Journal Title: Organizational climate and culture

Volume:
Issue:
Month/Year: 1990
Pages: 153-192

Article Author: Rousseau

Article Title: Assessing organizational culture: The case for multiple methods

Call #: HD58.7 .O7355 1990

Location: evans

Not Wanted Date: 07/11/2003

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Assessing Organizational Culture: The Case for Multiple Methods

Quantitative assessment of culture is controversial. Organizational culture research using structured interviews, Qsorts, and standardized questionnaires mends a well-established construct in the social sciences with a highly sophisticated measurement technology. But what might appear on the surface to be a reasonable combination of concept and operationalization is in fact a disputed one, interjecting issues of epistemology, ethics, and values into research methodology. This chapter examines the nature of the culture construct, its theoretical roots, the epistemological models underlying it, and the strengths and weaknesses of both the qualitative and quantitative methods for studying it. It also clarifies the meaning of quantitative methodology, considers the distinction between assessment and interpretation, and explores ethical issues in assessments of culture. Finally, current techniques for quantitative assessment of culture are reviewed and critiqued, and suggestions are made for future culture research.

Note: My thanks to Benjamin Schneider, Jennifer Chatman, Cathy Enz, and Marshall Sashkin for their insightful comments. I am indebted to Lou Pondy for ideas regarding public versus private research methods. Sam Pokbaz originally created the graphics.
The Culture Construct

Culture typically has been treated by anthropologists (Geertz, 1973; Wallace, 1970) and organizational researchers (Smircich, 1983) as a set of cognitions shared by members of a social unit. These cognitions are acquired through social learning and socialization processes that expose individuals to a variety of culture-bearing elements. These elements include the observable activities and interactions, communicated information, and material artifacts that form the social experience. Despite different substantive interests, organizational theorists who write about culture repeatedly employ terms that, as Barley (1983) indicates, bear a family resemblance (Table 5.1).

Notions of shared values, common understandings, and patterns of beliefs and expectations underlie our views on the nature of culture. Organizational researchers, though conceptualizing culture similarly, have assessed widely different elements. These elements vary in their subjectivity or objectivity, as well as in their observability and availability to both researchers and organization members. Examples include:

- organizational heroes (such as calling enlisted men who assist the launch of F14s “the fighter pilots of the deck”; Roberts, Rousseau & LaPorte, 1990)
- tales of how the boss reacts to incidents of failure or success (such as a manager handing an ingenious employee a banana from his lunch to provide immediate positive reinforcement, hence the Golden Banana Award; Peters & Waterman, 1982)
- rites and rituals (such as the funeral parlor operator opening the window in the death room to signify freshness and life; Barley, 1983)
- behavioral norms (such as laying low when a mistake occurs or being patient with newcomers; Cooke & Rousseau, 1988).

In effect, we seek widely different types of information and probe varied types of knowledge in the study of culture.

Despite a family resemblance in conceptualization and

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definition, inconsistency writing on culture in organizations as unconscious assumptions as artifacts. Cooke and culture as normative beliefs defining physical manifestations and insignia of partially on a preferred set of c
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Table 5.1. Culture Definitions.

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<tr>
<td>Kroeber &amp; Kluckhohn (1952)</td>
<td>Transmitted patterns of values, ideas, and other symbolic systems that shape behavior.</td>
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<td>Louis (1983)</td>
<td>Three aspects: (1) some content (meaning and interpretation) (2) peculiar to (3) a group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin &amp; Siehl (1983)</td>
<td>Glue that holds together an organization through shared patterns of meaning. Three component systems: context or core values, forms (process of communication—for instance, jargon), strategies to reinforce content (such as rewards, training programs).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ouchi (1981)</td>
<td>Set of symbols, ceremonies, and myths that communicate the underlying values and beliefs of the organization to its employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swartz &amp; Jordon (1980)</td>
<td>Pattern of beliefs and expectations shared by members that produce norms shaping behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttal (1983)</td>
<td>Shared values (what is important) and beliefs (how things work) that interact with an organization's structures and control systems to produce behavioral norms (the way we do things around here).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Maanen &amp; Schein (1979)</td>
<td>Values, beliefs, and expectations that members come to share.</td>
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definition, inconsistency and confusion plague much of the writing on culture in organizations. Schein (1984) treats culture as unconscious assumptions and regards conscious expectations as artifacts. Cooke and Rousseau (1988), in contrast, treat culture as normative beliefs shared by members of a social unit, defining physical manifestations (for example, green army fatigue and insignia of rank) as artifacts. Scholars focus essentially on a preferred set of culture elements (for instance, uncon-
Assessing Organizational Cultural, that is, elements of culture, is a family of definitions attached to research. But their focus varies.

To help focus culture, relevant factors, we might consider the elements of culture, organizational, difficult to assess (Figure 5.1). Cultural artifacts reflect the physical manifestation of culture, which might even seem "natural" and communicable to outsiders an organization problems, such as Cooke and Rousseau (1981) identify, and observable relationships that promote mutual predictability, without direct information sequences associated with support or cooperative relations (priorities assigned to coordination versus predictability). Inference — need, not directly known, research-researcher-member interactions (such as an example met CEO’s subordinates). Coordination (that is, interpretive-behavioral, occurring in depth, accessibility, models employing multiple examples, Kilmann, Saxtover, a framework linking the notion of one facet through the notion that culture is something that has been (Sathe, 1985).

Culture has many elements, subjectivity and accessibility, vehicles for transmission of culture, organized.
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cultural, that is, elements in some manner consistent with the family of definitions attached to culture in organizational research. But their focus varies widely.

To help focus culture research and operationalizations on relevant factors, we might consider a description of some major elements of culture, organized from readily accessible to difficult to assess (Figure 5.1). At the perimeter, material artifacts reflect the physical manifestations and products of cultural activity, which might even survive after the individuals and their social unit cease to exist (examples include logos, badges). Structures reflect those patterns of activity—decision making, coordination and communication mechanisms, and so on—that are observable to outsiders and whose functions help solve basic organization problems, such as coordination and adaptation (Cooke & Rousseau, 1981). Behavioral norms, that is, member beliefs regarding acceptable and unacceptable behavior, promote mutual predictability, but they may be difficult to note without direct information from members (for instance, consequences associated with substandard performance, competitive or cooperative relations between peers). Values—that is, the priorities assigned to certain states or outcomes, such as innovation versus predictability and risk seeking versus risk avoidance—necessitate informants. Finally, unconscious assumptions, not directly knowable even to members, require researcher-member interaction over time for assessment to be made (such an example might be siblinglike rivalry between a CEO’s subordinates). Configuring culture as layers of processes (that is, interpretative-behavioral, conscious-unconscious), varying in depth, accessibility, and malleability, is characteristic of models employing multiple dimensions to describe culture (for example, Kilmann, Saxton, Serpa, & Associates, 1985). Moreover, a framework linking multiple elements, describing transmission of one facet through use of others, is consistent with the notion that culture is something an organization is rather than has (Sathe, 1985).

Culture has many elements, layered along a continuum of subjectivity and accessibility. More objective elements become vehicles for transmission of less tangible, more subjective facets
of culture. Material artifacts and other physical manifestations of social systems and the patterns of activities and interactions members observe and carry out (such as decision making and communicating) can constitute major elements of culture when organizational processes directly related to these—use of formal structures, for example—are under investigation. In contrast, if one chooses to focus on deeper layers of culture, for instance in studies of socialization and assimilation, the more tangible culture elements such as the way people respond to mistakes can be construed as transmitters of the highly internalized and often unconscious aspects of culture (an example would be member fear of failure).

Assessing Organizational Climate and Culture

As noted earlier, the values, beliefs, and expectations in organizational culture. Interest in the values characterizing a social unit and in some of these is consistent with a "enacted environment." We develop an organized view ofings for events through identities (x→y+z). This constructed locality and uncertainty of efforts of two or more people attaching meanings to such social construction of reality.'

require mutuality and shared values. Values are preferred states or behaviors ("revealed preferences") of the deepest, most subjective others through they may members.

In this continuum from observable structures and climate in organizations (Parke, 1988) I have argued that definitions of the organization actions or descriptive beliefs organizational properties participativeness in decision beliefs tell us "what is" in influenced by individual ci zation, and organizational beliefs ("what should be" do uct of cultural processes. Psychological processes (a syncratic experience of the level phenomenon that is distinct constructs. Research
As noted earlier, the layers of culture associated with values, beliefs, and expectations constitute the primary elements in organizational researchers’ conceptualizations of culture. Interest in the values, beliefs, and expectations characterizing a social unit and in the interpretations individuals make of these is consistent with a cognitive-based view of culture as an “enacted environment.” Weick (1979) argues that individuals develop an organized view of the world by constructing meanings for events through identification of patterns (for instance, \(x \rightarrow y \rightarrow z\)). This constructed view of the world reduces equivocality and uncertainty of events and typically involves the efforts of two or more people in the process of interpreting and attaching meanings to such patterns, hence the expression “social construction of reality.” Behavioral norms are an example of a social construction experienced by members; these norms require mutuality and sharing as a basis for their existence. Values are preferred states often manifested in observable behaviors (“revealed preferences”). Finally, hidden assumptions—the deepest, most subjective elements of culture—may color all others though they may not be well understood even by members.

In this continuum from unconscious processes to highly observable structures and patterns of activity, the concept of climate in organizations becomes relevant. Elsewhere (Rousseau, 1988) I have argued that climate reflects individual perceptions of the organization and thus focuses on a class of cognitions or descriptive beliefs individuals hold regarding organizational properties (managerial trust, supportiveness, participativeness in decision making, and so on). Descriptive beliefs tell us “what is” in the eye of the beholder and are influenced by individual characteristics, position in the organization, and organizational factors; they contrast with normative beliefs (“what should be done”), which are more strictly a product of cultural processes. Climate as a product of individual psychological processes (and the individual’s potentially idiosyncratic experience of the organization) and culture as a unit-level phenomenon that is derived from social interaction are distinct constructs. Researchers have at times confused climate
with culture because aggregation of individual climate perceptions into unit-level scores has employed measures of consensus or intraunit agreement to justify this aggregation. The assumption is made that agreement means shared perception (which implies that members interact to create this shared worldview). However, few climate studies investigate the role of interaction or social contact in shaping shared perception (Joyce & Slocum, 1984). An individual can provide information on climate even when his or her responses do not agree with those of another unit member. But, by definition, the individual cannot provide meaningful data on culture unless his or her responses in some way converge with those of other members. Note that differentiating climate from culture raises questions regarding the meaning of shared climate perceptions (Does agreement make these perceptions cultural? Are "unshared" perceptions in a culture measure really climate?) The key distinction between climate and culture may be in the content of the measure (descriptive versus normative) and not the sharedness of the data.

Researchers show a tendency to choose their particular layer of culture, defining what is left as less important, or as a byproduct or vehicle for the transmission of the "deeper" elements of culture. These varied layers of culture and their differential availability for study by an outsider suggest that multiple methods are needed to tap the range of cultural elements and processes.

I argue that based on the literature on culture in organizations and other social systems,

1. Culture is a social process associated with a unit in which members share a common set of elements—assumptions and worldviews, values, behavioral norms, patterns of activities, and material artifacts.
2. These elements differ in the degree to which they are consciously experienced by members.
3. Cultural elements vary in their accessibility to outsiders and in the degree to which members must actively provide

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4. Existence of these layers makes it possible to construct stable organizations.
5. As yet, whether the cultural elements generalize in any sense, particularly those that define organizations—are empirically

Why Qualitative Methods

Advocates of qualitative methods support qualitative research methods such as ethnography. Others have argued that culture reflects societal values unique to members of a society, thereby making it impossible to study societal or cultural processes. Schein (1984, 1985) reported that the relevant conceptually derived categories not only warranted generalizability but also provided academic methods applicable to construct and reflect a relatively new field of study—organizational processes.

Two issues are actually presented: developmental assessment, and (2) more general assessment. Weaknesses are of quantitative methods. tapping how individuals experience the organizational research and on which it is predicate.

Organizational sociology in its study of organizations is in its offshoot, the field of
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information and interact in their interpretation before outsiders can understand and represent them.

4. Existence of these layers of elements is common to all units with sufficient social stability (for example, common history, stable membership) to sustain a culture.

5. As yet, whether the content of each layer is unique to a particular social unit and the extent to which cultural elements generalize in content and function across units—particularly those that researchers characterize as “organizations”—are empirical questions.

Why Qualitative Methods in Culture Research?

Advocates of qualitative methods have taken several positions supporting qualitative research and countering the use of quantitative culture measures. Louis (1983) and Smircich (1983) have argued that culture reflects a social construction of reality unique to members of a social unit, and that this uniqueness makes it impossible for standardized measures to tap cultural processes. Schein (1984, 1986b) argues that quantitative assessment conducted through surveys is unethical in that it reflects conceptual categories not the respondent's own, presuming unwarranted generalizability. Deal (1986) suggests that traditional academic methods applied to studying culture “sterilize” the construct and reflect a relabeling of old approaches to studying organizations.

Two issues are actually being raised here: (1) whether cultural processes are in any way amenable to quantitative assessment, and (2) more generally, what the relative strengths and weaknesses are of quantitative and qualitative assessments in tapping how individuals experience the organization. This debate stems from the resurgence of qualitative methodology in organizational research and controversy regarding the assumptions on which it is predicated.

Organizational sociology has long employed ethnography in its study of organizations (for example, see Whyte, 1949). Its offshoot, the field of organizational behavior—which is
rooted in both sociology and industrial and organizational psychology — has come to be characterized by the quantitative methodologies of the latter. A turning point came in the late 1970s when a trend toward "reclaiming" qualitative methods for organizational research emerged (Van Maanen, 1979). This movement emphasizes within-unit interpretations of the meaning of organizational phenomena, eschewing reports of their distribution, pattern, and generalizability across organizations (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). It reflects a view of organizational phenomena as particular and idiosyncratic rather than as replicable and well defined. Appearing in the field of organizational behavior concurrently with the growth of interest in qualitative assessment, the concept of culture has become almost inextricably linked with that methodology.

**Role of the Unconscious.** The rationale for the use of qualitative methods in culture research is largely predicated on the presumed inaccessibility, depth, or unconscious quality of culture. Some elements of culture are defined as layers of cognition of which members are unconscious or relatively unaware (Schein, 1984). Assumptions can be so deeply embedded that they are difficult to bring to the surface and examine. Schein argues that only a complex interactive process of joint inquiry between insiders and outsiders can uncover fundamental assumptions. Such assumptions, he argues, tend to drop out of awareness and become implicit, because unlike the situation with corporate ideology or slogans, there is no need to remind members of assumptions that are an integral part of their worldview. For example, a competitive, "us versus them" view of the world might characterize high-level government officials heading departments competing for resources and political clout. Rivalry, low trust, and defensiveness may become second nature, part of the psychodynamics of government agencies (Peck, 1988).

Some writers — like Smircich (1983) in discussing "root metaphors" — treat culture as a frame of reference through which one perceives the world, a frame of reference that is difficult for an individual to be cognizant of but accessible when insiders and outsiders interact to explore its meanings and workings. Schein (1985) rejected this view and characterized emotional responses as intrinsically tied to the organizational process. In that organization, whether an idea had merit or was debated and did not question the process. Probing and conflict generated by the members revealed a wide range of deep beliefs was reluctant to face. The members share as an unconscious, only to include beliefs or (anxieties, fears, attraction, Sociotechnical theorists developed models of workplace individuals' relations with the view of child to parent and sibling. Fear, anxiety, love, and bonds which can be understood to those experiencing similar to those understanding and treating clinics.

Fundamental assumptions members cannot access go by the name of "overt phenomena" characterize active participation and researchers, in turn, must not engage in standardized surveys and interviews of respondents to report on members. Some scholars argue that demand characteristics of methods, a less structured way of getting back from respondents to the organization.

**Organization Uniqueness.** The idea of uniqueness of an organization's view of the world and personal beliefs cannot be considered a priori questions. Many argue that Likert's (1967)
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workings. Schein (1985) relates the example of an organization characterized by emotional outbursts and conflict, where both appear to be intrinsically a part of the firm's problem-solving process. In that organization, members could not discover whether an idea had merit without subjecting it to extensive debate and did not question the appropriateness of the emotion and conflict generated by the idea-screening process. Extensive probing revealed a widespread fear of failure that members were reluctant to face. The notion of fundamental assumptions members share as an unconscious core can be expanded not only to include beliefs or worldviews, but also basic emotions (anxieties, fears, attractions) that work and relationships evoke. Sociotechnical theorists in the Tavistock tradition have developed models of workplace psychodynamics in which the individuals' relations with the work group and its task parallel those of child to parent and siblings (Bion, 1959; Hirschhorn, 1988). Fear, anxiety, love, and bonding are engendered in these interactions, which can be understood through processes of transference similar to those employed by psychotherapists in understanding and treating clinical patients (Hirschhorn, 1988).

Fundamental assumptions about organizing that even members cannot access go beyond the detailed descriptions of overt phenomena characteristic of ethnomethodology and involve active participation and probing by researchers. Researchers, in turn, must nonetheless set aside their own conceptions of organizing and meaning to probe those of others. Use of standardized surveys and/or interviews might require respondents to report on more than they are really able to—what Nisbett and Wilson (1977) describe as “telling more than we can know.” Some scholars argue that to avoid generating data reflecting demand characteristics associated with structured research methods, a less structured approach allowing probing and feedback from respondents to verify interpretations is necessary.

Organization Uniqueness. Another issue is the possible uniqueness of an organization's values and beliefs such that an outsider cannot form a priori questions or measures. Schein (1984) argues that Likert's (1967) Systems 4 and Ouchi's (1981) Theory
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Z reflect only employee ideologies, not basic culture types, in the absence of an extensive cross-organizational database. Stereotypical or overgeneral categories, reducing the wide variety of possible organizational forms and cultures to an idealized or model few, might be construed as a weakness of an a priori structured approach to tapping culture. Moreover, the specific types assessed might reflect ethnocentrism among organizational development practitioners or organizational behavior researchers, something Schein (1984) labels an “American optimism” that anything can be changed orbettered. Types designated as good or bad by researchers also become themselves value-laden.

These arguments are rooted in the notion of culture as a highly subjective unconscious process. This treatment is not consistent, however, with the majority of scholarly definitions of culture (Table 5.1), where the emphasis has largely been on behavior patterns and values. Nor is it congruent with actual operationalizations of culture. Siehl and Martin (1983) describe culture in a series of case studies focusing on behavioral patterns and artifacts. Barley (1983) uses descriptions of activities (for example, opening windows in the room where a person has died) and language (for instance, using the word sleep as a euphemism for death) to characterize the culture of the funeral industry. In these and other cases, language, overt behaviors and physical evidence are the sources of culture data.

Epistemology. Proponents of qualitative methods have sometimes linked the essential meaning and content of culture to qualitative methods on epistemological grounds. Epistemology, philosophies of knowing and knowledge, offers a variety of different constructions regarding what is knowable and how learning occurs. Morgan and Smircich (1980) employed a subjective-objective continuum to characterize what constitutes knowledge under the different worldviews that social scientists might adopt. Conceiving of reality as a concrete structure, a state to be viewed and measured, the highly objectivist scientist employing a positivist approach uses laboratory experiments and surveys to gain knowledge regarding what are essentially

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the univocal terms and of models in which reality exists in the meanings individuals attribute into concepts of reality. measurement devices fail, individuals’ interpretations are standardized instruments within.

Thus reality as social construction, that are more flexible, situation-specific.

Morgan and Smircich’s techniques of ethnomethodology aimed at understanding shared knowledge in different by ethnomethodology’s agreed-on social order. Most of this research will be unidirectional, positivist view requiring them phenomena studied be universal phenomena, they argue as satisfactory and inappropriate. Fundamental assumptions involve itself and cope with its own members to directly describe way of knowing culture.

Ethics. Finally, and perhaps is raised by Schein (1984) that accuracy raises certain ethical concerns or questionnaire study. Schein argues, by purporting an aggregated survey data raw numbers. He argues that summing information misrepresented derived categories need numbers’ worldview—which is (1984) discussion of empirical perspectives.
the univocal terms and conditions of the world. In contrast, models in which reality emerges from symbolic relations and the meanings individuals attach to interactions interject subjectivity into concepts of reality and make constantly calibrated measurement devices far less appropriate. When the individual's interpretations are primary causes of behavior, standardized instruments will not produce unequivocal results. Thus reality as social construction requires measurement systems that are more flexible, interactive, and person- and situation-specific.

Morgan and Smircich (1980) link social construction with techniques of ethnomethodology. They argue that an inquiry aimed at understanding the production of commonsense, shared knowledge in different areas of everyday life is achieved by ethnomethodology's identification of a subjective and agreed-on social order. Moreover, they argue that the products of this research will be unable to meet the demands of a more positivist view requiring that measurement and indeed the phenomena studied be univocal. In the study of socially constructed phenomena, they argue that quantitative assessment is unsatisfactory and inappropriate. When culture is viewed as fundamental assumptions invented by a social group to integrate itself and cope with its environment, it may be difficult for members to directly describe it. Epistemologically, a different way of knowing culture may be required.

**Ethics.** Finally, and perhaps most controversial, is the assertion by Schein (1984) that accessibility of information on culture raises certain ethical concerns. Researchers employing a survey or questionnaire to study organizations behave unethically; Schein argues, by purporting to speak for respondents through aggregated survey data rather than using the informants' own words. He argues that summary categories and aggregations of information misrepresent the respondents' views. Externally derived categories need not conform to the organization members' worldview—which is consistent with Morey and Luthans's (1984) discussion of emic ("insider") and etic ("outsider") perspectives.
In sum, proponents of qualitative methods argue that culture is most appropriately assessed by such processes because:

1. The fundamental content of culture is unconscious and highly subjective.
2. Interactive probing is required to access otherwise inaccessible and unconscious cultural material.
3. Each culture is idiosyncratic and unique and requires non-standardized assessments.

Opposition to quantitative culture assessment, closely allied with advocacy of qualitative study, maintains that:

1. Culture is not univocal, but as a highly subjective social construction it cannot properly be studied by researcher-constructed categories and scales with unchanging calibrations across field sites.
2. Categorization of constructs on an a priori basis by researchers doing field research misrepresents the experiences of respondents, and thus is invalid.
3. Use of researcher-derived categorizes is a distortion of the respondent's perspective and is thus unethical.

The Case for Multiple Methods

Different layers of culture are amenable to different research methods. Starting at the point of greatest subjectivity in Figure 5.1, assumptions unconsciously held are difficult to assess without interactive probing. Member fears and defenses are elusive psychodynamics difficult to elicit without interaction. In contrast, characteristic patterns of behaviors (norms) regarding how members should (or should not) act are far more accessible. The method appropriate to assessing culture depends on those elements we choose to examine. In the layered model of culture shown in Figure 5.1, observations by outsiders and responses to structured instruments become more appropriate as we move from the center outward. As the elements of culture we are interested in become more conscious (values), behavioral...
Qualitative methods argue that culture is unconscious and required to access otherwise inaccessible material. Unique and unique and requires non-descriptive culture assessment, closely alive study, maintains that:

but as a highly subjective social properly be studied by researcher-d scales with unchanging calibration, the concept on an a priori basis by research misrepresents the experience and thus is invalid. To categorizes is a distortion of the and is thus unethical.

Multiple Methods

are amenable to different research are greater in greatest subjectivity in Figure 5.1 held are difficult to assess with the fears and defenses are elusive elicit without interaction. In context of behaviors (norms) regarding how not act are far more accessible. Assessing culture depends on those behaviors. In the layered model of culture, behaviors by outsiders and responses to me more appropriate as we move is the elements of culture we are conscious (values), behavioral

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(norms), or observable (artifacts), these are accessible by both standardized and nonstandardized assessments. In both instances, assessments must be subjected to the rules of evidence, which in the case of culture means that members must agree or show consensus in the description or responses they provide. It has not always been evident in descriptive writings on culture how much consensus really exists.

Public and Private Research Methods. Framing the choice of method based on the subjectivity of the research introduces the notion of public and private research methods (Pundy & Rousseau, 1980). Public methods are those that can be specified in advance of implementation (that is, as in the case of recipes and other standardized performance programs), consistently observable by others, and replicable across subjects, sites, and data sets. Private methods are researcher-specific, involving cognitions, judgments, and experiences only indirectly communicable to others. Although both private and public methods can involve interaction and customization, private methods are less constrained, standardized, and specified. Public methods are construed as tapping more “objective” factors, emphasizing the collection of certain types of data or information (such as ratings on a specific continuum) available across subjects and sites, whereas private methods involve collecting data that are idiosyncratic, impressionistic, and not necessarily comparable across members or units. In a debate on the role of quantitative and qualitative methods in organizational research, Pondy and Rousseau (1980) took issue with this objective-subjective construction, suggesting that public and private methods involve not just data collection processes, but data analysis as well (Figure 5.2). Potential combinations of public and private methods for data collection and analysis create opportunities to synthesize the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Traditional qualitative methods combine impressionistic data collection with interpretive analysis. Classic quantitative methods couple standardized assessment with statistical analysis. Nonetheless, a rich eclecticism can yield statistical analyses
of impressionistic data (for example, Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988), allowing both exploration of new topics such as emotions and rigorous analysis despite the absence of well-specified a priori constructs. Private assessment coupled with public analysis can open up new areas of study where structured instruments are unavailable or possibly inappropriate. Similarly, standardized data collection combined with interpretive analysis allows researchers experience with a particular type of instrumentation to inform scholars and practitioners about varieties of interpretations, implications, and parallels.

Interpretation of quantitative data essentially mirrors clinical judgment, often reflecting forms of template matching. The example of the Jade Merchant applies here. When a raw jade stone is marketed in Southeast Asia, a “window” is cut on its surface by the merchant to show the varied color and depth within. An experienced buyer of jade matches what he or she sees through the window (color, depth, shading) with the thousands of other pieces (templates) seen in a lifetime in the trade, and from there assesses the jade’s value and potential as an elegant statue or piece of jewelry (Green, 1986). Researchers experienced with a particular instrument possess similar templates, patterns from a variety of different administrations that
can inform us differently about phenomena under study than could traditional statistical analysis.

In my own experience with an inventory assessing the behavioral norms characterizing organizations (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Rousseau, in press), I have repeatedly observed that certain organizations actively promoting norms involving team spirit and goal achievement nonetheless manifest a (contradictory) strong power orientation as well (for example, forcing, building power bases, evoking one’s authority). One set of norms is seemingly at odds with the other. Follow-up reveals that this exercise of power is often a transition, reflecting how the organization implemented the change to what might be considered an “excellent” organization (that is, top-down). This pressure for change exerted by top management falls away as the new team-oriented approach is institutionalized. As with most clinical uses of standardized instruments, complex patterns are apparent to the experienced user that would otherwise be lost in a prespecified statistical analysis and summary of the data. Both the jade merchant and the researcher are shaped by experience. Note here that when interpretation is applied at the analysis phase (by feedback from the respondents), organization members are engaged in an interaction that can establish or refute the veridical nature of the data and researcher interpretations and also assist them in realizing meanings and processes not otherwise available to them (Roberts & Rousseau, 1989).

Current Quantitative Approaches to Measuring Culture

Quantitative approaches to collecting data on organizational culture consist of public, replicable, standardized procedures for obtaining and scoring information on the elements within culture’s conceptual domain. Such methods include highly structured procedures, techniques, and instrumentation, such as interview schedules, questionnaires, and Q-sorts. The essence of this approach is a priori structuring of stimuli to which organization members are exposed during data collection. The common content participants respond to facilitates the application of uniform categorization and scoring systems useful for
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common content. obtaining information about cultural factors quantitatively involves a priori identification of a feasible set of dimensions, categories, or elements likely to be uncovered. theory and previous research and experience are sources of this feasible set. identifying a feasible set of variables requires:

1. well-grounded constructs: dimensions to be assessed require a basis in previous theory and research, supporting the assumption that certain dimensions are generalizable or generic across situations or organizational settings. the more rigorous the assessment scheme, the more grounded this assumption in theory and research. rigor is not and should not be treated as synonymous with quantitiveness, but refers to the strength of inference made possible by a given research study (staw, 1985). relevant terms here are confidence, specification, generalizability, and replication.

2. choice of a unit of measurement: organization members require a frame of reference to make use of standardized descriptors (for instance, short/tall, participative/authoritarian). whether the phenomena studied are organizational, functional, or departmental must be specified. failure to do this creates problems in obtaining consensus across respondents, as was the case in much of the early research on organizational climate (rousseau, 1988). in the case of culture, the focal unit—such as firm, department, or work group—must be specified. failure to do so risks the ambiguity that also plagued much of the early climate research. when the existence of climates is inferred based on statistical agreement at a specific level of aggregation although units go unspecified (for example, "management is trustworthy," "decisions are referred upward") rather than respondents' actual managers in this department referred upward to the aggregated climate anyway, it is questionable.

3. choice of a focus: with dimensions for study omitted, though addressing others, overall measures are specific (or in fact any other conception of certain variables).

subjects, informants, or respondents. participating in studies of the respondent role in research depends on respondents. informants interact in own terms and concepts relative to some extent the designated asks to researcher questions provided by the research. questionnaire response form respondents in the research. research employs key informants (special or more complete). qualitative research relies upon key informants, whose informants' elite—its executive identified as those possessing knowledge, are often relied upon systematic assessment of provided by respondents tended to confirm accuracy or confirmation in the research on climate (for example, interrater members as respondents in nature, involving more perspectives in organizational
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respondents' actual descriptions of a particular unit ("Managers in this department are trustworthy," "Decisions are referred upward to the executive level"), the reality of aggregated climate anywhere other than in the researcher's mind is questionable.

3. **Choice of a focus:** When priorities are set among possible dimensions for study, certain factors are assessed and others omitted. Though all research omits some variables while addressing others, omissions are often quite obvious when measures are specified a priori. No quantitative assessment (or in fact any other) can be all things to all people. Exclusion of certain variables is inevitable.

**Subjects, Informants, or Respondents?** Organization members participating in studies of their organization's culture play a different role in research depending on the type of assessment conducted. Informants interact directly with researchers, using their own terms and concepts to express their point of view, structuring to some extent the direction of the research through their answers to researcher questions. Members who react to stimuli provided by the researcher, such as structured questions, a questionnaire response format, or cards on a Q-sort, serve as respondents in the research. A good deal of organizational research employs key informants (that is, individuals construed to have special or more complete information than others in the organization). Qualitative research on culture to some extent focuses upon key informants, who are often drawn from the organization's elite—its executives and middle managers. Informants, identified as those possessing special or more complete knowledge, are often relied upon for veridical information without systematic assessment of their reliability. In contrast, data provided by respondents tends to be subjected to rules of evidence to confirm accuracy or confidence (for example, statistical tests in the research on climate [James, 1982]) and consensual validation (for example, interrater agreement). Research that employs members as respondents tends to be more cross-sectional in nature, involving more members from diverse positions and perspectives in organizations, a pattern which has an impact on
the content of the cultures revealed by these distinct approaches as well as on their apparent or observed intensity and distribution (see section on results below). Both approaches contrast with methods treating members as subjects, such as participant observation (Whyte, 1949), field stimulation (Salancik, 1979), and unobtrusive measures research (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, & Sechrest, 1966) where individual employees are the passive objects of study.

**Some Quantitative Measures of Culture.** For this chapter, a search was conducted of the existing literature on quantitative assessments of culture. In identifying what researchers are doing with this methodology, it is first necessary to specify what falls into the category of quantitative culture assessment for the purposes of this chapter, and what is excluded. Research employing a standardized a priori specified response set constitutes quantitative assessment. When the context of this response set is any of the elements comprising culture as summarized in Figure 5.1, an aspect of culture is assessed. Thus, studies assessing behavioral norms attached to organizations and their subunits, values espoused regarding organizational actions or preferred outcomes, and other cultural elements with an organizational frame of reference would be included here. Traditional "values" scales such as the Organizational Value Dimensions Questionnaire (Shartle, 1965, 1966) would be excluded because despite the label, they assess the individual respondent's own point of view regarding what is good or poor, acceptable or unacceptable. Practitioner-oriented inventories that lack research supporting their psychometric integrity (as cited by Jones & Pfeiffer, 1975; Ott, 1989) are typically omitted here unless there is evidence of widespread use. Also excluded is what might be tagged as "old wine in new bottles" — that is, climate surveys labeled "culture inventories." These include questionnaires assessing traditional climate concepts such as atmosphere, involvement, communication, and supervision by means of an "organizational culture survey" (see Glaser, Zamanou, & Hacker, 1987, for an example). Note again that climate represents individual perceptions or descriptive beliefs regarding organizational experi-

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ences, while culture is established as a unit.

Given the model of the role of observability and access to culture, quantitative assessments are focused on different elements. Such is the case with structure, psychometric examples of quantitative measures vary from values regarding individuals, such as people, Allen & Dyer, 1984 (Lafferty, 1984, 1989). The focus here is on cultural elements between objective and subjective, as described earlier. These can be a factor in facilitating assessment, no case are key informing how provide culture descriptors can be assessed.

**Content.** Measures of behavioral patterns, or amount of overlap in the culture. The task-people models used by both Kim and Lafferty (1984, 1989) for this dimension in leading (Mouton, 1964) and in personal (Lafferty, 1989). The concept of culture has task versus relationship, yielding a two Culture-Gap Survey (1984) and Organizational Culture Inventory (1985) second dimensions in the Kilmann and Saxton chart versus long-term, operating versus inno
Assessing Organizational Culture

ences, while culture is essentially shared social cognitions within a unit.

Given the model of culture as layers of elements varying in observability and accessibility, it would be reasonable to expect quantitative assessments of culture to focus on more observable elements. Such is the case. Table 5.2 summarizes the content, structure, psychometric properties, and applications of seven examples of quantitative assessments of culture. Their content varies from values regarding priorities or preferences (for example, Sashkin & Fulmer, 1985; Enz, 1986; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1988) to behavioral norms, expectations regarding how members should behave and interact with others (for example, Allen & Dyer, 1980; Kilmann & Saxton, 1983; Cooke & Lafferty, 1984, 1989). The focus of these quantitative assessments is on cultural elements that constitute the middle range, between objective and subjective, based on the framework described earlier. These cross-sectional approaches to assessing culture facilitate assessments of many members' perspectives. In no case are key informants, such as executives, relied on to provide culture descriptors, but rather multiple members' perspectives are assessed.

Content. Measures of behavioral norms surveyed here show a fair amount of overlap in the dimensions used to assess this aspect of culture. The task-people distinction underlies the conceptual models used by both Kilmann and Saxton (1983) and Cooke and Lafferty (1984, 1989) consistent with the prominence given this dimension in leadership research (for example, Blake & Mouton, 1964) and in personality theory (for instance, Cooke & Lafferty, 1989). The conceptual framework underlying both instruments has task versus people intersect with another dimension, yielding a two-by-two model in the Kilmann-Saxton Culture-Gap Survey (1983) and a circumplex in the Organizational Culture Inventory (OCI) (Cooke & Lafferty, 1989). The second dimensions in the two models also resemble each other. Kilmann and Saxton characterize the latter dimension as short versus long-term, operationalizing that in terms of support and relationships versus innovation and freedom, whereas the OCI
Table 5.2. Some Culture Assessment Instruments.

| Title: | Norms Diagnostic Index  
(Kilmann & Saxton, 1983) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspect:</td>
<td>Behavioral norms.</td>
<td>Behavioral norms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus:</td>
<td>Norms, the building blocks of culture, are the expected, accepted, and supported ways of behaving.</td>
<td>Descriptions of what actually happens and expectations of others. Instrument assesses separately actual operating norms and norms that should be operating if performance, job satisfaction, and morale are to be increased. Four scales reflecting a two-by-two framework (Technical/ Human and Short Term/Long Term): Task Support, Task Innovation, Social Relationships, and Personal Freedom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimensions:</td>
<td>Seven primary scales: Performance Facilitation, Job Involvement, Training, Leader-Subordinate Interaction, Policies and Procedures, Confrontation, and Supportive Climate. Scales were derived from both factor analyses and judgment (Allen &amp; Dyer, 1980)</td>
<td>Individual level of measurement aggregated to work group. Paired comparisons (k = 28). KR-20 internal consistency reliabilities were .57, .23, .72, to .26 for the above scales. Test-retest reliabilities (one month) ranged from .83 to .94.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels:</td>
<td>Individual level of measurement.</td>
<td>Not tested. Stable four-factor solution across samples (Saxton, 1987). Scales may be multidimensional. Weak relations with group and organizational morale (Saxton, 1987).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format:</td>
<td>Likert scales (1 to 5, 6 = Don’t know) k = 38.</td>
<td>U.S. for-profit and not-for-profit organizations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Reliabilities: | Not reported. | Organizational Value Congruence Scale  
(Enz, 1986) |
| Consensual validity: | Not reported. | Similarity of individual values to those of top management. |
| Construct validity: | Not reported. | |
| Criterion-related validity: | Scales have low to moderate correlations with the Job Descriptive Index (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969), with high correlations between the NDB’s Supportive Climate and the JDB’s Work and People scales. | |
| Settings: | Manufacturing and retail firms, migrant labor camps. | |
| Title: | Organizational Culture Inventory  
(Human Synergistics, 1986) | |
| Aspect: | Behavioral norms. | |

Focus: Behaviors that facilitate fitting into the organization and meeting expectations of co-workers.


Levels: Individual-level assessment. Frame of reference can be varied in the instructions. Aggregated to work group and organizational levels.

Organizational values are preferences or priorities held by a group or individual regarding their organizations' actions or outcomes. Perceived congruence between the individual and organization affects both employee and management behavior. Single score summed over twenty-two items (for example, professionalism, profits, adaptability, high morale). Top five rank ordering of values "any company should have" also assessed.

Levels: Individual-level measurement.
Consensual validity: Not reported.
Construct validity: Not reported.
Criterion-related validity: Scales have low to moderate correlations with the Job
Descriptive Index (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969), with high correlations between the NDI's Supportive Climate and the JDl's Work and People scales.
Settings: Manufacturing and retail firms, migrant labor camps.
Title: Organizational Culture Inventory
(Human Synergistics, 1986)
Aspect: Behavioral norms.
Focus: Behaviors that facilitate fitting into the organization and meeting expectations of co-workers.
Levels: Individual-level assessment. Frame of reference can be varied in the instructions. Aggregated to work group and organizational levels.
Format: 1 to 5 Likert scales (k120).
Reliabilities: Cronbach's alpha ranging from .70 to .96 (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Roberts, Rousseau, & LaPorte, 1990). LISREL analysis indicates half the scales might be multi-dimensional, loading on more than one factor (Aquino & Rousseau, 1990).
Consensual validity: Within-unit agreement on OCI responses (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Roberts, Rousseau, & LaPorte, 1990).
Construct validity: Stable factor solution across samples (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Roberts, Rousseau, & LaPorte, 1990) and organizational performance (Rousseau, in press).
Criterion-related validity: Concurrent correlations between culture styles and satisfaction, propensity to leave, person-job fit (Roberts, Rousseau, & LaPorte, 1990) and organizational performance (Rousseau, in press).
Settings: Business firms in United States, Canada, New Zealand, Thailand, and Western Europe; U.S. military units, FAA; nonprofit organizations.
Organizational values are preferences or priorities held by a group or individual regarding their organizations' actions or outcomes. Perceived congruence between the individual and organization affects both employee and management behavior.
Single score summed over twenty-two items (for example, professionalism, profits, adaptability, high morale). Top five rank ordering of values "any company should have" also assessed.
Individual-level measurement.
Likert scales (1 to 4; 5 = Don't know; Enz, 1986); 1 to 7 scale; Enz, 1988). (k = 22)
Split-half reliabilities of .87 and .95 in different samples (Enz, 1988).
Not tested.
No consensus between top management and department employees on value congruity (Enz, 1988).
Perceived value-congruity correlates significantly with departmental power. Perceived congruity accounted for departmental power more so than did actual or latent value congruity (Enz, 1988). Top management's perceptions of a department's value congruity correlates most highly with department power.
Quick-service restaurant chain and robotics firm.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>Organizational Culture Profile (O'Reilly, Chatman, &amp; Caldwell, 1988)</th>
<th>Organizational Beliefs Questionnaire (<em>Pillars of excellence</em>; Sashkin &amp; Fulmer, 1985)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspect:</td>
<td>Values.</td>
<td>Values shared by organization members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus:</td>
<td>Values regarding what is important, how to behave, or what attitudes are appropriate.</td>
<td>Value functions that must be present to get work done (based on Parsons' 1968 organizational functions framework).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimensions:</td>
<td>Fifty-four items sorted via a Q-sort technique into nine categories (from most to least characteristic), generated following review of academic and practitioner literatures on culture (for example, being innovative, an emphasis on quality, fairness, flexibility, decisiveness, being calm, being precise, fitting in). Yields an overall profile of organization across fifty-four items. Items chosen to minimize redundancy and social desirability and to enhance generalizability across organizations and readability.</td>
<td>Ten values: enjoying work, being best, innovating or taking risks, attending to details, valuing people, attaining top quality, communicating, growing in production/profit, managing “hands on,” believing in a common “organizational philosophy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels:</td>
<td>Individual descriptions of actual organization. Also used to obtain individual preferences regarding organizational values (Organizational Culture Preference). Person-organization fit computed by comparing Preference scores with aggregated Organizational scores.</td>
<td>Individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format:</td>
<td>Nine categories, forced symmetrical distribution. (k = 54)</td>
<td>Five-point Likert scales (strongly agree to strongly disagree). Items are phrased to avoid social desirability bias: For each scale one item is stated positively and the other negatively and the wording constructed to make it difficult to determine item's desirability. (k = 20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliabilities:</td>
<td>Test-retest reliability (one year) of Organizational Culture Preference Q-sort is .75 for sixteen M.B.A. students (Chatman, 1988).</td>
<td>None reported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consensual validity:</td>
<td>Interrater agreement ranged from .80 to .90 for eight accounting firms.</td>
<td>Relatively low within-organization variance in responses (Sashkin &amp; Fulmer, 1985).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Construct validity:**
Industry experts identified specific accounting firms by their aggregated profiles (Chatman, 1988).

**Criterion-related validity:**
Person-organization fit predicts incentive to stay in organization, satisfaction, and commitment.

**Settings:**
Accounting firms, business school students.

**Title:**
Organizational Culture Survey (Glaser, 1983)

**Aspect:**
Strength and type of culture — that is, "shared values and beliefs."

**Dimensions:**
Types — Based on Deal and Kennedy's (1982) description of culture types; Tough Civil/Marko, Work (High/Low)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels:</th>
<th>Individual descriptions of actual organization. Also used to obtain individual preferences regarding organizational values (Organizational Culture Preference). Person-organization fit computed by comparing Preference scores with aggregated Organizational scores.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Format:</td>
<td>Nine categories, forced symmetrical distribution. (k = 54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliabilities:</td>
<td>Test-retest reliability (one year) of Organizational Culture Preference Q sort is .73 for sixteen M.B.A. students (Chatman, 1988). None reported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consensual validity:</td>
<td>Interrater agreement ranged from .80 to .90 for eight accounting firms. Relatively low within-organization variance in responses (Sashkin &amp; Fulmer, 1985).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct validity:</td>
<td>Industry experts identified specific accounting firms by their aggregated profiles (Chatman, 1988). Not reported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion-related validity:</td>
<td>Person-organization fit predicts incentive to stay in organization, satisfaction, and commitment. Not reported. Norms have been proposed for score needed to achieve particular levels of &quot;excellence&quot; (Sashkin &amp; Fulmer, 1985).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settings:</td>
<td>Accounting firms, business school students. Business organizations (N = 100), management students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>Corporate Culture Survey (Glaser, 1983)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspect:</td>
<td>Strength and type of culture—that is, &quot;shared values and beliefs.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels:</td>
<td>Individual descriptions of their present organizations. Is also used to obtain an &quot;ideal&quot; or desired culture profile and to compute &quot;gap&quot; between ideal and actual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format:</td>
<td>Likert scales (0 to 4) (k = 50).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliabilities:</td>
<td>Not reported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consensual validity:</td>
<td>Not reported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct validity:</td>
<td>Not reported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settings:</td>
<td>Business organizations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
refers to the second dimension as security-versus-satisfaction-oriented (along the lines of Maslow’s need hierarchy). In both instruments, this second dimension refers to the degree to which individuals are encouraged to avoid conflict and protect themselves, or to innovate and take risks. Thus, to some extent, these instruments contrast a risk-averse, behavior-inhibiting set of norms with behavior-enhancing growth-oriented expectations. Together, these instruments suggest that norms derived from theories of behavior in organizations share a common focus (tasks or people) and reflect both behavior-inhibiting (for example, risk-averse) and behavior encouraging (for instance, risk-seeking) expectations.

The other instrument focusing on behavioral norms, the Norms Diagnostic Index (NDI; Allen & Dyer, 1980), is reminiscent of a climate survey, containing a collection of different dimensions along which organizations can be described (such as performance facilitation, training, supportive climate, and so on) without an underlying integrative framework. The parallel between the NDI and a climate survey may reflect the fact that the NDI is the oldest of the surveys reviewed here, embodying the transition from climate to culture as a popular concept for organizational assessment.

Values are assessed in the Organizational Beliefs Questionnaire (Sashkin & Fulmer, 1985), Organizational Values Congruence Scale (Enz, 1986, 1988), Corporate Culture Survey (Glaser, 1983), and Organizational Culture Profile (O’Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1988). Their content is diverse, with Sashkin and Fulmer (1985) and O’Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell (1988) employing such dimensions as innovation, quality, and common culture. In contrast, Enz (1986) uses somewhat more abstract constructs such as professionalism, control over environment, and social well-being. Glaser’s (1983) survey yields atheoretical categories scored along dimensions of the popular book Corporate Culture: The Rites and Rituals of Organizational Life by Deal and Kennedy (1982).

In short, the content of inventories assessing values and behavioral norms does vary. Certain dimensions do, however, appear on several questionnaires, expressed either as values or

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.3. Generic Dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfectionism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer status quo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never make a mistake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge new idea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

as behaviors. When organizing these three general categories:

1. Task-related values: quality
2. Interpersonal values: communicating
3. Individual values: autonomy and self-expression

Together, these dimensions capture cultural elements. Moreover, many of these concepts are expressed in similar terms, even to a point of paradox. For example, organizations that support innovation and actually supporting phenomena, though a combination of the type listed above, often include distinct types of culture.
Organizational Climate and Culture

security versus satisfaction—wants need hierarchy). In both to avoid conflict and protection risks. Thus, to some extent, adverse behavior inhibiting setting growth-oriented expectations suggests that norms derived organizations share a common both behavior inhibiting (for or encouraging (for instance, 

Organizational Beliefs Questionnaire, Organizational Values Questionnaire, Corporate Culture Survey, Organizational Culture Profile (O'Reilly, their content is diverse, with Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell's (1986) uses somewhat more professionalism, control over en-

Glaser's (1983) survey yields dimensions of the popular Rituals of Organizational Life inventories assessing values and dimensions do, however, expressed either as values or

Assessing Organizational Culture

Table 5.3. Generic Dimensions for Cultural Values and Behavioral Norms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Interpersonal</th>
<th>Individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Valuing people</td>
<td>Self-expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk taking</td>
<td>Fitting in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfectionism</td>
<td>Team spirit/morale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Fear of failure</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>Prefer status quo</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm</td>
<td>Never make a mistake</td>
<td>Approval seeking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenge new idea</td>
<td>Open communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

as behaviors. When overlapping dimensions are considered, three general categories are evident (Table 5.3):

1. Task-related values and behaviors, such as risk taking and quality
2. Interpersonal values and behaviors, such as supporting and communicating
3. Individual values and behaviors addressing the enhancement of organization members personally, including freedom and self-expression

Together, these dimensions reflect an etic perspective on cultural elements. Moreover, values and behaviors can be expressed in similar terms, even though values and norms are distinct concepts. For example, expressing a preference for creativity and actually supporting and rewarding it are distinct social phenomena, though a core theme exists. Comparable dimensions of the type listed in Table 5.3 may apply across several distinct types of culture elements, such as hidden assumptions,
norms, values, and patterns of activity. Assumptions and values may be configured in terms of task as well as interpersonal and individual foci, as in the case of group psychodynamics involving risk aversion (task), interunit conflict (interpersonal), and limited member autonomy (individual). The same may be true for behavioral norms, which might promote innovation (task), teamwork (interpersonal), and personal discretion and judgment (individual). For example, cultural analyses of high-risk organizations such as nuclear power plants frequently stress the predominance of controlling and restrictive task, interpersonal, and individual values and norms while advocating the need for innovation, teamwork, and operator discretion particularly in crisis situations (Hirschhorn, 1983; Perrow, 1984; Rousseau, 1989).

**Consensus.** Though consensus is a sine qua non for identification of a norm and also for the attribution that a particular preference or priority is an organizational value, it is noteworthy that consensual validity has not been reported in any published form for several of the instruments surveyed here. The OCI (Cooke & Lafferty, 1984, 1989) demonstrates moderate—that is, squared correlation ratios of approximately 12 percent—with-unit agreement (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Roberts, Rousseau, & LaPorte, 1990), with consensus strongest when within-subunit agreement is investigated (for example, by department, level, military operating unit). Sashkin and Fulmer (1985) also examined within-organization covariance for the Organizational Beliefs Questionnaire and found it to be relatively low, while in contrast Enz (1988) found virtually no consensus between top management and employees within specific departments on values the organization purported to espouse. Failure of the other researchers to test for consensus indicates, however, that a major methodological concern has yet to be satisfied in the use of individual-level data to describe something about the organization or unit.

Where consensus is tested, results question the generalizability of the notion that organizations have a strong pervasive dominant culture. Rather, data suggest that organizations may in fact be strong operating at the level of functions—marketing, production, organizational level. No initiative, and teamwork in contrast to norms of cooperation, and dependence on functions. That such norms are a link between organizations.

The lack of consensus regarding the organization's (1988) research also suggests that organizational levels can experience preferences. Enz goes on to argue that between departmental subunits that are associated with greater power and rank. Although evidence from organizational norms and values assessments, Chatman (1984) has found that organizational values relate to levels of public accounting culture profiles. In sum highlighted uniformity and evidence from quantitative the differences can be addressed.

Dominant culture organizations, necessitate patterns and distribution. The various patterns of assessments suggest two distinct integration.

**Intensity** is the extent to which the norms, values, or other unit. Organizations with entrepreneurship have integrated organizations or those in transi...
Assessing Organizational Culture

may in fact be strongly subcultural, with behavioral norms operating at the level of the subunit. Some theory supports this (Schneider & Reichers, 1983). Cooke and Rousseau (1988) found that the organizations they surveyed were strongly subcultural by functions—marketing, production, and so on—but also by organizational level. Norms supporting achievement, personal initiative, and teamwork characterized higher organization levels in contrast to norms supporting conflict avoidance, competition, and dependence characteristic of lower levels in organizations. That such norms differentiate hierarchical levels suggests a link between organizational structure and cultural elements.

The lack of consensus among members of different units regarding the organizational values demonstrated in Enz's (1988) research also suggests that members of different organization levels can experience divergent priorities and outcome preferences. Enz goes on to argue that congruence when it exists between departmental and top-management values is associated with greater power and influence for congruent departments. Although evidence for the subcultural nature of organizational norms and values is provided by several quantitative assessments, Chatman (1988) found substantial convergence in organizational values reported by respondents in different levels of public accounting firms using her Organizational Culture Profile. In sum, where qualitative research has highlighted uniformity and mutuality in descriptions of culture, evidence from quantitative assessments of culture suggests that the differences can be as striking as the similarities.

Dominant cultures are characteristic of some but not all organizations, necessitating perhaps more attention to varied patterns and distributions of cultural elements in organizations. The various patterns of agreement evident in quantitative assessments suggest two distinct attributes of culture: intensity and integration.

Intensity is the extent to which members of a unit agree on the norms, values, or other culture content associated with the unit. Organizations with strong norms promoting service or entrepreneurship have intensive cultures, whereas new organizations or those in transition (due to culture change or member...
turnover) have weaker, less intensive cultures. Intensity is evident when intraunit agreement among members regarding culture content is great. Greater consistency in member behavior is expected where intensive cultures are evident.

Integration is the extent to which units within an organization share a common culture. Organizations with a pervasive dominant culture, such as hierarchically controlled power-oriented military units (Rousseau & Cooke, 1988) have highly integrated cultures. In contrast, firms structured functionally—as in the case with many manufacturers—might have strong subcultures (for instance, engineering versus marketing) and a weaker overall corporate culture. Low cultural integration is associated with within-firm differentiation in goals, structures, and personnel practices. Integration is in effect an intensive culture at the organizational level.

Since culture involves a diverse array of values and beliefs, organizations may simultaneously have a strong dominant culture (for example, regarding how business is conducted—quality versus quantity, risk aversion versus innovation) and intensive subcultures as well (for instance, regarding how people are to be treated—teamwork in manufacturing and entrepreneurship in sales). Recent research on nuclear-powered aircraft carriers reveals such a pattern, where the organization's dominant, shared culture emphasizes power and dependence while particular subunits also stress achievement, teamwork, and individual participation in technical decisions (Rousseau & Cooke, 1988). Quantitative assessments facilitate intra- and interunit comparisons—in fact requiring them to establish the instrumentations' psychometric properties—and can reveal a diversity of cultural patterns.

Research Results

Use of quantitative assessments for statistical inferences has resulted in testing of a number of hypotheses and research questions. Some general findings are reviewed here.

1. Is there intraunit agreement on organizational values and behavioral norms? As described earlier, diverse patterns are in

Assessing Organizations evidence, though in

2. What influences do process or outcomes? or qualitative—exist

3. Is culture related to success? Congruity be

4. Do cultural values and the departmental power and influence of cultural elements increase to and influence norms and expectations, there is a sys.

5. How do cultural characteristics higher institutional report that achieve helpful, and affiliate

level employees rep
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Evidence, though in general consensus on values and norms exists within departments, functions, and levels of organizations. The degree of consistency between units varies in organizations and cannot be assumed.

2. What influences do dominant cultures have on organizational process or outcomes? Little systematic research—quantitative or qualitative—exists on the impact of culture on organizational effectiveness. When different types of organizational strategies are considered, research (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Roberts, Rousseau, & LaPorte, 1990; Rousseau & Cooke, 1988; Rousseau, in press) suggests that organizations with reliability-oriented strategies (avoiding error and operating predictably and without catastrophe, as is the case in military operations and air traffic control) have behavior-inhibiting norms (for instance, risk aversion, hierarchical control, conflict avoidance, critical opposition). Organizations with performance-oriented strategies (growth, adaptability, innovation) are characterized by behavior-enhancing norms (creativity, self-expression, teamwork, encouragement). Thus culture and strategy may well be linked. A recent study suggests successful charitable fund-raising campaigns have more achievement-oriented and self-expressive norms than those that raise less money. Less successful campaigns are associated with norms of conflict avoidance and competition (Rousseau, in press).

3. Is culture related to other organizational characteristics and processes? Congruity between subunit members’ beliefs regarding values and those of top management correlate with departmental power (Enz, 1986), suggesting that the pattern of cultural elements within an organization affects subunit access to and influence over top management. Although behavioral norms are differentiated across levels in organizations, there is a systematic pattern in the types of norms characterizing higher and lower levels. High-level executives report that achievement, self-actualization, humanistic, helpful, and affiliative behavior predominate, while lower-level employees report an emphasis on dependence, conventionality, and approval (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988). In

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Results

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are reviewed here.

organizational values and behav-
riever, diverse patterns are in
short, executives experience the workplace as more team-oriented and creative, whereas their employees see it as more controlling and inhibiting.

4. **What influences do cultures have on individual outcomes?** Allen and Dyer (1980) found correlations between their measure of culture and job satisfaction. Saxton (1987) found weak relations between cultural dimensions and group and organizational morale. Roberts, Rousseau, and LaPorte (1990) found significant relationships between behavioral norms and member satisfactions, propensity to stay, person-organization fit, and (lack of) role conflict. Organizational norms supporting what they termed a *satisfaction* culture—(emphasizing achievement, self-expression, humanistic/helpful, and affiliative norms)—produced positive effects on these outcomes, while *security-oriented* norms such as power, perfectionism, conventionality, and approval were negatively related to these individual outcomes.

5. **How idiosyncratic are cultural elements to specific organizations?** Martin and Siehl (1983) have argued that members believe their own organizations to be unique to such a great extent that this belief is itself highly generalizable. Ideally, tests of whether cultural elements are unique to particular organizations or generalizable across them should come from independent assessments of several organizations without an a priori categories or cultural dimensions. Such comparative analyses are not currently available. However, quantitative assessments using a priori dimensions of culture have revealed patterns of behavioral norms and values common to several organizations. Effects of level, strategy, and function noted earlier suggest that certain behavioral norms may characterize specific types of organizations or positions. But it must be noted that while quantitative analysis often seeks patterns and generalizability and qualitative research idiosyncrasy and distinctiveness, more comparative qualitative research is necessary to resolve this research question.

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**Future**

The tendency to treat cultures and sets of elements—how they tie theory and hypotheses together—is not straightforward. Methodological debates continue to stifle much of the research expected in the decade ahead, as organizational behavior is redefined to be fulfilled.

Quantitative assessment of cultural organizations or comparisons between culture and organizational patterns. Some questions require different sets of norms dominate, what implications do priorities the organization produces, and the integration? How do members (where mutuality or sharing) cope with the environment? If cultural values and beliefs, how do they transition and how do they change?

The layers of culture described are more than a framework that organizes knowledge. What integrated into the organizational behavioral norms? Or prior knowledge of members when material is in evidence? What are members values, or basic assumptions about the organization among members?

How members integrate with the organization is a question of understanding the nature of norms, values, and basic...
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Future Research on Culture

The tendency to treat culture as univocal—having one meaning and set of elements—has deprived the field of the rich array of theory and hypotheses such a complex concept can generate. Methodological debates, prejudices, and preferences seem to have stifled much of the constructive work that might have been expected in the decade or so since culture first entered the organizational behavior mainstream. The potential remains to be fulfilled.

Quantitative assessment offers opportunity for interorganizational comparisons to assess often-assumed relations between culture and organization success, strategy, and goals. Qualitative research can explore the meanings behind the patterns. Some questions remain: If top managers really do have different sets of norms and expectations than their subordinates, what implications do these have for the values and priorities the organization embodies, the service or products it produces, and the integration of members into the organization? How do members of organizations with weak cultures (where mutuality or shared beliefs are lacking) make sense of their environment? If culture changes mean unfreezing of old values and beliefs, how do people interpret and react to times of transition and how do they relearn a culture?

The layers of culture elements different theorists have described are more than just a typology; they also represent a framework that organization members must master to become integrated into the organization. What do they learn first? Behavioral norms? Or priorities and values? Is it easier to socialize members when material and symbolic artifacts are pervasively in evidence? What are more commonly shared: behavior norms, values, or basic assumptions? What is the impact of disagreement among members regarding these?

How members internalize culture from their experiences with the organization is a critical topic of study if we are to better understand the nature of cultural elements, and the impact of norms, values, and basic assumptions on behavior, sense mak-
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ing and membership. Though culture has widely been discussed as a process—that is, what the organization is—it has not really been studied as one. Research must go beyond description to explore learning, socialization, and change.

These research questions offer great opportunity. Failure to apply a variety of methods to assessing culture limits our understanding of it. Characterizing cultural elements in terms of generalizable dimensions fosters interunit comparisons and understanding of systematic effects, while qualitative probing can explore how members interpret and internalize these features. Clearly there is a need for both etic and emic perspectives. The structured assessments described here yield a number of etic categories found to be applicable in diverse organizational settings. Dimensions of task performance, interpersonal relations, and individual integrity are relevant descriptors in all organizational settings. How these are affected idiosyncratically by the personality and style of executives or the subjective interpretations made by members requires the combined resources of quantitative and qualitative methods—the logical next step.

Conclusion

Culture research remains an unpaid promissory note in the field of organizational behavior. Driven largely by methodological preferences and a topical subject matter rather than by theory, we are still in the earliest phases of understanding culture's role in organizations.

Notes

1. The author holds degrees in both anthropology and industrial and organizational psychology. She recalls her first industrial and organizational psychology course (about 1972), in which the instructor said, “In this field, only the methods and not the findings generalize.”

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**Level-of-Analysis in Climate and Culture Research**

As other chapters of this book discuss, culture has found expression in various outlets, including popular culture or climate of organizations. The term "culture" or "climate" of an organization is often used to describe the prevailing attitudes, beliefs, and values shared by its members. It is typically studied through surveys, interviews, and other methods that allow for the collection of data on employees' perceptions of their workplace. However, these approaches seem to address the levels of analysis—although they may not always provide meaningful insights.

This chapter attempts to address the levels of analysis that will allow consistent results.

*Note:* We gratefully acknowledge Irwin Goldstein on an earlier