship orientations in the SG Group industries in Estonia through metaphors.

Socio-demographic characteristics distinguish estimations of orientations. In reference to task orientation, the interaction between education, position and tenure was an important result. Higher estimations of task orientation were connected with higher education, higher position and shorter tenure. This outcome is logical as a higher position generally demands higher education and people who have worked in the organization for a shorter time are either optimistic or have not yet got to know the organization, and therefore, give higher estimations of aspects related to task orientation.

The organism and *machine* metaphors differentiate estimations of orientations. Lower estimations of task orientation could be interpreted through the *machine* metaphor according which the culture is indifferent towards people's feelings, is oriented towards filling the plan and giving orders, while employees find their organization tedious and have little well-being. This shows that as aspects related to people's well-being while accomplishing the task

are not being perceived to be important for the organization, the estimations of task orientation are low. According to the *organism* metaphor, the culture is characterized as active, chaotic, developing and considerate towards people's emotions, and when the organization is perceived to care about employee well-being, rewards them for good work and allows positive changes to take place, the estimations of task orientation are higher.

Age and tenure differentiate estimations of task and relationship orientations among employees who perceive their organization organically, and therefore, use the *organism* metaphor to describe it. Younger respondents with shorter tenure give higher estimations of task and relationship orientation than older people with a longer tenure. This may be due to younger people's enthusiasm or their shorter organizational experience and incipient demands towards the organization that make them estimate the orientations higher. At the same time, despite the fact that older people also perceive organizational culture organically, they give lower estimations to both orientations. They may have already established higher demands on the organization, and even though they may feel the organization is developing, dissatisfaction with some other aspects (i.e. freedom of activity, reward system and hierarchy between subordinates and superiors, which were often mentioned in the interviews) may be overwhelming. In respect to relationship orientation, the results indicate that during the first years in the organization people consider communication and good relations with colleagues more important than in later years in the same organization.

Metaphors differentiate results inside groups coherent by their socio-demographic characteristics. Blue-collar workers with a high-school education using the *machine* metaphor gave higher estimations of relationship orientation than employees with the same socio-demographic characteristics using the *organism* metaphor. It seems that employees working in the factory consider it natural that there is more order and less randomness in mutual relationships. When employees in the factory can take a break and for how long is very strictly determined. This comes from the character of the work. It predisposes the evolution of accepted communication standards, elicits the feeling of togetherness

between employees and makes it possible to discuss important job-related matters with each other, as employees know one another.

The *animal* metaphor differentiated estimations of task orientation among employees with high-school education and estimations of relationship orientation among females. Females and employees with a high-school education using the *slow and dim-witted animal* metaphor characterized the organization as being big and very slow to make changes, and employees as not being well aware of the organization's task as a result of which there is lot of struggling without knowing the correct direction. They perceived the organizational culture to be less task- and relationship oriented than females and employees with high-school education using the *wild animal* metaphor and who characterized the organization as making considered decisions, investments and developing quickly and as very flexible, trustworthy, innovative and precise. Higher estimations of task orientation were given by these workers because they may have perceived the organization as considering positive changes and a great freedom of activity eliciting innovativeness and flexibility to be important. These results are interesting as the same demographic characteristics elicited different estimations of task orientation. As those employees said themselves, workers are not well aware of the organization's task and changes take place slowly.

Higher estimations of relationship orientation may stem from the perception of a trustworthiness that encourages people to form more relationships with one another. Lower estimations may stem from the struggling in the organization that causes disorderliness where the formation of basic mechanisms for relationships is hindered. The fact that employees in SG Group industries may feel that the organization is still relationship oriented even though it is operating mechanically, may come from their subjective comparison with other industrial enterprises where there are even less opportunities for workers to form relationships.

Another metaphor that showed differences in both orientations was the *season* metaphor. Employees using the *spring* metaphor and characterizing organization as follows: "*Something is happening in the organization all the time, moving, developing and changing.*

There are a lot of young people who bring a brightness and positive ambience. Relationships between workers are good, but not so good between hierarchies," gave higher estimations to both orientations. Task orientation is estimated highly as these employees consider positive changes important in the organization and relationship orientation is estimated high because workers have good relationships, they know one another, can discuss different matters and have a strong feeling of togetherness inside the group when it comes to relations with higher levels of the hierarchy.

Employees who characterized their organization using the autumn-winter metaphor as follows: "There is too much struggling in the organization; relationships are not good, too much envy and apathy; workers are tired, depressed and feel an inequity," gave lower estimations of both orientations. Task orientation for these workers may be estimated low because they perceive that the organization does not pay attention to people's well-being and does not reward them enough for their good work. Relationship orientation may be estimated low because people have a lot of information about each other that is perceived to cause envy, and therefore the formation of good relationships is hindered.

The higher and lower estimations of task and relationship orientations are explained through the metaphors. In the case of task orientation, similar estimations stem from a similar pattern of perception of the organization. In the case of relationship orientation, members with a totally different pattern of perception of the organization give similar estimations. This implies that estimations of relationship orientation are based on complicated mechanisms, which demand further investigation. The practical importance of these results could be viewed from the perspective of changing and managing organizational culture. Their overall practical importance lays in a deeper knowledge of the pattern of organizational culture. Information about which socio-demographic groups are important from the standpoint of organizational culture makes it possible to manage the processes in the organization.

In everyday practice more attention should be paid to older members and members with high-school education who tend to perceive a deficit in aspects related to accomplishing the organizational task. They may be dissatisfied with the well-being of the employees or afraid to make mistakes. Also, decisions regarding organizational development and its consequences should be introduced to all workers in order to involve them. This helps them understand the aims of the organization and which goal the members should help to accomplish. It also helps blue-collar workers to perceive the distance between hierarchies in a slightly more positive light as they sense their importance in the overall development of the organization.

A considerable proportion of blue-collar workers perceive that organizational culture is not very relationship oriented. Based on the current sample it can be said that in the factory where the work is not very dynamic, the employees highly value all opportunities offered by the organization to form relationships. When people cannot leave their workplace when they please, they have fewer opportunities to communicate with each other. The ten-minute breaks after every hour and a half are not enough to satisfy the employees' communication needs. Several employees in the interviews brought out that the collective vacation that workers used to have in summer is not possible anymore. Also, the simultaneous holiday for husbands and wives working in the same factory is not allowed. When common events are organized by the organization then most of the employees have to be at work. Hence, the opportunities for workers to communicate with each other outside the factory are being limited by the organization itself. Therefore, such organizations should pay more attention to providing organized social activities for their employees whose mutual communication is otherwise limited due to the characteristics of the job.

Information about organizational culture through metaphors provides an understanding about how an organization is perceived when higher or lower estimations are given to task and relationship orientations. Such knowledge enables leaders to manage organizational processes. When the organization is aimed at mechanizing the work and organizational processes and at forming

strict communication rules, the employees tend to consider the organization to be less oriented to task accomplishment. Strictly organized work reduces synergy between the workers and opportunities to treat every problem according to its individual characteristics and offer new ideas and innovative solutions. Task-oriented organizational culture provides flexibility in organizational processes, consideration towards the employees and acceptance of new ideas from every hierarchical level.

In the case of relationship orientation, further research is needed, as it seems that the patterns and explanatory mechanisms behind it are much more complicated than in the case of task orientation. The results showed that there are different estimations of relationship orientation between groups using similar metaphors to describe their organization. For further research the dimension of values and personality traits could be taken into account, as estimations of organizational culture are often subjective and may therefore depend on the person.

The results of the current research enable us to conclude that depending on the organization, the organizational culture should be managed by paying attention to how people describe the organization and what they consider important. When people estimate the orientations of organizational culture highly, the probability that they are themselves more oriented to aspects related to the tasks and relationships in the organization may increase.

The current analysis proved to be informative while analyzing and interpreting organizational culture. Therefore, it could be used to gain a more thorough understanding of organizational culture. One limitation that should be kept in mind is that the approach to organizational culture in the current research is quite specific and detailed. A certain reduction is inevitable when analyzing such a broad-based and abstract phenomenon as organizational culture, and there might be hidden aspects of organizational culture that the current research does not show.

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KOKKUVÕTE

Organisatsioonikultuuri diagnoosimine läbi metafooride ning ülesande- ja suhteorientatsiooni

Kultuuri kujundamisel ja juhtimisel on suur mõju kogu ettevõtte efektiivsusele ja seetõttu on hakatud organisatsioonikultuuri tähtsustama ka paljude praktikute ja juhtide poolt. Organisatsioonikultuuri diagnoosimine ja iseloomustamine on keerukas kuna ta koosneb tasanditest mille olemasolu ja sisu organisatsiooni liikmed ei teadvusta. Nende tasandite sisu toomine organisatsiooniliikmete teadvusesse on keeruline, kuid võimaldaks rikastada seniseid kultuuriuuringuid põhjalikema arusaamadega sellest keerulisest ja abstraktsest nähtusest. Põhjalikum organisatsioonikultuuri tundmine võimaldab võtta kultuuri juhtimisel arvesse rohkem aspekte, muuhulgas ka neid alateadvuslikke komponente, millel organisatsioonikultuur peamiselt põhinebki.

Mitmed uurijad on eristanud organisatsioonikultuuris kahte olulist orientatsiooni – ülesande ja suhete. Ülesande orientatsioon peegeldab, millisena tajuvad töötajad ülesande täitmisega seotud aspekte ja hinnangud suhteorientatsioonile näitavad, kuidas tajuvad töötajad suhete soodustamisega seotud aspekte. Inimeste hinnangud sellele, milline on organisatsioonikultuur läbi ülesande ja suhte orientatsiooni nende organisatsioonis sõltuvad sellest, millisena organisatsioonikultuuri tajutakse. Tajutud kultuuri aitavad vahendada metafoorid, mille kaudu inimesed saavad väljendada oma alateadvuslikke eeldusi ja arusaamu organisatsioonist, võimaldades kirjeldada abstraktseid nähtusi läbi tuttavate kujundite.

Käesolevas uuringus rakendatakse organisatsioonikultuuri diagnoosimiseks metodoloogilist triangulatsiooni[5] ehk teisisõnu kvantitatiivse (organisatsiooni orientatsioone mõõtev küsimustik)

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[5] Triangulatsioon pakub mooduse seostada omavahel kahte erinevat uurimismeetodit, et rakendada samaaegselt mõlema meetodi tugevaimaid omadusi ning kompenseerida nende nõrkusi.

ja kvalitatiivse (metafoore selgitav intervjuu) uurimismeetodi kooslust. Käesoleva uuringu unikaalsus tuleneb võimalusest uurida organisatsioonikultuuri alateadvuslikke aspekte rakendades selleks triangulatsiooni metafooride ning ülesande ja suhte orientatsioonide vahel. Uuringu eesmärk on diagnoosida organisatsioonikultuuri läbi ülesande- ja suhteorientatsiooni seoste metafooridega.

75 osalejaga empiiriline uurimus viidi kahes Saint-Gobain Gruppi kuuluvas tööstusettevõttes läbi 2006 aastal. Vastajatel paluti täita 43-st väitest koosnev organisatsioonikultuuri küsimustik (Vadi, Allik, Realo, 2002), mille 8 väidet moodustavad suhteorientatsiooni skaala ja 8 väidet ülesandeorientatsiooni skaala ning selgitamaks välja organisatsiooni kultuuri iseloomustamiseks kasutatavad metafoorid viidi 43 vastajaga läbi struktureeritud intervjuu mis koosnes 5 küsimusest. Uuringusse kaasati sõltumatute muutujatena ka sotsiaaldemograafilised andmed, millest moodustati vastavad grupid.

Analüüsi näitas, et hinnangud ülesandeorientatsioonile olid madalamad kui organisatsiooni iseloomustati metafoori kaudu stagneerununa, depressiooni ja väsimust tekitavana, suurena, hoolimatuna oma töötajate suhtes ning ebaselge eesmärgiga. Järelikult ei taju suur osa töötajad, et nad oleksid organisatsioonile olulised või et organisatsioon hooliks nende heaolust või tunnustaks neid. Kõrgemaid hinnanguid nii suhte- kui ülesandeorientatsioonile andsid lühema tööstaažiga nooremad töötajad, kes tajusid organisatsiooni arenevana, positiivsena, ideederohkena, usaldusväärsena, hoolivana, täpsena ning heade omavaheliste suhetega. Noorematel töötajatel ei pruugi olla välja kujunenud kindlaid nõudmisi, mida organisatsioon peaks täitma või ei ole tekkinud töörutiini ja seega ollakse oma hinnangutes optimistlikumad.

Hinnangutes suhteorientatsioonile esines mõningast vastuolulisust. Kõrgemaid hinnanguid andsid naissoost töötajad, ning madalama positsiooni ja haridusega töötajad, kes küll tajusid organisatsiooni mehaanilisena, kuid samas ka usaldusväärse, hooliva, täpse, ideederohke, innovaatilise ja heade omavaheliste suhetega. Selline tulemus võib olla tingitud asjaolust, et tehases töötavad inimesed,

kel ei ole võimalik omavoliliselt masinate juurest lahkuda muul ajal kui selleks ettenähtud puhkehetkedel, mistõttu nad hindavad kõrgelt organisatsiooni poolt võimaldatavaid 10-minutilisi pause iga pooleteise tunni tagant ning ka aeg-ajalt korraldatavaid ühiseid suve- ja talvepäevi.

Igapäeva praktikas võiksid SG Grupi ettevõtted kaasata ka tehases töötavaid inimesi rohkem otsustusprotsessidesse ja julgustada neid esitama omapoolseid ideid ilma hirmuta eksimise ees. Et muuta organisatsioonikultuuri rohkem suhetele orienteerituks, peaks alustama sellest, et pakkuda töötajatele senisest enam võimalusi omavaheliseks suhtlemiseks.

Kokkuvõttes võimaldas triangulatsioon tuua välja ka mõned üldisemad mustrid organisatsioonikultuuris:

Tööstaaži ja vanuse koosmõju omab olulist mõju hinnangutes organisatsiooni orientatsioonidele. Alla 40-aastased lühema tööstaažiga töötajad annavad kõrgemaid hinnangud organisatsioonikultuuri orientatsioonidele.

Hinnangud ülesande ja suhte orientatsioonidele on seotud sellega, kas töötajad tajuvad organisatsiooni organismi või masinana. Orientatsioonid pälvivad madalamaid hinnanguid kui organisatsiooni tajutakse mehaanilisena ning kõrgemaid hinnanguid kui organisatsiooni tajutakse orgaanilisena.

Edasise uuringu raames tuleks kaaluda ka isiksuseomaduste või indiviidiväärtuste dimensioonide kaasamist. Kuna organisatsioonikultuuri tajumine ja iseloomustamine on sageli subjektiivne protsess võivad hinnangud teatud määral sõltuda ka individuaalsetest erinevustest.

Appendix 1

Table 5. Statements of task and relationship factors (Vadi, Allik, Realo, 2002)

TASK ORIENTATION	RELATIONSHIP ORIENTATION
IN OUR ORGANIZATION …	IN OUR ORGANIZATION …
… people are proud of their organization	… employees know one another
… people are rewarded for their good work	… accepted communication standards exist
… everyone has a great freedom of activity	… [people] know about each others' personal lives
… people are not afraid of making mistakes	… in case of mistakes one feels embarrassed in front of the other members of the organization
… positive changes constantly take place	… in tough situations there is a strong feeling of togetherness
… differences between subordinates and superiors are not accentuated	… [people] know about one each others' hobbies and out-of-work activities
… people concentrate more on their own needs than on the goals of the organization[R]	… [people] help one another in job-related problems
… people's well-being is important	… all important matters are discussed with each other

Notes: [R] item is reversed for scoring. Features are translated from Estonian into English by authors.

<div align="right">**Appendix 2**</div>

Questions for the interview[6]

Would you characterize your organization as a *machine or a organism*? Why?

If you had to compare your organization with an animal, then what animal would it be? Why?

If you compared your organization with a machine, then what machine would it be? Why?

If you had to compare your organization with a season, then which season would it be? Why?

If you had to compare your organization with a color, then what color would it be? Why?

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[6] Compiled on the basis of interview conducted by V. Vaarik in his research "Organisatsioonikultuuri metafooriline käsitlus" (2002).

<div align="right">**Appendix 3**</div>

<div align="center">**Overview of the main research results**</div>

Table 6. Estimations on OC1 and OC2 in different metaphor groups

Metaphor group		OC1			OC2	
		N	*means*	*SD*	*means*	*SD*
Machine vs. organism	machine	23	5.04	1.04	…	…
	organism	20	5.84	1.11	…	…
Season	spring	13	6.13	1.18	6.25	1.25
	autumn-winter	21	5.00	0.87	4.93	1.30

* *Remark*: only statistically significant results are presented in the tables.
* M (SD; N) – medium score (standard deviation; number of respondents).
  Remark: number of cases may differ due to missing data.   *Source*: compiled by the authors on the basis of 43 interviews.

Table 7. Interactions for OC1 and OC2 between metaphors and socio-demographic groups

OC1		Age		Education	
Metaphor group		*A<40*	*A>40*	*High-school*	*Higher*
Machine vs. organism	*machine*	6.12 (0.8; 16)*	…	…	…
	organism	5.03 (1.18; 14)	4.72 (1.61; 4)	…	…
Animal	*fast wild animals*	…	…	6.31 (0.88; 4)	…
	hardworking domestic animals	…	…	…	5.97 (0.79; 4)
	slow and dim-witted animals	…	…	4.38 (1.26; 6)	6.13 (0.88; 3)

OC2		Gender		Tenure	
Metaphor group		*women*	*men*	*T<10*	*T>10*
Machine vs. organism	*machine*	…	…	5.50 (1.31; 13)	5.42 (1.35; 6)
	organism	…	…	5.71 (1.19; 14)	3.58 (1.26; 3)
Animal	*fast wild animals*	6.05 (1.39; 5)	5.60 (0.92; 6)	…	…
	hardworking domestic animals	5.98 (1.35; 10)	5.23 (1.13; 6)	…	…
	slow and dim-witted animals	3.00 (1.06; 2)	5.23 (1.00; 7)	…	…

* *Remark*: only statistically significant results are presented in the tables.
* M (SD; N) – medium score (standard deviation; number of respondents).
   Remark: number of cases may differ due to missing data. *Source*: compiled by the authors on the basis of 43 interviews.