

ABSTRACT

Accommodation in Email and the Influence of Organizational Culture

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Understanding how organizational members engage with email is essential to facilitating healthy interpersonal relationships and providing insight into the influence of organizational culture on members' behaviors. Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) recognizes communication as a dynamic process between individuals and explores the intersection of language, identity, and context. Organizational culture defines the context in which organizational members learn to thrive in organizations. This study tested the application of CAT, exploring the impact of context on email behavior among organizational members. Participants identified the culture of the organization to which they belong and responded to randomly assigned email scripts. Six total scripts were used throughout the study, equally containing female and male gender language cues. The mean culture was calculated for each participant and script responses were globally coded. Accommodation to gendered-language cues occurred in two of the four cultures examined, indicating a relationship between culture and accommodation behavior in email among users.

Accommodation in Email and the Influence of Organizational Culture

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A Thesis

Approved by the Department of Communication

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts

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Accepted by the Graduate School

August 2022

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of my mentor, Dr. Schlueter. I would like to further acknowledge the members of my committee who dedicated their time, Dr. Ashley Barrett and Dr. Dawn Carlson. Finally, my supervisor, my mentor, and my friend, Dr. Crystal Diaz-Espinoza, who encouraged me to pursue my master's degree.

DEDICATION

To all the professionals who have ever struggled with email in the workplace.

CHAPTER ONE

Literature Review

Introduction

In 2020, approximately 306.4 billion emails were sent worldwide every day. The data suggests in 2024 we can expect this number to increase to 361.6 billion emails a day (*Daily Number of E-Mails Worldwide 2024* | Statista, n.d.). With numbers like these, it is no surprise scholars from the field of communication and organizational studies dedicate time to research the impact of email on interpersonal relationships within an organization.

Communication scholars measure mediums based on their richness, or the ability to facilitate rapid feedback, communicative cues, and establish personal focus (Lengel & Daft, 1988). Scholars consider email as a lean communication channel (Byron, 2008). Email provides little opportunity for immediate feedback as the recipient may not immediately respond to the sender's email. Additionally, email fails to provide important communicative cues such as tone and nonverbals that individuals rely on to interpret meaning. Due to the leanness of email, there is an increased likelihood of miscommunication between sender and recipient, negatively impacting interpersonal relationships. Workplace issues, caused by email miscommunication, leads to decreased work efforts, productivity, the drive to develop productive relationships among team members, and overall contributions (Lim & Teo, 2009). Although email communication occurs among individual employees at the

organization, these employees and their behavior are defined by the context in which they work. Organizational culture provides a set of behavioral norms employees must adhere to in order to fit in and survive in an organization (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988). If we understand organizational culture to define norms and expectations of behavior, it is essential to understand the ways in which organizational culture influences email use among employees.

According to Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), interactions between a sender and receiver is a continuous process of strategies. Communication partners adjust and accommodate communication styles to positively impact interpersonal relationships. CAT is an appropriate theory to utilize when understanding the impact of a broad concept such as organizational culture because CAT considers the context and social norms of the interactants. In other words, if we are to understand how email behaviors impact interpersonal relationships, it is not enough to simply understand specific linguistic choices made by members of the organization. Rather, it is the interplay of linguistic styles, social norms, and cultural expectations that ultimately impact behavior of organizational members.

Although email is a common medium of communication in organizational settings, few scholars study accommodation strategies in email and the influence of context on these strategies. The leanness of email is an interesting setting to examine accommodation strategies due to the reduced cues available to communication partners. This study sought to deepen our understanding of accommodation in email communication. Specifically, accommodation of gendered language styles across organizational cultures.

Communication Accommodation Theory

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) assumes interpersonal relationships grow and develop through communication. Conversation partners utilize dynamic communication strategies to reflect their partner's communication style. CAT outlines a framework for scholars to measure the communication strategies, identify the motivations behind the communicative style people use, and understand the ways in which listeners perceive these styles (Gallois et al., n.d.; Zhang & Giles, 2018). The process of accommodation is complex as many factors influence the process of accommodation. Two specific factors worth exploring is the interplay between intergroup and interpersonal communication styles.

Since the development of CAT, the theory has grown to include six key phases of the accommodation process: convergence, divergence, subjectivist phase, intergenerational communication and health, communicative breadth phase, and mediating mechanism phase (Zhang & Giles, 2018). Although these phases are interrelated, this study specifically explores the phases of convergence and divergence. Convergence is the process of adjusting an individuals' communicative style to enhance the similarities between the communication partners (Zhang & Giles, 2018). Conversely, divergence occurs when individuals adjust their communicative style to enhance the differences between communication partners (Zhang & Giles, 2018). Nonaccommodation can occur when an intergroup identity becomes salient. Communication partners engage in nonaccommodation when there is, "a desire not to assimilate but, rather, to tenaciously preserve a group's linguistic culture" (Zhang & Giles, 2018, p. 4). In convergence, "speakers adjust (or accommodate) their speech

styles in order to create and maintain positive personal social identities” (Gallois et al., n.d., p. 123). Divergence, however, can lead to dissatisfaction with an interaction (Gasiorek & Giles, 2012). The act of convergence and divergence directly impact exchanges and, ultimately, interpersonal relationships. Two factors contributing to convergence and divergence in interactions is the interplay between intergroup and interpersonal identity.

One underlying assumption of CAT, “is the existence of intergroup and interpersonal communicative markers, which have different impacts...” (Gallois et al., n.d., p. 138). Both processes of convergence and divergence are based on interpersonal and intergroup motivations. The salience of these motivations determine if communicative partners engage in convergence or divergence (Gallois et al., n.d.). When two people engage in conversation, CAT recognizes the context in which the conversation takes place has an intergroup history. This history can be positive or negative, but the salience, or presence, of this intergroup identity influences the accommodation strategies used by conversation partners (Gallois et al., n.d.). The theory allows us to step beyond the micro focus of previous studies and take a macro perspective by understanding the impact of context on accommodation. “CAT theorizes norms as part of the societal and situational context, taking them as read but emphasizing that intergroup and interpersonal histories and initial orientation influence tolerance about their application” (Gallois et al., n.d., p. 138).

A foundational principle of CAT is the belief that interactions directly impact interpersonal relationships (Gallois et al., n.d.). Email is a common medium for communication interactions to occur, especially in organizations. With the increasing

popularity of email and the impact this form of communication has on interpersonal relationships in the workplace, it is important to understand the process of accommodation in email. Thomson & Murachver (2001) examine gender-preferential language styles in informal electronic discourse. Findings show that even though email is believed to be a neutral space that suppresses sender cues, people are sensitive to gender differences in language style (Thomson & Murachver, 2001). Not only are email users aware of gendered language, but they also respond and accommodate for gendered language.

In a study of undergraduates, Thomson et al., (2001) found gendered language style directly impacts accommodation in email communication. They found when gender of the sender matched gender language style, the receiver of the email was more likely to accommodate to the language style used by the sender. However, when inconsistencies presented themselves, the receiver was more likely to engage in underaccommodation. When the gender of the sender did not match the gender language style, participants were less likely to accommodate the language style (Thomson et al., 2001). “Given the convergent accommodation is a sign of liking and acceptance, participants might have been signaling nonacceptance by maintaining their own gender preferential style when netpal style and gender did not match” (Thomson et al., 2001, p. 174).

Although these studies confirm accommodation of gendered language style in email, we do not have a clear understanding of how communication context impacts the role of accommodation. “One goal for future research is to clarify the social and contextual variations that influence accommodation” (Thomson et al., 2001, p. 174).

Context includes intergroup identities that are salient during an interaction. The salience of intergroup might lead to adhering to cultural values and diverging from partner communication patterns (Gallois et al., n.d.). Research confirms accommodation behavior in email communication between two individuals. However, individuals engaging in email communication are influenced by the context in which the communication takes place. Particularly if the context involves social norms that might constrain individual's accommodation behaviors. Organizational culture defines the behavior norms individuals are expected to adhere to in an organization. It is imperative to understand how behavior norms, defined by an organization's culture, impacts accommodation strategies in the workplace because the act of convergence or divergence influences interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationships are a key facet to employee job satisfaction and tenure at an organization (Mudor, 2011; Spector, 1997), making the act of accommodation in organizations an important behavior pattern to understand.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is an agreed set of norms and behaviors organizational members recognize as necessary for success in an organization. "Culture provides a premade and socially shared enacted environment to which the individual must accommodate in order to fit in, and in some cases, survive" (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988, p. 249). Organizational culture influences more than feelings of belonging to an organization, organizational culture mandates how to behave in an organization.

Culture mandates norms and behaviors regarding computer mediated communication (CMC). Madanchian and Taherdoost (2016) found organizational culture impacts the ways in which employees utilize email. Specifically, organizational culture defined the attitudes toward email, how quickly employees responded to emails, and the reasons for using email. Culture impacts formality, promptness, preciseness, task-relatedness, and relationship-relatedness in email communication (Holtbrügge et al., 2013). Culture dictates norms and behaviors not only related to the general use of email, but also specific language style.

Waldvogel (2007) examines the ways in which organizational culture influences the styles of greetings and closing in email. While email is a lean channel of communication, scholars find scenarios when email conveys a rich message. “The extent to which email is able to do this is largely dependent on the relationship between the communication participation and the kind of organization to which they belong” (Waldvogel, 2007, p. 458). Organizational culture has a critical role in defining organizational email practices because culture not only sets the norms and behaviors of email style, but also the development of interpersonal relationships in the workplace.

Stryker (2018) explores key facets of language used by professionals in executive leadership positions. Results indicate there is a distinct difference in language cues used by women in executive positions compared to women outside of these roles (Stryker, 2018). Women in executive leadership roles use more pronouns, positive emotions tentative, and certainty. Compared to women outside of these positions who use, more negative emotions, inclusion word sadness, and third person

pronouns (Stryker, 2018). Interestingly, when exploring the language used by male leaders compared to regular conversational language used by men, the results were the same. In other words, regardless of position and setting, men did not change their language style. The authors suggest, women in executive leadership positions accommodate their language style to match the context of the organization suggesting a relationship between organizational culture and language accommodation.

Luong et al., (2007) examines gender-based expectations of email communication style affect perception of leaders in the workplace. The study confirms not only does the gender of the receiver matter, but the organization context in which the email communication occurs impacts the perception of leadership effectiveness (Luong et al., 2007). From this study, the authors emphasize the need for future scholarship to look at both the sender and receiver of the email communication and the influence of organizational culture on the exchange.

The studies confirm that women in leadership positions adapt their language style to meet the expectations of the workplace. However, the studies do not specifically explore the type of culture that requires gender language accommodation in face-to-face or computer mediated communication. The Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) developed by Cameron & Quinn (2011) identifies four archetypes to classify and define an organization's culture. Built on the competing values framework, the OCAI represents basic assumptions, orientations, and values that guide employee behavior and decisions within an organization (David et al., 2018). According to the OCAI, there is not one archetype that is better than

another, or more prominent in industries. Rather, an organization's archetype should reflect the characteristics unique to that organization.

The four archetypes defined by the OCAI are: clan, adhocracy, hierarchy, and market (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). The clan culture, sometimes described as collaborate, view the organization as an, "extended family" (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 45). Members within a clan organization have shared values and goals, they operate as cohesive units. This organizations are identified by their high degree of teamwork, employee involvement, and the expectation that employees uphold and commit to the corporate mission.

Adhocracy cultures, or creative cultures, value innovation, entrepreneurship, and creativity (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Adhocracy organizations do not have a centralized leadership structure and often do not own an organizational chart. Positions and titles change as new projects emerge. Members of an adhocracy organization expect adaptability, flexibility, and a commitment to experimentation.

Hierarchy, or control, cultures are present in formalized and structured organizations. In these organizations, policy and procedures govern behavior as they value smooth running organizations. Leaders in hierarchy organizations must be skilled at organizing and coordinating members. Members are expected to maintain efficiency, execute their work in a reliable fashion to keep production running smoothly (Cameron & Quinn, 2011).

Market, or compete, cultures represent organizations that function as a marketplace (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Organizations with a market culture, "assume that a clear purpose and an aggressive strategy lead to productivity and profitability"

(Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 45). Therefore, these organizations focus their attention externally. They work with suppliers, contractors, and other partners to ensure their competitive advantage in the market. In these organizations, members are competitive, productive, and have a results-oriented mindset.

The behavioral norms associated with each type of culture, emerge as products of members' collective learning regarding what it takes to get things done and succeed in the organization (Cooke & Szumal, 2013). Accommodation strategies are behavioral norms impacting interpersonal relationships. CAT proves accommodation strategies are more than individual behaviors, they are influenced by the social context and identities individuals to which individuals identify and belong (Gallois et al., n.d.). Recognizing context influences accommodation strategies, we propose the following research question:

RQ: Is there a relationship between the type of organizational culture and accommodation strategies for gendered language in member's email?

Significance of Study

In 2003, 2,000 US homes were surveyed and found 62.5% of all Americans use the Internet for communication. Of the homes that had internet, 90% of users engage email for business purposes (Cole, 2003). Email is a common medium organizational members use to facilitate work projects, complete tasks, and maintain relationships with other members. "As organizations move towards a more virtual style of operation as in remote working, email is often the primary means of communication. How these communications are constructed and interpreted takes on

importance” (Thomson, 2006a, p. 253). Beyond the practical applications of the medium and the prevalence of engagement, the behavior, specifically the communicative acts, utilized within the medium has the potential to impact interpersonal relationships among organizational members and impact organizational efficiency (Brosnan, 2006). It is the potential consequences for organizations and the members within that make the following study valuable to the field of communications.

Organizational culture dictates the behaviors and norms of the organizations to which members belong. “Culture provides a premade and socially shared enacted environment to which the individual must accommodate in order to fit in, and in some cases, survive” (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988, p. 249). While organizational culture encompasses a vast set of topics. This study focuses specifically on the relationship between organizational culture and the email practices of members within the organization.

Organizational culture also dictates the language used by organizational members. Research identifies the impact culture has on language used by female and male executives (Stryker, 2018) and the gender-based expectations of leaders and their email style (Luong et al., 2007). Beyond specific language features, organizational culture influences members’ attitudes toward email behavior (Holtbrügge et al., 2013; Madanchian & Taherdoost, 2016). The culture within the organization determines if specific behaviors are allowed, accepted, and rewarded. When scholars study email behaviors, taking context into account is necessary. “The underlying assumption is that there is an organizational context that intertwines with

email message texts” (Panteli & Seeley, 2006, p. 250). Unfortunately, identifying the interplay of context and communicative behavior in email messages is a gap in the current body of communications research.

This study furthers the field of communication by exploring the relationship between context, specifically organizational culture, and email behavior.

Communication accommodation theory (CAT) is a heuristic theory to explore in this study because the theory examines the interplay between language, context, and identity; acknowledging that communication directly impacts interpersonal relationships (Gallois et al., n.d.). While all three factors, language, context, and identity, are at play, too often research fails to acknowledge the impact of context.

The process of accommodation is complex. Of the six phases of accommodation, outlined in the CAT literature, the phases of convergence and divergence are the focus of this study (Zhang & Giles, 2018). Convergence is the process of adjusting an individuals’ communicative style to enhance the similarities between the communication partners (Zhang & Giles, 2018). Conversely, divergence occurs when individuals adjust their communicative style to enhance the differences between communication partners (Zhang & Giles, 2018). Nonaccommodation can occur when an intergroup identity becomes salient. Communication partners engage in nonaccommodation when there is, “a desire not to assimilate but, rather, to tenaciously preserve a group’s linguistic culture” (Zhang & Giles, 2018, p. 4). In convergence, “speakers adjust (or accommodate) their speech styles in order to create and maintain positive personal social identities” (Gallois et al., n.d., p. 123).

Divergence, however, can lead to dissatisfaction with an interaction (Gasiorek &

Giles, 2012). The act of convergence and divergence directly impact exchanges and, ultimately, interpersonal relationships. Two factors contributing to convergence and divergence in interactions is the interplay between intergroup and interpersonal identity.

Research shows accommodation occurs in email communication. Email users accommodate to specific language style (Thomson et al., 2001; Thomson & Murachver, 2001), the utilization of email (Holtbrügge et al., 2013; Madanchian & Taherdoost, 2016), and expectations of leaders' use of email (Luong et al., 2007). Although these studies confirm accommodation in email, we do not have a clear understanding of how communication context impacts the role of accommodation. "One goal for future research is to clarify the social and contextual variations that influence accommodation" (Thomson et al., 2001, p. 174). Context includes intergroup identities that are salient during an interaction. The salience of intergroup identities might lead to adhering to cultural values and diverging from partner communication patterns (Gallois et al., n.d.). However, individuals engaging in email communication are influenced by the context in which the communication takes place. Particularly if the context involves social norms that might constrain individual's accommodation behaviors. Organizational culture defines the behavior norms individuals are expected to adhere to in an organization. It is imperative to understand how behavior norms, defined by an organization's culture, impacts accommodation strategies in the workplace because the act of convergence or divergence influences interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationships are a key facet to employee job satisfaction and tenure at an organization (Mudor, 2011;

Spector, 1997), making the act of accommodation in organizations an important behavior pattern to understand.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

Participants and Setting

The purpose of this study was to understand the relationship between organizational culture and accommodation strategies in email. Because this study did not focus on one specific type of organizational culture, exploring an organization that was comprised of a variety of subunits with different cultures presented an opportunity to compare how different cultures impact accommodation strategies. Higher education was an ideal setting because research shows subunits within one higher education institution develop cultures unique to the employees and students within the unit (Clark, 1980). The variety of cultures developed across the subunits of the organization allowed comparison of accommodation strategies across various organizational cultures.

To be eligible to enroll in the study, participants were required to be undergraduate students enrolled in upper-level courses. They were required to be at least 18 years of age and classified as a junior or senior. The principal researcher sought to recruit at least 200 participants. IRB approval for the study was secured prior to participant recruitment.

Participants for this study totaled 321 students enrolled in upper-level courses from a large private university in the Southwest. 100 participants were removed due to incomplete survey responses, leaving a total of 221 responses for analysis. Of the 221

participants, 128 (57.9%) identified as female, 92 (41.6%) identified as male, and 1 (0.4%) preferred not to disclose sex. Participants ages ranged from 18-30 with a mean age of 21.8. Participants represented 27 different majors across the university. Including participants from different majors allowed for a representation of different organizational cultures across participants.

Data Collection

Previous studies examine accommodation to gendered language cues in email by asking respondents to reply to a series of pre-composed scripts which include gendered language cues (Thomson, 2006b; Thomson et al., 2001; Thomson & Murachver, 2001). In addition to examining specific linguistic styles, context is an additional factor to consider when examining accommodation patterns (Thomson et al., 2001). Context, in this study, is organizational culture. Previous studies examining organizational culture from a quantitative lens engage the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI). Based on the competing values framework, the OCAI has been used in dissertations, published research, and thousands of institutions including educational institutions (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). In alignment with the techniques used in previous studies, this project examined context and accommodation patterns through the distribution of an online survey (see Appendix B).

Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument

The Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) was used in this study. The OCAI scale consists of six categories with four topics within each category (see Appendix B). The four topics describe features consistent with four culture archetypes measured by the OCAI. The clan culture views the organization as an, “extended family” (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 45). Adhocracy culture values innovation and creativity. Hierarchy culture is known as a control culture and includes formalized processes. Market culture is competitive and functions as a marketplace (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). To measure the impact of the participant’s unique academic unit’s culture, respondents were instructed to review each topic while considering the major in which they were enrolled. While considering the culture of their major, respondents divided 100 points among the topics based on how much each topic reflected the culture of their academic unit.

Email Scripts

For the study, six scripts were developed by the principal researcher. Three scripts included female gender language cues such as apologies, intensive adverbs, subordinating conjunctions, and references to emotions. Alternatively, three scripts included male gender language cues such as opinions, adjectives, and insults. The six scripts were developed based on previous research showing email recipients correctly guessed the gender of the sender based on the gender specific cues found within the text of the email (Thomson & Murachver, 2001).

Prior to the study, the principal researcher validated the six scripts to ensure they were viewed as intended by the participants. Nineteen participants (53% male and 47% female with a mean age of 21.5 years old) from an upper-level communication class were presented with the six scripts. Participants were instructed to rate how reflective the scripts were for female gendered or male gendered language on two five-point Likert-like scales (see Appendix C).

An analysis of variance revealed there was a significant difference in how subjects rated the scripts, $F(5,19) = 13.48, p = .000$. Post hoc analyses using Duncan's multiple range tests (See Tables 1 & 2) confirmed that subjects viewed the three male gendered scripts as significantly more masculine and the three female gendered scripts as significantly more feminine.

Table 1. Ratings of Scripts on the Female Gendered Likert-Like Scale

Script	N	1	2
Masculine script 1	19	2.42 _a	
Masculine script 2	19	2.53 _a	
Masculine script 3	19	2.74 _a	
Feminine script 1	19		3.53 _b
Feminine script 2	19		4.05 _b
Feminine script 3	19		4.11 _b

Means with uncommon subscripts are significantly different at The .05 level using Duncan's multiple range test.

Table 2. Ratings of Scripts on the Masculine Gendered Likert-Like Scale

Script	N	1	2
Masculine script 1	19	3.53 _a	
Masculine script 2	19	3.95 _a	
Masculine script 3	19	4.11 _a	
Feminine script 1	19		1.80 _b
Feminine script 2	19		2.55 _b
Feminine script 3	19		2.70 _b

Means with uncommon subscripts are significantly different at The .05 level using Duncan's multiple range test.

Distribution of Questionnaire

Participants were identified using a convenience sampling technique from a large private university in the Southwest. The principal researcher contacted professors of upper-level courses from various colleges requesting information about the study be shared with students enrolled in the course. Professors were provided with content inviting students to participate in the study. This content was displayed on the university's Learning Management System or emailed directly to the student (see Appendix A). The content included a brief purpose statement summarizing the study, outlined participation requirements, duration of the study, general study procedures, described the voluntary nature of the study, and a secure link for participants to join the study. The contact information of the principal researcher was also included in the event any potential participants had questions relating to the study.

The survey began with participants completing the OCAI scales. Once the participants completed the OCAI scales, they were presented with a script designed to look like an email from a fellow student. Each participant was randomly assigned one of the six scripts. The following instructions were included, “You receive the following email from a student within your department. Using the space below, type your response.” An open text box was provided to capture responses. There was no restriction placed to manipulate the length of responses. Participants then completed a series of demographic items. Participants were informed that all answers were anonymous, and their responses would be destroyed following the completion of the study. Participants had the option to withdraw from the study safely at any time without penalty.

CHAPTER THREE

Data Analysis

Organizational Culture

The OCAI scale consists of six categories with four topics within each category. These six categories represent aspects of organizational culture that may be present within an organization. The scores collected from these scales produce a culture profile representing the type of culture present within the organization (Cameron & Quinn, 2011).

On the OCAI scale, each topic within the larger category is denoted by A, B, C, or D. The principal researcher calculated the mean score of each topic (A, B, C, and D) across all categories for every response received. After the scores for each topic were averaged together, the principal researcher determined the culture profile for each participant by identifying the culture with the highest mean score.

Accommodation in Email

A content analysis was performed on the email messages submitted by participants to assess accommodation strategies. The principal researcher created a global coding scheme based on previous research conducted on accommodation to gendered language features. Research suggests distinct differences in language used by males and females in email communication (Thomson et al., 2001; Thomson & Murachver, 2001). Females tend to make more reference to emotion (Mulac et al.,

1990), provide personal information (Herring, 2000; Tannen, 1990), and use hedging language (Mulac et al., 1990). A global coding scheme was developed for this study since its major objective was to identify patterns of accommodation, rather than focus on specific linguistic styles used within responses.

The principal researcher recruited a second coder to perform a content analysis using the developed coding scheme. Each message submitted was coded globally based on the 13 language features that have been reliably used in previous studies to examine accommodation strategies for gendered language (Thomson et al., 2001; Thomson & Murachver, 2001). If the message contained the following features associated with feminine speech styles: (1) intensive adverbs, (2) subordinating conjunctions, (3) compliments, (4) modals & hedges, (5) self-derogatory comments, (6) references to emotion, (7) requests for information, (8) provide personal information, or (9) apologies, coders were instructed to sort the message as female (Thomson & Murachver, 2001). If the message contained the following features associated with male speech styles: (10) opinions, (11) insults, (12) adjectives, (13) oppositions, coders were instructed to sort the message as male (Thomson & Murachver, 2001).

The principal researcher developed an instructional guide for coding and provided a training for the second coder prior to performing the content analysis. Each coder independently coded 61 responses or 25% of the total responses from the participants. Agreement between coders was 92% based on Scott's pi. The remainder of the responses were then coded for analysis.

Results

Clan Culture

A 2 X 2 chi square analysis was performed for each of the four cultures. A marginally significant difference between script and response was observed for subjects who described the dominant culture as a clan, $X^2(1, N=132) = 3.28, p = .070$. Table 3 reveals that subjects receiving a female gendered script responded marginally more frequently with a female gendered response.

Table 3. Script by Response for Clan Culture

	Female Script	Male Script	Total
Female Response	46	30	76
Male Response	25	31	56
Total	71	61	112

Adhocracy Culture

A non-significant difference between script and response was observed for subjects who described the dominant culture as adhocracy, $X^2(1, N=15) = 1.42, p = .233$. Results are displayed on Table 4.

Table 4. Script by Response for Adhocracy Culture

	Female Script	Male Script	Total
Female Response	2	2	4
Male Response	2	9	11
Total	4	11	15

Market Culture

A non-significant difference between script and response was observed for subjects who described the dominant culture as a market, $X^2 (1, N = 42) = .002, p = .963$. Results are displayed on Table 5.

Table 5. Script by Response for Market Culture

	Female Script	Male Script	Total
Female Response	6	9	15
Male Response	11	16	27
Total	17	25	42

Hierarchy Culture

A significant difference between script and response was observed for subjects who described the dominant culture as a hierarchy, $X^2 (1, N = 32) = 5.18, p = .023$.

Table 6 illustrates subjects receiving a male gendered script responded more frequently with a male gendered response.

Table 6. Script by Response for Hierarchy Culture

	Female Script	Male Script	Total
Female Response	10	3	15
Male Response	11	12	27
Total	17	25	42

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

Email is a common medium organizational members use to facilitate work projects, complete tasks, and maintain relationships with other members. “As organizations move towards a more virtual style of operation as in remote working, email is often the primary means of communication. How these communications are constructed and interpreted takes on importance” (Thomson, 2006a, p. 253). Beyond the practical applications of the medium and the prevalence of engagement, the behavior, specifically the communicative acts, utilized within the medium has the potential to impact interpersonal relationships among organizational members and impact organizational efficiency (Brosnan, 2006). It is the potential consequences for organizations and the members within that make this study valuable to the field of communications.

Organizational culture dictates the behaviors and norms of the organizations to which members belong. “Culture provides a premade and socially shared enacted environment to which the individual must accommodate in order to fit in, and in some cases, survive” (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988, p. 249). While organizational culture encompasses a vast set of topics. This study focuses specifically on the relationship between organizational culture and the email practices of members within the organization.

Organizational culture also dictates the language used by organizational members. Research identifies the impact culture has on language used by female and male executives (Stryker, 2018) and the gender-based expectations of leaders and their email style (Luong et al., 2007). Beyond specific language features, organizational culture influences members' attitudes toward email behavior (Holtbrügge et al., 2013; Madanchian & Taherdoost, 2016). The culture within the organization determines if specific behaviors are allowed, accepted, and rewarded. When scholars study email behaviors, taking context into account is necessary. "The underlying assumption is that there is an organizational context that intertwines with email message texts" (Panteli & Seeley, 2006, p. 250). Unfortunately, identifying the interplay of context and communicative behavior in email messages is a gap in the current body of communications research.

This study explores the relationship between context, specifically organizational culture, and email behavior. Communication accommodation theory (CAT) is an appropriate heuristic theory to apply in this study because the theory examines the interplay between language, context, and identity; acknowledging that communication directly impacts interpersonal relationships (Gallois et al., n.d.). While all three factors, language, context, and identity, are at play, too often research fails to acknowledge the impact of context.

Research shows accommodation occurs in email communication. Email users accommodate to specific language style (Thomson et al., 2001; Thomson & Murachver, 2001), the utilization of email (Holtbrügge et al., 2013; Madanchian & Taherdoost, 2016), and expectations of leaders' use of email (Luong et al., 2007).

Although these studies confirm accommodation in email, we do not have a clear understanding of how communication context impacts the role of accommodation. “One goal for future research is to clarify the social and contextual variations that influence accommodation” (Thomson et al., 2001, p. 174). Context includes intergroup identities that are salient during an interaction. The salience of intergroup identities might lead to adhering to cultural values and diverging from partner communication patterns (Gallois et al., n.d.). However, individuals engaging in email communication are influenced by the context in which the communication takes place. Particularly if the context involves social norms that might constrain individual’s accommodation behaviors. Organizational culture defines the behavior norms individuals are expected to adhere to in an organization. It is imperative to understand how behavior norms, defined by an organization’s culture, impacts accommodation strategies in the workplace because these strategies influence interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationships are a key facet to employee job satisfaction and tenure at an organization (Mudor, 2011; Spector, 1997), making the act of accommodation in organizations an important behavior pattern to understand.

The results from the current study show a relationship between organizational culture and accommodation behaviors in email exchanges among organizational members. These findings suggest the context in which communicative acts take place impact accommodation strategies between individuals engaging in communication, supporting one of the core assumptions of CAT. “It focuses on both intergroup and interpersonal features and, as we shall see, can integrate dimensions of cultural variability” (Gallois et al., n.d., p. 123). When individuals engage in conversation,

CAT suggests the context in which the conversation takes place influences accommodation strategies used by the individuals (Gallois et al., n.d.).

This study explored the relationship between organizational culture and accommodation strategies utilized in email communication among organizational members. Utilizing the OCAI, four types of organizational culture were tested: clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy. Results identified two types of organizational culture profiles that influence accommodation strategies in email communication: clan and hierarchy. Participants who are members of organizations with a clan-oriented culture engaged in accommodating behavior when presented with a female gendered script. The clan culture is described as collaborative and as an, “extended family” (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). This culture emphasizes a “we-ness” among employees and expects members to share the same values, promote cohesion among members, and emphasize teamwork (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Research looking at female gendered language styles find that females engage in linguistic patterns that promote politeness to develop cohesion and prevent conflict (Lakoff, 1973). Furthermore, female language tends to emphasize community and find common ground among members (Tannen, 1990). Arguably, there are parallels between behaviors found within the clan culture and norms associated with female gendered language style. With a focus on community and “extended family” attitudes, we can expect to find female gendered language styles among members within organizations with clan-oriented cultures. Supporting the findings found in the present study, participants who are members of a clan culture are most likely to accommodate to

female gendered language patterns found in email communication between organizational members.

The hierarchy organizational culture is the second type of culture influencing accommodation strategies in email behavior. TheOCAI describes hierarchy cultures as places of control. These organizations are highly ritualized with standardized rules and practices. Organizations with hierarchy cultures display traditional bureaucratic behaviors such as adhering to established forms of hierarchy, impersonality, and separate ownership (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). While females typically engage in polite requests and tagged-questions to promote cohesion, male gendered speech patterns display the opposite behavior. Male gendered language utilizes direct orders and requests, carrying the underlying expectation of enforcing compliance (Lakoff, 1973). Research also suggests men engage in language that preserves their independence and promotes a hierarchical order (Tannen, 1990). The similarities between male speech patterns and expected behaviors within a hierarchy culture support the current findings that members of organizations with a culture that is classified as hierarchy are more likely to accommodate for male gendered language cues in email communication between organizational members.

Recognizing the influence context has on accommodation strategies in email, the results of this study have implications for organizations as they work to define their organizational culture. Organizational culture not only defines the behaviors and norms expected of organizational members, but also influences accommodation strategies utilized among organizational members. Central to the theory of CAT, “speakers adjust (or accommodate) their speech styles in order to create and maintain

positive personal and social identities” (Gallois et al., n.d., p. 123). Meaning, if accommodation strategies ultimately impact interpersonal relationships among organizational members, organizations need to be cognizant of how their culture influences the accommodation strategies utilized by organizational members. Email is designed to bring efficiency to the workplace. However, if organizations do not provide clear standards of practice, based on the culture, to organizational members, these members may struggle to align their email behavior with the expected norms and ultimately harm interpersonal relationships and their status in the organization. Harming interpersonal relationships will ultimately cost organizations because positive interpersonal relationships are a key facet to employee satisfaction and longevity at organizations (Mudor, 2011; Spector, 1997). Organizations should then consider how to help organizational members navigate the underlying norms of the organizational culture.

In conclusion, this study furthers the application of CAT by exploring the impact of context on accommodation strategies. As communication scholars continue to explore the far-reaching impacts of accommodation strategies on interpersonal relationships, scholars should be aware of the context in which the accommodation strategies occur as this is a factor that influences the ways in which individuals engage in communication.

Limitations and Future Research

The study yielded insignificant findings for members of an adhocracy culture because of a lack of representation among participants. Further research is needed to

fully explore the relationship between all four organizational culture profiles and accommodation strategies. Future studies should work to recruit a sample that reflects all four cultures to further test if there are significant results beyond the hierarchy and clan culture identified in this study.

Communication accommodation theory (CAT) examines the interplay between language, context, and identity; acknowledging that communication directly impacts interpersonal relationships (Gallois et al., n.d.). Notably absent from the body of research is the examination of the impact of context. While this study fills an important gap in research by focusing explicitly on the impact of context, it is the interplay of these three topics that help us truly understand the process of accommodation. A limitation of the present study is the omission of examining the effect of gender of the sender, in addition to context, on accommodation behavior. Further research should consider the multiple factors that influence accommodation as outlined by CAT, rather than one specific facet.

Accommodation and nonaccommodation are influenced by the salience of intergroup identities (Gallois et al., n.d.). The current study instructed participants to respond to an email from a member within their organization, suggesting that participants responded to members from similar intergroup identities. While this is valuable to understand the influence of intergroup identity, in this case a shared organizational culture, CAT makes it clear that both accommodation and nonaccommodation impacts interpersonal relationships. Future research should explore instances where nonaccommodation may occur by developing a study that instructs participants to respond to a member outside of the shared intergroup identity.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Recruitment Email

Subject Line: Baylor Thesis Candidate: Requesting Participation in Survey

Greetings [*professor name*],

I am a master's student at Baylor University, and I am conducting a research study to understand the impact of organizational culture on email practices.

I received approval from your professor to reach out to you directly and invite you to participate in this study. Participation is voluntary and information collected will remain confidential.

If you are interested in participating, I encourage you to read through the details and eligibility requirements of the study below:

- **General Information:**
 - Participants will complete a survey that should take no more than 30 minutes
- **Eligibility Requirements:**
 - Participants must be at least 18 years of age
 - Currently enrolled at INSTITUTION NAME
 - Student classification is junior or senior

Click here to participate in this study.

If you have any questions about the details of the study or eligibility requirements, please do not hesitate to call Emily Corntassel at (580) 716-9986 during Monday-Friday between the hours of 9:00-4:00 pm.

Thank you,

Emily Corntassel

APPENDIX B

Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument

<i>1. Dominant Characteristics</i>	
A. My major at Baylor University is a very personal place. It is like an extended family. People seem to share a lot of themselves.	
B. My major at Baylor University is a dynamic and entrepreneurial place. People are willing to stick their necks out and take risks.	
C. My major at Baylor University is very results oriented. A major concern is with getting the job done. People are very competitive and achievement oriented.	
D. My major at Baylor University is a very controlled and structured place. Formal procedures generally govern what people do.	
Total	100

<i>2. Organizational Leadership</i>	
A. The professors in my major are generally considered to exemplify mentoring, facilitating, or nurturing.	
B. The professors in my major are generally considered to exemplify entrepreneurship, innovation, or risk taking.	
C. The professors in my major are generally considered to exemplify a no-nonsense, aggressive, results-oriented focus.	
D. The professors in my major are generally considered to exemplify coordinating, organizing, or smooth-running efficiency.	
Total	100

<i>3. Management of Members</i>	
A. The teaching style in my major is characterized by teamwork, consensus, and participation.	
B. The teaching style in my major is characterized by individual risk taking, innovation, freedom, and uniqueness.	
C. The teaching style in my major is characterized by hard-driving competitiveness, high demands, and achievement.	

D. The teaching style in my major is characterized by security of employment, conformity, predictability, and stability in relationships.	
Total	100

<i>4. Organization Glue</i>	
A. The glue that holds students in my major together is loyalty and mutual trust. Commitment to this major runs high.	
B. The glue that holds students in my major together is commitment to innovation and development. There is an emphasis on being on the cutting edge.	
C. The glue that holds students in my major together is the emphasis on achievement and goal accomplishment.	
D. The glue that holds students in my major together is formal rules and policies. Maintaining a smoothly running experience is important.	
Total	100

<i>5. Strategic Emphasis</i>	
A. My major at Baylor University emphasizes human development. High trust, openness, and participation persist.	
B. My major at Baylor University emphasizes acquiring new resources and creating new challenges. Trying new things and prospecting for opportunities are valued.	
C. My major at Baylor University emphasizes competitive actions and achievement. Hitting stretch targets and winning in the marketplace are dominant.	
D. My major at Baylor University emphasizes permanence and stability. Efficiency, control, and smooth operations are important.	
Total	100

<i>6. Criteria of Success</i>	
A. My major at Baylor University defines success on the basis of the development of human resources, teamwork, employee commitment, and concern for people.	
B. My major at Baylor University defines success on the basis of having unique or the newest products. It is a product leader and innovator.	

C. My major at Baylor University defines success on the basis of winning in the marketplace and outpacing the competition. Competitive market leadership is key.	
D. My major at Baylor University defines success on the basis of efficiency. Dependable delivery, smooth scheduling, and low-cost production are critical.	
Total	100

APPENDIX C

Email Script Manipulation Check

Feminine script 1

Hi, I'm sorry to bother you. I'm really stressed out at the moment because I was planning to be in class today to take notes and get our final assignment.

Unfortunately, the car wouldn't start, and my friends were already at school. I'm embarrassed to reach out to our professor directly because I don't want him to think I'm a bad student. Would you maybe be willing to share the missing assignment and class notes with me?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all reflective of feminine-gendered language			feminine-	Very reflective of gendered language

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all reflective of masculine-gendered language			masculine gendered language	Very reflective of

Feminine script 2

Hello! It was great seeing you in class today. I'm nervous about the group projects for this semester. As soon as rush is over, I'll have absolutely zero time for myself and

I'm awful at time management. What is your schedule like this semester? If you have time, would you consider helping me find a group for the group project?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all reflective of feminine-gendered language			feminine-	Very reflective of gendered language
1	2	3	4	5
Not at all reflective of masculine-gendered language			masculine	Very reflective of gendered language

Feminine script 3

That test was so hard! I'm sure you did amazing because you always study. What did you think of the extra credit? I'm sure I failed. Maybe I can talk the professor into letting me re-take the exam?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all reflective of feminine-gendered language			feminine-	Very reflective of gendered language
1	2	3	4	5
Not at all reflective of masculine-gendered language			masculine gendered language	Very reflective of

Masculine script 1

Hi, I was planning to be in class today, but my stupid car wouldn't start. In my opinion class should have been online but clearly our professor doesn't care to accommodate students. Before I reach out to the professor, can you share the notes from class?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all reflective of feminine-gendered language			feminine-	Very reflective of gendered language
1	2	3	4	5
Not at all reflective of masculine-gendered language			masculine gendered language	Very reflective of

Masculine script 2

This semester is off to a ridiculous start. Personally, I would not have assigned two group projects but clearly, I'm not the professor. Do you want to be in my group for the group projects?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all reflective of feminine-gendered language			feminine-	Very reflective of gendered language
1	2	3	4	5

Not at all reflective of
masculine-gendered language

Very reflective of
masculine
gendered language

Masculine script 3

I think I dominated that silly test. The extra credit was hard but I'm pretty sure I
figured it out. How do you think you did?

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all reflective of
feminine-gendered language

Very reflective of
feminine-
gendered language

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all reflective of
masculine-gendered language

Very reflective of
masculine
gendered language

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