FEMA and DHS's Response to Hurricane Katrina through the Lens of Structuration Theory

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Hurricane Katrina was the biggest natural disaster in the U.S. history, claiming over 1300 lives and destroying property worth an estimated $96 billion (White House, 2005, pp. 5 & 7). The federal response to the hurricane by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), an agency under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), was widely criticized as shockingly poor. Not surprisingly, FEMA's Katrina response became the subject of several congressional investigations and a White House review. At a hearing of one such investigation, Senator Susan Collins called FEMA's response to the hurricane a "failure" and added that DHS shared the responsibility for the failure (2006,*"Statement"*).

DHS was created after 9/11 as a unified department to deal with national emergencies of all types, be they natural disasters or terrorist incidents. Prior to DHS, FEMA had been the main federal agency "charged with preparing for and responding to both natural and man-made disasters" (www. fema.gov). However, FEMA could not on its own prevent or prepare for possible terrorist incidents, which required involvement of law enforcement agencies (Grunwald & Glasser, 2005). Therefore, FEMA was merged into the newly-created DHS, which also included departments and agencies concerned with law enforcement (www. dhs.gov).

FEMA's merger with DHS created problems typical of organizational mergers. Conflicting views prevailed over the areas for which FEMA was responsible and the resources to which it was entitled" (Grunwald & Glasser, 2005). For example, Michael Brown, FEMA's chief when Hurricane Katrina struck, told *The Washington Post* that DHS, due to its focus on preventing terrorism, had divested FEMA of most of its "preparedness functions" (Grunwald & Glasser, 2005). These functions, according to Brown, enabled FEMA to train and exercise its "first responders," emergency workers at local and state level who are the first to respond to emergencies (Grunwald & Glasser, 2005). Brown also told the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs that "there's the whole clash of cultures between DHS' mission to prevent terrorism and FEMA's mission to respond to and to prepare for responding to disasters of whatever nature" (Collins, 2006, *"Statement"*). Additionally, Brown complained of "structural problems stemming from FEMA being made a part of the Department of Homeland Security" ("Brown says," 2006). Likewise, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs concluded in its report that "Hurricane Katrina exposed flaws in the structure of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that are too substantial to mend" (2006, p. 607).

This paper investigates the "cultural clash" and "structural problems" emanating from FEMA's merger with DHS using Anthony Giddens's (1984) theory of structuration. Structuration theory

provides a useful lens with which to examine the mutually dependent relationship between structure and agency in organizations. The mutual relationship between structure and agency may help us understand organizational communication better rather than approaches that emphasize either agency at the expense of structure (hermeneutics) or vice versa (structuralism) (Giddens, 1984, p. 26). Framed in terms of structuration theory, my paper asks the following question: How can professional communication explore some of the structural problems FEMA faced from its subordination to DHS during their Katrina response while also highlighting the agency exercised by the respective heads of FEMA and DHS during their response to the hurricane?

To answer this question, I analyze using structuration theory two memos written by the respective heads of FEMA and DHS during their response to Hurricane Katrina. My reasons for selecting these two memos are both simple and strategic. At the outset, these were the only two FEMA and DHS memos I found on the internet. More importantly, however, these memos are written by the heads of FEMA and DHS and provide valuable if partial insight into the leadership discourses of these organizations, thus throwing inevitable light on issues of agency, power, and ideology in these organizations. Furthermore, both memos were written in response to Hurricane Katrina, thus providing a common— hence comparable—context for my analysis of the memos.

The following sources provide contextual information for memo analysis: reports on the federal response to the hurricane by various congressional investigations and a White House review, press reports and articles on the subject available online, the National Response Plan (NRP), and the websites of DHS and FEMA. In what follows, I first provide a brief overview of structuration theory, followed by a description of my use of the theory as an analytical framework. Next, I analyze the memos through the lens of structuration theory, supplementing my analysis with contextual information surrounding the memos. I conclude with a brief summary of my analysis and its limitations.

Structuration Theory: An Overview

Structuration theory proposes a "duality of structure" that empowers structure as well as agent (Giddens, 1984, p. xxi). The theory posits that structure is both an outcome of acts of agents and a medium through which those agents act (Giddens, 1984, 374). Put differently, structure both provides the framework for agents' acts (as a medium) and is reproduced as a result of those acts (outcome). Giddens (1984) links structure and agency through power, which according to him enables as well as constrains agents (p. 175). All agents, including those in subordinate positions, have some power and can effect changes to structure (Giddens, 1984, p. 16).

Structure consists of organizational rules and resources (Giddens, 1984, p. 377). Rules are of two types: those that give meaning and those that regulate (Giddens, 1984, p. 18). Resources are "authoritative"— an individual's authority over and ability to interact with other agents—and "allocative," an individual's access to material resources (Giddens, 1984, p. xxxi).

Organizational and management communication scholars have long used structuration theory to examine relationships between structures and agents in organizations (Sillince, 2007; Dennis,

2006; Luo, 2006; Kuhn & Nelson, 2002; Murphy, 2002; Fairhurst et al., 2002; Yates & Orlikowski, 1992; Filby & Willmott, 1988; Knights & Willmott, 1987; Riley, 1983). In comparison, although rhetoric and professional communication scholars have acknowledged the usefulness of the theory to examine organizational discourses (Suchan, 2006; Amidon, 2005; Winsor, 2003; Schryer, 2000), few have used it as an analytical framework to examine these discourses.

Among studies in rhetoric and professional communication using structuration theory as an analytical framework, Herndl (1993) analyzed a scientific article to show how the article's excellent "descriptive" analysis of a scientific discourse failed to highlight power and ideological issues of the discourse. Herndl and Taylor (1993) also presented a paper discussing a discursive struggle at a missile range site using structuration theory as an analytical framework. Herndl and Taylor (1993) emphasized the usefulness of the theory in understanding and implementing resistance to dominant discursive structures (p. 7). Suchan (2006) echoed Herndl and Taylor in describing structuration theory as a "useful lens to understand how communication routines and norms form and why they may be difficult to change" (p. 47). It is clear from my brief literature review that structuration theory as a framework for analysis of organizational discourses has not been sufficiently utilized by rhetoric and professional communication scholars. Next, I describe the framework for my analysis of the memos.

My Analytical Framework

My analytical framework includes Giddens's three interlinked "dimensions of structure," namely, "signification," "domination," and "legitimation," and related concepts of "ideology" and "reification" (Giddens, 1984, pp. 30-31). "Signification" refers to communicative "signs" or "modes of discourse" in organizations (Giddens, 1984, pp. 31-32). Prasad (2005) provides a welcome elaboration of the term "signification" by including among the meanings of the term "rules, scripts, codes, and conventions of communication" (p. 187). "Domination" ("power") refers to control over "authoritative" and "allocative" resources (Giddens, 1984, p. 33). "Signification" and "domination" are interlinked in that "signs," as mediums, can constrain (or limit) acts of agents, but "signs" can also allow agents to gain "power" ("domination"), helping them to reproduce "signs" (outcomes) (Giddens, 1984, p. 31). "Legitimation" refers to "domination" of certain discourses ("signs") over others in organizations achieved through "ideology," or signs controlled by dominant groups in the organization (Giddens, 1984, p. 33). Moreover, signs, in their ideological form, may be subject to "reification," taking on an appearance of having fixed or "thing-like properties" (Giddens, 1984, p. 180). In summary, then, structuration theory posits that "signification" and "domination," through "ideology" or "reification," lead to "legitimation" of certain discourses over others in organizations. I now describe how I use my analytical framework.

My analysis of the two memos is divided in two parts. First, I discuss "signification" and "domination". These two go together, as they are mutually dependent, signs being means for "domination" ("power") and "domination" being a rationale for signs (Giddens, 1984, p. 31). I first identify from the memos a sign or a pair (or a group) of signs that appear to work together strategically. Then, I provide a brief analysis of how the "sign(s)"—or the rule(s), script(s), code(s), convention(s), or "mode(s) of discourse"—frames (or limits) the memo writer's actions,

yet at the same time allowing him to use power ("domination"). I support my textual analysis of the memos with contextual evidence where appropriate.

In the second part of my analysis, I take up ideology, reification, and "legitimation", as the use of the first two achieves the third. Here, I identify from the memos, and the surrounding contextual information, signs that appear ideologically oriented or reified. Then, I discuss the ramifications of these signs for actors and structures in FEMA and DHS.

Taken together, the two parts of my analysis of the two memos show how FEMA's merger with DHS during their Katrina response created structural constraints for FEMA and allowed DHS to dominate FEMA. My analysis also shows how both Michael Brown, FEMA's head when Katrina struck, and Michael Chertoff, DHS's Secretary, used signs in an enabling manner to gain approval and power for themselves and their respective organizations. In summary, my analysis of the memos nods to the assertion of structuration theory that signs can both be limiting and empowering for organizational actors. I now turn to my analysis of the memos.

Analysis

Brown's memo (Figure 1) to his boss Michael Chertoff, Secretary, DHS, is the first of the two memos I analyze. I reproduce the entire memo here except an attached list of requirements Brown refers to at the end of the first paragraph. Also not shown in Figure 1 is FEMA's letterhead on which the actual memo is printed.

August 29, 2005
MEMORANDUM TO: Michael Chertoff
Secretary of Homeland Security

FROM: Michael D. Brown
Under Secretary

SUBJECT: DHS Response to Katrina

We are requesting your assistance to make available DHS employees willing to deploy as soon as possible for a two-week minimum field assignment to serve in a variety of positions. We anticipate needing at least 1000 additional DHS employees within 48 hours and 2000 within 7 days. Attached is a list of requirements that employees will have to meet before deploying.

It is beneficial to use DHS employees as it allows us to be more efficient responding to the needs of this disaster and it reinforces the Department's All-Hazard's Capabilities. Also, DHS employees already have background investigations, travel cards and badges, all items that normally delay filling our surge workforce. FEMA Response and Recovery operations are a top priority of the Department and as we know, one of yours.

We will also want to identify staff with specialized skills such as bilingual capabilities, Commercial Driver's License (CDL), and logistics capabilities.

Thank you for your consideration in helping us meet our responsibilities in this near catastrophic event.

Figure 1: Brown's Memo

I first take up "signification" and "domination". Then, I analyze the memo for issues related to ideology, reification, and "legitimation".

"Signification" and "Domination"

- **The use of a FEMA letterhead and the subject line stating "DHS Response to Katrina"**

Brown's use of a FEMA letterhead (not shown in Figure 1) is interesting, especially when seen in conjunction with the memo's subject line, which reads, "DHS Response to Katrina." If one also considers the last sentence of the second paragraph ("FEMA Response and Recovery operations are a top priority of the Department . . ."), and the last sentence of the memo ("Thank you for your consideration in helping us meet our responsibilities . . ."), the contradiction becomes even more stark. In all three places or "signs"—the letterhead, the last sentence of the second paragraph, and the last sentence of the memo—the memo depicts the Katrina response operations as a FEMA task, suggesting Brown's quest for more power and "domination" within DHS. Yet the subject line declares the operations to be a DHS task (an apparent constraint for Brown).

Behind this apparent contradiction there probably lies a balancing act on the part of Brown between FEMA's need for more autonomy (power) on one hand and the need on the other hand for him to adhere to the established chain of command (a constraint for Brown). FEMA is a subordinate organization of DHS and Brown is answerable to the Secretary, DHS. Although Brown wants the response operations to be a FEMA responsibility (more power for himself and FEMA), he does not want to be seen as trying to usurp the authority of FEMA's parent organization (DHS). Put differently, Brown is unable to avoid calling the response operations a DHS task in the subject line of the memo, a prominent and visible sign (and in this case, a constraint for Brown) in the memo. Yet the mention of DHS in the subject line (a constraint) also allows Brown to use FEMA's letterhead and refer to FEMA, directly or indirectly, within the memo to declare that the response operations are essentially a FEMA task (an attempt to gain power within DHS). Thus, Brown uses a limiting sign (the subject line) in the memo to gain power for himself and FEMA by using it along with other signs (e.g., the letterhead, subtle references to FEMA within the memo).

It should be noted here that Brown's use of a FEMA letterhead and his one explicit mention of FEMA by name are ironic considering that after its merger with DHS, FEMA was rechristened as Emergency Preparedness and Response (EP&R), a term Chertoff uses in his memo written just a day after Brown's memo, as we will see.

- **Four mentions of DHS in the body of the memo versus a single mention of FEMA**

As organizational acronyms (or codewords), DHS and FEMA are probably routinely used in these organizations' communications. However, Brown's using DHS four times in the body of the memo and FEMA just once indicate DHS's "domination" and power over FEMA, especially given that DHS is also mentioned in the subject line. In contrast, although FEMA is explicitly mentioned just once in the body of the memo, a number of first person pronoun references to FEMA (through words such as "we" and "us") in the body of the memo, coupled with Brown's use of FEMA's letterhead, allows Brown to stake a claim for more authoritative and allocative resources (power and dominance) for FEMA. Thus, an apparent constraint (more mentions in the memo of the codeword DHS) is used by Brown to gain power for himself and FEMA, because a higher visibility of the codeword DHS in the memo may be interpreted as Brown trying to be an obedient member of the larger organization (DHS). At the same time, through relatively less visible first-person pronoun references to FEMA, Brown seeks to establish that the Katrina response efforts are a FEMA task, in an effort to gain power for himself and FEMA. Similarly, Brown's request for additional DHS employees (authoritative and allocative resources) to meet FEMA's commitments is an expression to gain power, although Brown's request identifies the requested employees as "DHS employees," a constraint for Brown and FEMA.

- **A specific mention in the memo of the number of personnel required, when they are required, and the duration for which they are required**

Brown's mentioning in the memo of the number of personnel he requires from DHS, when he requires them, and the time for which these personnel are needed (a scripted request), are expressions to gain power (to act despite constraints), even though the fact that Brown has to request and be dependent on DHS for these resources is obviously a constraint for FEMA. The resource crunch faced by FEMA in the months and years preceding Hurricane Katrina has been noted by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs in its report. Referring to FEMA's personnel shortage, the report stated, "Over the last few years, FEMA has suffered numerous personnel problems, hindering its ability to prepare for and respond to a catastrophic event" (2006, chapter 14, p. 216). An additional point regarding Brown's scripted request for DHS personnel is that the details of the script (the number of employees, when they are required, and the like) help establish Brown as an "expert" or a person in command, thus gaining power for him.

- **The reference to DHS's "All-Hazard's [sic] Capabilities" and the description of the FEMA recovery and response effort as a "top priority" of DHS and that of Brown's supervisor's (Secretary Chertoff's)**

The memo's reference to DHS's "All-Hazards Capabilities" is another example of Brown's use of a "sign" to gain power. Although the memo's context (a hurricane of the magnitude of Katrina) overwhelmingly justifies Brown's request for additional personnel from DHS, he still couches his request for additional personnel in terms of the phrase "All-Hazards Capabilities" ("It is beneficial to use DHS employees as it allows us to be more efficient . . . and it reinforces the Department's All-Hazard's Capabilities"). Clearly, Brown's framing of his request in terms of this particular phrase can be seen as a constraint, in that such a powerful justification for his request as a hurricane of the magnitude of Katrina is apparently not enough by itself. On the other hand, if one considers that the phrase "All-Hazards Capabilities" is akin to a mission

statement for the National Response Plan (NRP), developed and to be implemented by DHS (www. dhs.gov), one can appreciate Brown's reasons for using the phrase. Brown uses the term to persuade his supervisor, who is the head of DHS, the organization responsible for the implementation of NRP. Similarly, Brown's description of the FEMA recovery and response effort as a "top priority" of DHS and that of Secretary Chertoff's are expressions to gain power within DHS.

- **The reference to typical communicative signs and conventions within DHS, such as travel cards and badges and background investigations**

Brown's mention of typical "signs," rules, conventions, and "modes of discourse" within DHS, such as travel cards and badges and background investigations, appears to have been intended for gaining power, because these signs have a law-enforcement angle considered important within DHS. At the same time, it is clear from his reference to these signs that there is an obvious advantage DHS employees have as far as these "signs" go, because DHS employees already possess the necessary clearances required in connection with these "signs." Conversely, the lack of requisite clearances for these "signs" among FEMA employees often delays their mobilization, a constraint noted by Brown.

- **Description of Hurricane Katrina as a "near catastrophic event"**

Brown's use of the term "near catastrophic event" to describe Hurricane Katrina in the memo's last paragraph is meant to gain power, that is, persuasion for his request. The National Response Plan (NRP) defines a category of emergencies known as "Catastrophic Events" (Department of Homeland Security, 2006, p. 43). These events are defined as "any natural or manmade incident, including terrorism, that results in extraordinary levels of mass casualties, damage, or disruption severely affecting the population, infrastructure, environment, economy, national morale, and/or government functions" (Department of Homeland Security, 2006, p. 43). Brown is cautious in using this special NRP category (a "sign") to describe Hurricane Katrina, which is evident from his use of the qualifying word "near." Apparently, Brown is not sure at this point whether the hurricane deserves to be categorized as a "catastrophic event." This lack of clarity about whether the special category (a "sign") applies in the present context (Hurricane Katrina) is a constraint, in so far as Brown's ability to use this sign is concerned. However, he still uses the "sign" in an enabling manner by adding a qualifier ("near") to it. His qualified use of the sign "near catastrophic event" makes his request more powerful than it might have been in the absence of even a qualified mention of this special NRP category. I now turn to issues of "ideology," "reification," and "legitimation" seen in Brown's memo.

"Ideology," "Reification," and "Legitimation"

A key phrase ("sign") in Brown's memo relating to ideology is "all-hazards capabilities." The sign "all-hazards" is taken from the National Response Plan (NRP), the backbone of DHS, where it is defined as including "terrorism, major natural disasters, and other major emergencies" (Department of Homeland Security, 2006, Preface). Both DHS and FEMA used the sign differently. While Brown used it to mean both terrorism as well as natural disasters, for DHS the term "all-hazards approach" seems to have largely meant possible terrorist attacks. DHS's

preoccupation with terrorism has been documented by many reports on the federal response to Hurricane Katrina. For example, Kathleen Tierney, the Director of the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado, stated that DHS rejected the principle of "integrated emergency management" and failed to achieve "all-hazard preparedness" in its zeal to prevent another terrorist attack like 9/11 (Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 2006, p. 221).

What Tierney meant was that DHS leaned so heavily towards preventing terrorism that it did not pay adequate attention to threats from other types of disasters. She also criticized DHS for deviating from the principle of "integrated emergency management," which involves four components of "mitigation," "preparedness," "response," and "recovery" (Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 2006, p. 221). The two concepts ("signs") of "all-hazard preparedness" (mentioned by Brown in his memo) and "integrated emergency management" (mentioned by Tierney) combined to create the structural conflict between FEMA and DHS.

Prior to DHS, FEMA was responsible for all four components of "integrated emergency management" for all types of disasters (Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 2006, p. 221). After DHS's creation, however, Tom Ridge and Michael Chertoff, the first and the second Secretaries of DHS, respectively, removed from FEMA its preparedness responsibilities and transferred them to another organization within DHS, thus breaking the cycle of "integrated emergency management" (Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 2006, pp. 221-222). Brown told the House Select Committee that "these recent organizational changes have divided what was intended to be one, all-hazards preparedness mission into two artificially separate preparedness categories of terrorism and natural disasters" (U.S. House of Representatives, 2005, p. 155). The Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs also concluded that separating preparedness functions from FEMA "eliminated FEMA's role in preparing for disasters" (2006, p. 222).

Thus, DHS appears to have legitimized its control of FEMA by adopting an interpretation of the sign "all-hazards approach" that considered emergency preparedness a terrorism-related issue. The sign "all-hazards approach" thus became an "ideology" allowing DHS to legitimize its control over FEMA. Conversely, for Brown and FEMA the sign "all-hazards approach" meant disasters of all kinds. The use of the phrase "All-Hazards's [sic] Capabilities" comes across in Brown's memo as a reified term for DHS and FEMA. The phrase appears to have become almost a byword for DHS, even though, clearly, the organization lacked such capabilities (as seen in the organization's disastrous Katrina response), nor did it probably have a uniform definition of the phrase (as seen in the differing conceptions of the phrase in DHS and in Brown's FEMA). Next, I turn to the second memo in this paper.

The second memo (Figure 2) I analyze is that by Michael Chertoff, Secretary, DHS. I include only select paragraphs from the memo, leaving out a bulleted list mentioning the responsibilities of the Principal Federal Official (PFO) and the closing paragraph where mere contact information is given. Also not shown in Figure 2 is DHS's letterhead on which the actual memo is printed.

August 30, 2005
MEMORANDUM FOR DISTRIBUTION
FROM: Michael Chertoff
SUBJECT: Designation of Principal Federal Official for Hurricane Katrina

As you know, the President has established the "White House Task Force on Hurricane Katrina Response." He will meet with us tomorrow to launch this effort. The Department of Homeland Security, along with other departments, will be part of the task force and will assist the Administration with its response to Hurricane Katrina.

In accordance with the guidance provided in the National Response Plan (NRP), I hereby declare Hurricane Katrina an Incident of National Significance and designate Michael Brown, Under Secretary for Emergency Preparedness and Response (EP&R), as the Principal Federal Official (PFO) for incident management purposes during the response and recovery operations for Hurricane Katrina.

As stated in the NRP, the PFO serves as my representative locally and coordinates federal activities relevant to the response and recovery efforts. The specific roles and responsibilities of the PFO include: [the bulleted list mentioning the responsibilities omitted here].

The PFO does not impede nor impact the authorities of other Federal officials to coordinate directly with their department or agency chain of command or to execute their duties and responsibilities under law.

I am confident that Under Secretary Brown will provide the leadership necessary to ensure an effective and efficient incident response. I request that you provide him your fullest measure of support in the execution of these important responsibilities.

Figure 2: Chertoff's Memo

As with Brown's memo, I first take up "signification" and "domination". Then, I analyze the memo for issues related to "ideology," "reification," and "legitimation".

"Signification" and "Domination"

- **Starting the memo by mentioning that DHS, along with other departments, will be part of the "White House Task Force" for response to Katrina**

Despite leading the most important homeland security organization (DHS) in the country, Chertoff's starting the memo with a "script" stating that DHS will be part of the White House Task Force to respond to Hurricane Katrina conveys framing (and thus limiting) of DHS's role in the overall national effort to respond to the hurricane at the highest level. At the same time, by starting the memo with a mention of the president and the White House Task Force, Chertoff gains power ("domination") by locating himself and his department (DHS) next to the highest office in the country.

- **Referring to NRP as a basis for his declaration of Hurricane Katrina as "an Incident of National Significance (INS)" and designation of Michael Brown as PFO**

Chertoff's reference to the National Response Plan (NRP)—a collection of "signs"—frames and guides (and therefore limits with various provisions and directives and conditions) his declaration of the hurricane as an INS and his designation of Brown as a PFO. Yet Chertoff simultaneously gains power by referring to the NRP—which is a national framework (NRP, Preface)—as the basis of his actions ("In accordance with the guidance provided in the National Response Plan (NRP) . . . .").

- **Distributing the memo to several officials (listed under "distribution" at the end of the memo), but not addressing the memo to anyone in the heading**

Chertoff's memo does not mention any recipients in the heading but lists them by their job titles at the end of the memo under the notation of "distribution." The phrase "Memorandum for distribution" is included in the heading. This practice appears to have been an organizational convention (sign) framing Chertoff's memo in a bureaucratic and impersonal mode. At the same time, this convention, when seen along with the memo's letterhead (not shown in Figure 2), allows Chertoff to show his power as the writer of the memo.

The letterhead (not shown here) displays DHS's logo together with the words 'Homeland Security" in large, bold font. Chertoff's job title ("secretary") appears on top of the prominent-looking logo and the departmental name in small, barely noticeable font. The effect is one of contrast, with the words "Homeland Security" prominently displayed on the page and the word "secretary" in small, italicized font appearing on top of the departmental name. Despite the small print showing Chertoff's job, the reader of the memo is able to perceive the sender of the memo as holding the top job in this most important of departments, as highlighted by a prominently displayed "Homeland Security." Overall, the letterhead appears to exert a dominating and legitimating influence over the recipients of the memo. I now turn to issues of "ideology," "reification," and "legitimation" seen in Chertoff's memo.

"Ideology," "Reification," and "Legitimation"

The covert ideology in Chertoff's memo seems derive from the framework (a collection of "signs") of the National Response Plan (NRP), which he mentions in the first sentence of the second paragraph and under whose authority he designates Brown as a PFO and declares Hurricane Katrina to be an Incident of National Significance (INS). Perhaps the most telling example of Chertoff's use of NRP as an ideological tool to dominate FEMA is Chertoff's not mentioning the name FEMA in his memo. Instead, Chertoff calls FEMA by its new name under DHS, which is given by NRP: Emergency Preparedness and Response (EP & R). Chertoff's not using the name FEMA even as a parenthetical reference after the agency's new name is interesting considering that only a day ago Michael Brown sent Chertoff a memo on FEMA's letterhead and with one explicit mention of FEMA in the body of the memo.

Another instance of Chertoff's use of NRP as an ideological tool to dominate FEMA can be seen in his explanation of the term (a "sign") Principal Federal Official (PFO) in the memo. Chertoff

names Michael Brown as DHS's PFO for response to Hurricane Katrina. But he carefully delimits PFO's boundaries: 1) "The PFO serves as my representative locally . . . ," 2) "The PFO does not impede nor impact the authorities of other Federal officials. . . ." Moreover, the PFO was just one of many officials and structures ("signs") involved in the response operations. Under the framework of NRP, DHS created an elaborate network of positions and departments ("structures") to manage response operations, which failed to work together effectively in response to Katrina (U.S. House of Representatives, 2005, p. 156).

The collection of "signs" enunciated by NRP also proved problematic in Chertoff's declaration of Hurricane Katrina as an "Incident of National Significance (INS)." According to Senator Collins, the chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, the declaration was unnecessary because the president's declaration of emergency in Louisiana had already made Katrina an INS under NRP (2006,*"Statement"*). White House's review of the federal response to Katrina also stated that many aspects of NRP, especially those related to by whom and how Incidents of National Significance (INS) ought to be declared, were unclear when Katrina struck (White House, 2005, chapter 2). Thus, the NRP, which seems to have been a reified sign in Chertoff's memo and which was used by DHS as an ideological tool to legitimize its control over FEMA, proved inadequate to deal with Katrina.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown how structuration theory can help explore some of the structural conflicts between DHS and FEMA during their response to Hurricane Katrina. I have also shown how structuration theory accounts for the agencies of both FEMA's Brown (who acted despite constraints) and DHS's Chertoff (who had few, if any, constraints) during their response to Hurricane Katrina. The main contention of structuration theory is that agents are not abject receivers of structural influences. Both Brown and Chertoff used organizational "signs" and "modes of discourse" not only to frame (and explain) their actions but also to advance their viewpoints or persuade other members of their organizations. The use of "ideology" and "reification" by dominant groups in organizations to legitimize their interests is another component of Structuration theory. The memos by Brown and Chertoff show how DHS legitimized its "domination" of FEMA by using signs such as "All-Hazards Approach" and NRP.

Structuration theory has important uses for rhetoric and professional communication scholars. The theory helps us view organizations as dynamic entities where individuals use whatever power they have to influence their environments. The theory saves us, then, from seeing organizations as monolithic or stultifying machines that simply crush or mold "innocent" agents who work for them. Finally, I want to make a brief mention of this study's main limitations.

This paper is a small, preliminary attempt to use structuration theory as an analytical framework to understand the interdependent roles of structure and agency in organizations and the relationship of these roles with organizational discourses. As a small, preliminary step, this paper has many limitations. Its main limitation is using only secondary data for analysis. Interviews with the writers of the memos or with other DHS and FEMA members involved in the response efforts to Hurricane Katrina would obviously lend the study more depth and credibility. Moreover, my sole reliance on the memos for my analysis, albeit supported with contextual

information, may invite a characterization of this study as "positivistic" or as trying to read reality from and within a handful of artifacts. In response to such criticism, I quote Alvesson and Skoldberg, who said, "Empirical material cannot unambiguously falsify or verify theories, but it can generate arguments for or against the championing of theoretical ideas (p. 275). In the end, this paper joins scholars such as Herndl (1993) and Suchan (2006) in urging more use of structuration theory in rhetoric and professional communication. As Herndl (1993) says, structuration theory can create in both us and our students a deeper appreciation for the role of agency in organizations amidst structural constraints and ideological struggles (pp. 354-355).

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