

CHAPTER 3

Organizational Culture: Concepts, Definitions, and a Typology

Organizational culture is not just another piece of the puzzle, it is the puzzle. From our point of view, a culture is not something an organization has; a culture is something an organization is. (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983, p. 126).

Many of the debates about organizational culture are caused by people's use of different concepts and definitions. This chapter seeks to clarify matters by examining just what organizational culture is. The overview of organizational culture in Chapter 1 and the discussion of its elements and functions in Chapter 2 provide the groundwork for this task.

There are two very basic ways to go about defining complex concepts: (a) inductively building a generalized theoretical definition from one's experiences, preferences, and assumptions; and (b) working deductively from a generalized theory, analyzing realities to see how they fit with theory, and modifying theory based on the results of the analysis.

While this chapter uses both deductive and inductive approaches, deduction predominates. Keesing (1974) and Schein (1981; 1984; 1985) provide the theory for creating an initial classification system, or a typology of organizational culture elements (Miles & Huberman, 1984, chs. III–VI), which then is used to analyze and compare a wide array of concepts of organizational culture that have been proposed by writers. The typology is used throughout the rest of this book as the analytical framework for understanding different aspects of organizational culture, such as the relationships between organizational culture, leadership, change strategies, and research methodologies.

It is useful to review the brief description of organizational culture that was presented in Chapter 1:

- Organizational culture is the culture that exists in an organization, something akin to a societal culture.
- It is made up of such things as values, beliefs, assumptions, perceptions, behavioral norms, artifacts, and patterns of behavior.
- It is a socially constructed, unseen, and unobservable force behind organizational activities.
- It is a social energy that moves organization members to act.
- It is a unifying theme that provides meaning, direction, and mobilization for organization members.
- It functions as an organizational control mechanism, informally approving or prohibiting behaviors.

These basic assumptions of the organizational culture perspective differ from those of other perspectives of organization theory.¹ As I asserted in Chapter 1, the organizational culture perspective is challenging the basic views of the structural and systems perspectives, about how organizations make decisions, and how and why people in organizations behave as they do. It is a counterculture within organization theory. Proponents of the organizational culture perspective believe that the structural and systems perspectives of organization theory are using the wrong lenses to look at the wrong organizational elements in their attempts to understand and predict organizational behavior.

The prior paragraph may make it sound as though there is consensus about organizational culture and unanimity of concepts among proponents of the organizational culture perspective. This is far from the case. There are very important substantive disagreements. The most fundamental of these involves the contents or composition of an organizational culture: what are the elements, constructs, and attributes of an organizational culture? The differences are more than semantic debates. They reflect serious disagreements about how one views, investigates, manages, and changes organizations.

The first step toward understanding the essence of *organizational culture* is to appreciate that it is a concept rather than a thing. This distinction is crucial. A thing can be discovered and truths established about it, for example, through empirical research. Unlike a thing, however, a concept is created in peoples' minds—that is, it

¹More complete discussions are in Chapters 1 and 6.

must be conjured up, defined, and refined. Thus ultimate truths about organizational culture (a concept) cannot be found or discovered. There is no final authoritative source or experiment to settle disagreements about what it is or what comprises it.

Why is this important? Because when someone claims to have identified an organizational culture, that discovery represents nothing more than the results obtained from applying that person's concepts of organizational culture (via a concept-driven deciphering process) in a given organization.² Another discoverer who uses a different concept-driven deciphering process will find a different culture in the same organization (Van Maanen, 1979, 1983; Herbert, 1987, Preface). The concept of culture that is used to shape the discoverer's frame of reference determines what is looked for and how it is looked for; and it often predetermines what is found. Consider an analogy. It is easy to get people to agree that frogs are green once there is consensus about what constitutes green. Without agreement on green, there is no way to secure consensus on the color of a frog.

The second important thing to remember is that how one looks at organizational culture largely determines what it is. When you or I start thinking about organizational culture structurally (as in Figures 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, and 3-4) we create structural typologies that, in turn, cause us to forget that organizational culture is not just structural elements. It also is a *dynamic process*—a social construction that is undergoing continual reconstruction—as well as *the puzzle*, “not just another piece of the puzzle” (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983, p. 146).

Organizational culture's definitional problems mirror longstanding arguments in anthropology, archaeology, and cultural anthropology about the general concept of culture. In 1952, the cultural anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn identified 164 different definitions of culture existing in their search of the literature. As recently as 1982, Ian Hodder described and bemoaned the problems caused by the continuing debate between anthropologically oriented and materially oriented archaeologists over what culture is. The

²For example, Allen and Kraft (1982) define organizational culture operationally as norms, describe how to measure norms, and then announce that the organizational culture has been identified. Davis (1984) identifies two levels of organizational culture, *guiding beliefs* and *daily beliefs*. He implicitly equates guiding beliefs with goals or strategies and proposes goal and strategy change tactics as though they were synonymous with tactics for changing organizational culture. He is more explicit about equating daily beliefs with existing rituals and management practices. Kilmann (1985) minimizes the importance of defining organizational culture, and seems to equate it with something akin to *organizational climate*. His “five tracks to organizational success” closely resemble an organization development program.

situation is perhaps even less clear relative to organizational culture.

There are very few areas of general consensus about organizational culture. They include the five assumptions stated earlier in this chapter:

1. Organizational cultures exist.
2. Each organizational culture is relatively unique.
3. Organizational culture is a socially constructed concept (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Holzner & Marx, 1979, chs. 4 and 5; Mead, 1934).
4. Organizational culture provides organization members with a way of understanding and making sense of events and symbols.
5. Organizational culture is a powerful lever for guiding organizational behavior. It functions as “organizational control mechanisms, informally approving or prohibiting some patterns of behavior” (Martin & Siehl, 1983, p. 52).

But beyond these five basic points agreement is very limited, and the points say nothing about what organizational culture is. Consensus is restricted to its existence, relative uniqueness, and a few functions it performs.

The variety of views about the essence of organizational culture has been mentioned several times without substantiation. It is enlightening (and entertaining) to scan some of the definitions that have appeared in the literature. The chapter appendix contains excerpted definitions from fifty-eight books and articles on organizational culture and closely related topics. The references are representative but certainly not exhaustive. The key words and phrases from these definitions are presented in Figure 3–1. No words or phrases are included that describe sources, functions, transmittal, change, or maintenance of organizational culture—only what it is, and what elements constitute it.

Figure 3–1 lists seventy-three words or phrases used to define organizational culture from the fifty-eight different published sources listed in the chapter appendix. Figure 3–1 makes it easy to see why Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) found 164 definitions of culture. Clearly the concept has not been clarified very much since 1952, at least not by those who have written about organizational culture.

CLASSIFYING ELEMENTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Typologies are simply classification systems. They are frameworks, much like file folders and drawers, where one puts sorted and grouped information (Miles & Huberman, 1984, ch. II). As with all

FIGURE 3-1 Alphabetical Listing of Elements of Organizational Culture

anecdotes, organizational	management practices
art	manner
assumptions that people live by	material objects
assumptions, patterns of basic	meaning, patterns of
assumptions, shared	meanings
attitudes	meanings, intersubjective
behavioral regularities	mind-set
being	myths
beliefs	norms
beliefs, patterns of shared	philosophy
celebration	physical arrangements
ceremonies	practical syllogisms
climate, organizational	purpose
cognitive processes, patterns of	rites
commitment to excellence	ritualized practices
communication patterns	rituals
consensus, level of (about myriad organizational variables)	roots
core	rules, informal system of
customs	scripts, organizational
doing things, way of	sentiments
enactment (per Weick, 1977)	source of norms, rules, attitudes, customs, and roles
ethic, organizational	specialness, quality of perceived organizational
ethos	spirit
expectations, shared	stories, organizational
feelings	style
glue that holds an organization together	symbols
habits	thinking, way of
heroes	traditions
historical vestiges	translation of myths into action and relationship
identity	understandings, tacit
ideologies	values
interaction, patterns of	values, basic or core
jargon	values, patterns of shared
justification for behavioral patterns	vision
knowledge	way
language	worldviews
links between language, metaphor and ritual	

filing systems, useful typologies must have a sound theoretical framework or else they are not useful for grouping, storing, and extracting information. The typology presented in this chapter was constructed

primarily from theories proposed by the cultural anthropologist Keesing (1974) and the organizational theorist Schein (1985).

Keesing (1974) described two schools of cultural anthropology that have strongly influenced current concepts of culture: the adaptationist and the ideationalist schools. These two schools provide a starting point for creating a typology to sort through the myriad conceptions of organizational culture. The *adaptationist* concept of culture is based on that which is directly observable about the members of a community, including socially transmitted patterns of speech, behavior, and uses of tangible (material) items such as tools. It is based on patterns of behavior that help communities relate to their environments. In contrast, the *ideationalist* concept of culture is based on that which is shared in the community members' minds, including their common beliefs, values, knowledge, meanings, and ideas.

The different concepts of culture held by the ideationalists and the adaptationists—by those who focus on behaviors and things, and those who are more concerned with shared ideas and meanings—help to explain why debates continue to rage about whether organizational culture consists of such things as artifacts, behavioral norms, patterns of behavior, and language, or of its shared assumptions, beliefs, understandings, and values.

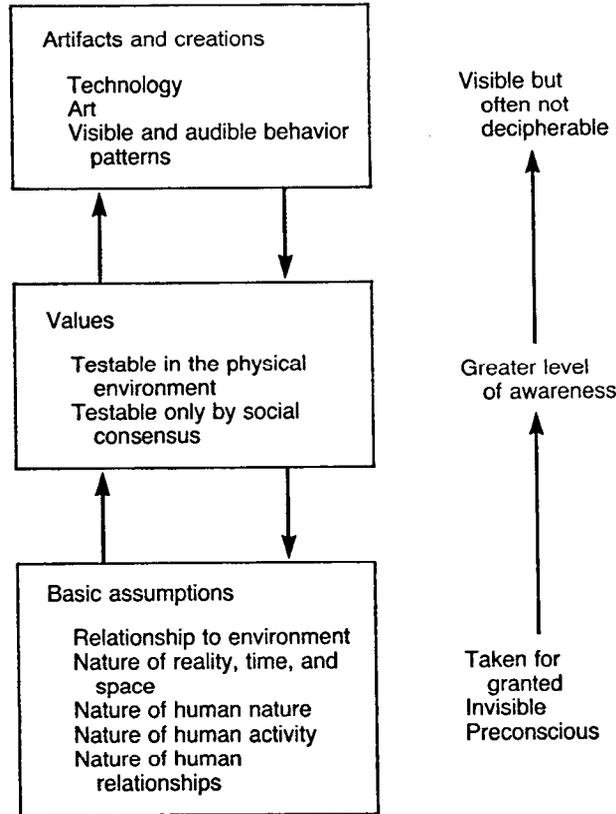
Edgar H. Schein, a clinical psychologist turned organizational theorist, refined the distinction between the adaptationist and ideational views of culture by conceptualizing three levels of organizational culture: (Schein, 1981, 1984, 1985)

- Level 1—artifacts.
- Level 2—values and beliefs.
- Level 3—basic underlying assumptions.

Level 1 of organizational culture, *artifacts*, is consistent with the adaptationist view of culture. Level 2, *values and beliefs*, overlaps aspects of both the adaptationists and the ideationalists. Level 3, *basic underlying assumptions*, is consistent with ideationalist concepts. This conceptualization of the levels of organizational culture is diagrammed in Figure 3-2.

By now the reader should be questioning the usefulness of this definitional exercise: "Why bother to create a typology?" There are many practical reasons. Consider, for example, the different implications the three levels of organizational culture have for managers who want to make fundamental organizational changes—such as John Thomas, the new president of the Mountain State Chapter—or when the world changed around AT&T. How does a manager insti-

FIGURE 3-2 Schein's Three Levels of Organizational Culture and Their Interaction



SOURCE: Reprinted from "Does Japanese Management Style Have a Message for American Managers?" by E. H. Schein, *Sloan Management Review*, Fall 1981, p. 64, by permission of the publisher. Copyright © 1981 by the Sloan Management Review Association. All rights reserved.

tute dramatic holistic changes? Where does one start? What "change levers" should be used? The following discussion describes just one example of the many practical applications for a typology of organizational culture.

If the Level 1 definition of organizational culture (artifacts) is used as the frame of reference for holistic change, AT&T's management must alter longstanding patterns of behavior, including its shared patterns of decision making. If this is the case, AT&T management should use whatever is known or theorized about how to change patterns of behavior and decisions in organizations to induce change in the company's culture. Presumably, management's strategy would include many complementary thrusts such as developing

strategic marketing plans; creating new organizational units with marketing-oriented goals and objectives; changing the rewards systems (the criteria for pay increases and promotions); and modifying the contents of management information and control systems. AT&T also might bring in teams of applied behavioral scientists to help alter patterns of behavior, perhaps using management training or instituting participative management techniques. New executives might be recruited from companies acknowledged for their marketing savvy. Management's levers for changing AT&T's basic orientation probably would include the company's strategic plans; organizational structures; management information and control systems; decision processes; policies and procedures; reward systems; management training; and behavioral norms (Allen & Kraft, 1982; Davis, 1984).

However, many newspaper and business journal articles have reported AT&T's apparently unsuccessful use of all of these change levers. For example, on October 26, 1985, the *Rocky Mountain News* carried a page three article headlined, "AT&T Plant in Westminster to Lay Off 400." The story announced that for the second time in four months, AT&T Information Systems was laying off workers from its Westminster (Colorado) manufacturing plant.

Art Bouffard, public relations manager for AT&T in Denver, blamed the layoffs on slow orders for two business products. . . . The giant communications company, anticipating strong demand for the Merlin Communications Systems and PBX central telephone systems, had increased employment in plants nationwide, but orders have fallen short. AT&T is laying off employees at plants in other states.

The Level 1 perspective of organizational culture does not open the door to dramatic new strategies, tools, or approaches for changing the basic orientation of an organization. Yet some authors and consultants are exploiting the rising visibility of the organizational culture perspective by defining Level 1 as organizational culture and advocating the types of approaches described above as something new and innovative (Allen & Kraft, 1982; Davis, 1984; Kilmann, 1984). Their approaches and methods may be perfectly appropriate for the situations they describe, but to identify such approaches as the organizational culture perspective is misleading and creates unnecessary confusion.

In contrast, the use of Level 2 (values and beliefs) or Level 3 (basic assumptions) as the guiding theoretical framework for changing AT&T's (or any other organization's) organizational culture requires entirely different targets in an organization and a very different arsenal of change tools and approaches. The levers that can be used effectively to alter artifacts generally will not succeed in

changing patterns of shared beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions. Many of the appropriate change levers have been around for a long time, and a few are the same ones as those that can be used in Level 1. However, they must be applied differently. The organization must be perceived differently. Managers must buy a new pair of “3-D glasses.”

Some Older Tools for Creating Change

A few of the older but still applicable levers for creating employee readiness to modify their beliefs, attitudes, values, and moral codes include:

- The social psychological models for changing peoples’ attitudes and thought patterns (Lewin, 1947; Zimbardo & Ebbesen, 1970).
- The subtle and not-so-subtle U.S. Forest Service strategies for gaining willing compliance among geographically isolated forest rangers (Kaufman, 1960).
- The thought and attitude change tactics used in total institutions such as asylums (Goffman, 1961) and prisoner-of-war camps (Schein, 1961).
- The processes organizations use to socialize new members and older employees promoted or transferred across organizational boundaries (Schein, 1968; 1978; Van Maanen, 1983b).
- The belief-controlling strategies used by cults (Festinger, Riecken, & Schachter, 1956).
- The value-altering strategies used by medical schools on future doctors (Becker, Geer, Hughes, & Strauss, 1961).
- The use of cognitive dissonance to change beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, and values (Festinger, 1957).

Some Newer Tools for Creating Change

Other Level 2- and Level 3-type organizational change targets and levers are relatively new, at least in terms of their application to changing organization culture. These change levers are used deliberately to alter perceptions of reality and the meanings of concepts and things central to peoples’ patterns of cognitions. If AT&T’s management should decide to use these levers to change the organizational culture, they would go beyond just modifying organization members’ values and beliefs. They would work to alter perceptions of reality, truth, worth, meaning, and knowledge. Why? Because AT&T’s long-

standing technical value orientation is more than a set of shared beliefs and values. It is a pattern of thinking (basic assumption) rooted in basic perceptions about world realities and how AT&T meshes with those realities—the realities of the bygone world of monopolistic telephone service and telecommunications provided universally by the Bell System.

The tools needed to alter shared patterns of perceptions, meanings, and cognitions among organization members are neither mystical nor necessarily immoral. As with all tools of the social and physical sciences, they can be used for desirable or undesirable purposes. They may be used overtly and explicitly as, for example, President Reagan has done in an open effort to change U.S. perceptions about the impacts of liberal economic and welfare programs on both the rich and the poor. However, most attempts to change cognitive patterns in organizations are implemented with subtlety. A chief executive officer may become consistently unavailable for meetings about technological issues. The office of a once powerful, technologically oriented vice president may be reassigned to a recently recruited marketing-oriented person who knows little about the company's technology. The organizational stories told at informal gatherings and company retreats may start having new kinds of heroes and contain new morals that reflect the desired new conceptions of realities.

The tools for changing perceptions of reality that have received the most attention recently have been borrowed from several academic disciplines that are relatively new to organization theory. They include cognitive social psychology; social constructionism (a subset of sociology); and learning theory. The generic label being applied to them is *symbolism* or *symbolic management*.

Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal (1984, pp. 149–50) summarize the basic assumptions of the *symbolic frame*:

- The meaning or the interpretation of what is happening in organizations is more important than what actually is happening.
- Ambiguity and uncertainty, which are prevalent in most organizations, preclude rational problem-solving and decision-making processes.
- People use symbols to reduce ambiguity and to gain a sense of direction when they are faced with uncertainty.

A TYPOLOGY OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The level of organizational culture that one uses as the frame of reference almost dictates how one studies, manages in, and goes about trying to change an organizational culture. These implications

are sufficiently important to warrant the creation of a typology. There must be clear understanding when the phrase *organizational culture* is used, or else we will never be able to agree that frogs are green. Therefore, this chapter now returns to Schein's conceptualization of organizational culture (Figure 3-2) and adds more content to his three levels.

Level 1 of Organizational Culture: Artifacts

Artifacts are the behavioral patterns and the visible, tangible, and/or audible results of behaviors. Level 1 of organizational culture includes an organization's written and spoken language and jargon, office layouts and arrangements, organizational structure, dress codes, technology, and behavioral norms. According to Stanley Davis (1984), artifacts are tangible, and it is possible to "get your arms around them." This is why it is tempting to collect

information about specific programs and to shy away from the harder task of interpreting the values and beliefs that lie behind them. . . . A living culture exists in beliefs and values more than in artifacts and documents. This makes managing the culture a very intangible undertaking, and it renders the job of analyzing culture equally frustrating at times (p. 12).

In addition, Vijay Sathe (1985) describes artifacts as relatively "easy to see but hard to interpret without an understanding of the other [two] levels" (p. 10).

To the Level 1 artifacts, we now add a *Level 1B*, patterns of behavior, a distinction first proposed by Joanne Martin and Caren Siehl (1983).³ Following Martin and Siehl's logic, Level 1B of organizational culture includes such elements of organizational culture as habits, patterns of behavior, norms, rites, and rituals. These elements are consistent with the adaptationist concept of culture and do not appear to violate Schein's conceptualization.

Level 2 of Organizational Culture: Values and Beliefs

Level 2 of organizational culture consists of beliefs and values. They are the sense of "what 'ought' to be, as distinct from what is" (Schein, 1985, p. 15). Sathe (1985) describes Level 2 as revealing "how people communicate, explain, rationalize, and justify what they

³Martin and Siehl (1983) use the label *management practices*. I prefer the broader phrase, *patterns of behavior*.

say and do as a community—how they ‘make sense’ of the first level of culture. We will denote this level with the terms *cultural communications* and *justifications of behavior*, or *justifications*” (p. 10). (Emphasis in original text.) Beliefs and values are of interest to both the adaptationists and the ideationalists.

In addition to beliefs and values, the Level 2 constructs of organizational culture include ethos, philosophies, ideologies, ethical and moral codes, and attitudes. At first glance, Level 2 elements of organizational culture appear to represent an ideal, workable blending of the ideationalist and adaptationist concepts of culture. Indeed, it is tempting to label Level 2 the *true* organizational culture, and several organization theorists have done so.⁴ Nevertheless, Level 2 elements cannot be trusted to provide accurate information about a *true* organizational culture (Level 3) because of prevalent incongruences between “espoused values” and “values-in-use” in organizations (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Espoused values often serve important symbolic functions and may remain in an organization for extended periods of time even though they are incongruent with values-in-use. Investigations of Level 2 elements of organizational culture often yield espoused values—what people will say—rather than values-in-use, which can be used to predict what people will do.

Despite the dangers inherent in using Level 2 elements, if in fact organizational culture (a) influences behavior in and of organizations; (b) increases understanding of organization members; and (c) can be used to predict behavior (at least in some circumstances), then (d) Level 2 elements of organizational culture (values and beliefs) should be better predictors of organizational behavior than Level 1 elements (artifacts and patterns of behavior)—because they are conceptually closer to Schein’s *true* organization culture that resides in Level 3 (basic underlying assumptions).

Level 3 of Organizational Culture: Basic Underlying Assumptions

Schein defines basic assumptions as fundamental beliefs, values, and perceptions that

have become so taken for granted that one finds little variation within a cultural unit. . . . What I am calling basic assumptions are congruent with what Argyris has identified as “theories-in-use,” the implicit assumptions that actually guide behavior, that tell group members how to perceive, think about, and feel about things (Argyris, 1976; Argyris

⁴See Chapter 2 and Figure 3–5.

and Schön, 1974). Basic assumptions, like theories-in-use, tend to be nonconfrontable and nondebatable (Schein, 1985, p. 18).

Basic underlying assumptions are distinct from preferred solutions—"what should be"—in the sense of dominant values. Level 3 elements of organizational culture include spirit; truths (in the social constructionist sense); and possibly the transactional analysis concept of organizational scripts—but only if they are so completely accepted and deeply ingrained that they have moved into organization members' preconscious or unconscious.

Schein's three-level model provides the most useful typology published to date for classifying elements of organizational culture into usable groupings. Siehl and Martin (1984) and Sathe (1985) have acknowledged and utilized it in their analyses, perhaps indicating the beginning of a badly needed movement toward general agreement on a conceptual definition of organizational culture. Separating Level 1 into Level 1A (artifacts) and Level 1B (patterns of behavior) appears to make Schein's typology even more useful. Figure 3-3 presents the typology that serves as the analytical framework used for the remainder of this book.

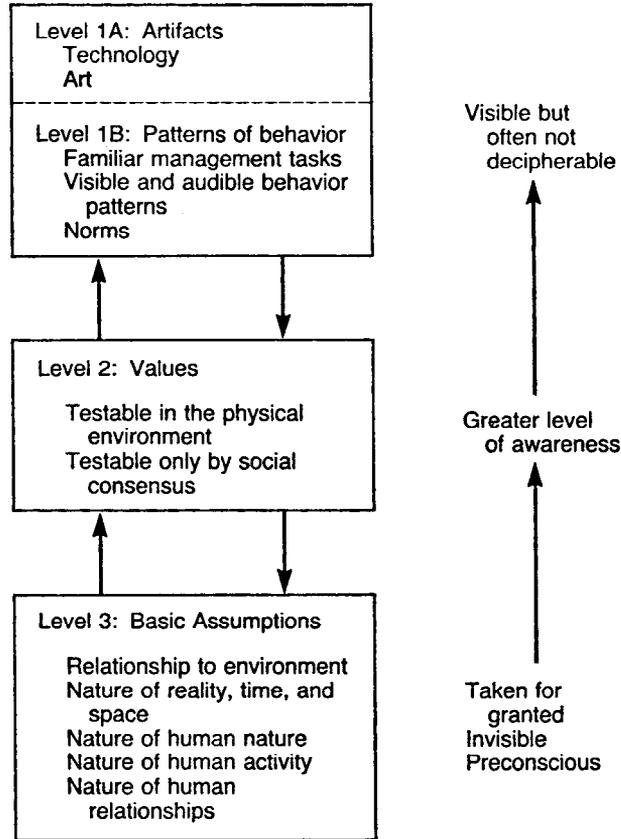
SOME POTENTIAL USES FOR THE TYPOLOGY OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

How can the typology help one understand and use organizational culture? An example is provided in Figure 3-4, where the key words and phrases from various definitions of organizational culture (from Figure 3-1) are classified into the levels of culture from the typology in Figure 3-3.⁵ The resulting matrix has many potential uses. For example, it provides a beginning point for a manager to match his or her reasons for changing an organizational culture with the lenses for seeing it and the tools for changing it.

Figure 3-5 takes the next logical step. It classifies various authors' writings about organizational culture into levels, which makes it easy to identify their conceptual and methodological preferences ("where they are coming from"). Thus, one would expect authors who write from a Level 1 slant of organizational culture (artifacts and patterns of behavior) to favor behaviorally oriented methods and instruments for identifying organization culture (for example, instruments that identify norms) and behavioristic strategies for

⁵All classifications were made by the author using the definitions and descriptions of levels presented in Chapters 2 and 3. When classification decisions were not clearly evident, I assigned the elements in question to more than one level.

FIGURE 3-3 Levels of Organizational Culture and Their Interaction



effecting changes in organizations (for example, strategies for altering behavioral norms). In contrast, writers who emphasize Level 2 of organizational culture probably will approach organizational change via strategies for changing members' beliefs and values and will use research methods and instruments borrowed from psychology, social psychology, and social constructionism.

Also, the matrix can assist a manager or a student to begin matching alternative methods for changing or reinforcing an organizational culture with his or her purpose for doing so. A manager or consultant who needs to effect rapid, tangible, demonstrable, organizational changes (such as doubling productivity levels) probably should focus on Level 1 elements of organizational culture. In contrast, a macro organization theorist attempting to understand and predict an organization's long-term policy or strategic decision pat-

FIGURE 3-4 A Typology of Elements of Organizational Culture

<i>Elements of Organizational Culture</i>	<i>Level of Culture</i>				<i>Not Clear</i>
	<i>Artifacts 1A</i>	<i>Patterns of Behavior 1B</i>	<i>Beliefs & Values 2</i>	<i>Assumptions 3</i>	
anecdotes, organizational	x				
art	x				
assumptions that people live by				x	
assumptions, patterns of basic				x	
assumptions, shared				x	
attitudes		x	x		
behavioral regularities		x			
being			x	x	
beliefs			x		
beliefs, patterns of shared			x		
celebration	x				
ceremonies	x				
climate, organizational					x
cognitive processes, patterns of			x		
commitment to excellence			x		
communications, patterns of	x				
consensus, level of			x		
core			x	x	x
customs		x			
doing things, way of		x			
enactment (per Weick, 1977)				x	
ethic, organizational			x		
ethos			x		
expectations, shared		x			
feelings			x		
glue that holds an organization together				x	
habits		x			
heroes	x				
historical vestiges	x				
identity			x	x	
ideologies			x		
interaction, patterns of		x			
jargon	x				
justifications for behavior			x		
knowledge			x		
language	x				
links between language, metaphor, and ritual	x	x			
management practices		x			
manner		x			

FIGURE 3-4 (Concluded)	1A	1B	2	3	Not Clear
material objects	x				
meaning, patterns of			x		
meanings			x		
meanings, intersubjective			x		
mind-set			x	x	
myths	x				
norms		x			
philosophy			x	x	
physical arrangements	x				
practical syllogisms			x		
purpose			x		
rites		x			
ritualized practices		x			
rituals		x			
roots					x
rules, informal system of		x			
scripts, organizational (cognitive social psychology)	x				
scripts, organizational (transactional analysis)				x	
sentiments			x		
source of norms, rules, attitudes, customs, and roles			x		
specialness, quality of perceived spirit				x	x
stories, organizational	x				
style		x			
symbols	x				
thinking, way of			x		
traditions	x	x			
translation of myths into action and relationship	x				
understandings, tacit			x		
values			x		
values, basic or core			x		
values, patterns of shared			x		
vision			x		
way			x	x	x
worldviews			x	x	x

terns would be expected to focus on Level 2 and/or 3 elements. Figure 3-5 demonstrates how the typology can be used to classify books and articles about organizational culture (and therefore authors). In it,

FIGURE 3-5 Typology of Publications on Organization Culture

Author and Work

Level 1A: Artifacts

Bates (1984)
 Clark (1970)
 Cohen (1969) (*)
 Edelman (1971, 1977) (*)
 Evered (1983)
 Gephart (1978)
 Hayakawa (1953) (*)
 Hirsch (1980)
 Martin (1982b)
 Meissner (1976)
 Pettigrew (1979)
 Pfeffer (1981b)
 Pondy (1978)
 Steele and Jenks (1977)
 Wilkins (1983)

Level 1B: Patterns of Behavior

Allaire and Firsirotu (1985)
 Blake & Mouton (1969)
 Clark (1970)
 Davis (1984)
 Deal and Kennedy (1982)
 Gephart (1978)
 Goffman (1959, 1967) (*)
 Hall (1977)
 Jaques (1952)
 Martin and Siehl (1983)
 Pettigrew (1979)
 Ritti and Funkhouser (1982)
 Schein (1968)
 Tichy and Ulrich (1984)
 Van Maanen (1976, 1979)

Level 2: Beliefs and Values

Allaire and Firsirotu (1985)
 Barnard (1938, 1968)
 Blake and Mouton (1969)
 Buchanan (1975)
 Clark (1970)
 Davis (1984)
 Deal and Kennedy (1982)
 Duncan and Weiss (1979)

FIGURE 3-5 (Concluded)

	Hall (1977)
	Harrison (1972)
	Jaques (1952)
	Meyer (1984)
	Morley (1984)
	Ouchi (1981)
	Pascale and Athos (1981)
	Peters and Waterman (1982)
	Selznick (1957)
	Sergiovanni and Corbally (1984a)
	Smircich (1983)
	Sproull (1981)
	Tichy and Ulrich (1984)
	Weick (1977, 1979)
	Wharton & Worthley (1983)
<i>Level 3:</i>	<i>Basic Assumptions</i>
	Buchanan (1975)
	Duncan and Weiss (1979)
	Jongeward (1973)
	Sathe (1985)
	Schein (1981, 1984, 1985)
	Siehl and Martin (1984)
	Weick (1977, 1979)
	<i>Do Not Fit Cleanly into Levels, and Why</i>
	Etzioni (1975) (Addresses all levels)
	Gold (1982) (A feeling of specialness)
	Lippitt, Langseth and Mossop (1985) (Organizational climate)
	Miles and Schmuck (1971) (Organizational climate)
	Tagiuri and Litwin (1968) (Organizational climate)

(*) The author was not writing specifically about organizational culture.

the authors and works that are listed in the chapter appendix (on page 70) are classified by their levels of primary focus.⁶

Not all of the selected books and articles on organizational culture can be classified perfectly into one level. Nevertheless, almost all fit cleanly into either one or two adjacent levels. If the levels are

⁶I attempted to classify each work based on its overall slant and emphasis. This required going beyond the definitional statements presented in the chapter appendix and incorporating the context from which statements were excerpted. When there was doubt about the level to which an article or book should be assigned, it was classified in more than one level.

viewed as points on a continuum, virtually all of the works cited can be classified within a reasonable range. William Taylor (1984) provides a theoretical justification for viewing the levels of organizational culture as ranges on a continuum. He argues that the study of cultures is always a study of wholes.

We can, and do, pick out particular features of cultural life, such as language, mythology, belief systems, conventional understandings, and so on for study and interpretation. But the reification that makes us comfortable with the methodologies and outcomes of structural analysis, the treating of social forms as objects, "out there" in the external world, created by man but possessing a superordinate reality and power of constraint, is more difficult to achieve in relation to cultural phenomena (p. 126).

Organizational culture is not something easily broken down into elements and placed in single boxes.

All except two of the listed works that do not fit neatly into a single or adjacent levels can be explained and dealt with. Etzioni's (1975) definition is so broad that it, in fact, addresses all levels. Similarly, Gold's (1982) "quality of perceived organizational specialness" can be interpreted to mean several different things. His intention is not clearly evident. Lippitt, Langseth, and Mossop (1985); Miles and Schmuck (1971); and Tagiuri and Litwin (1968) define organizational culture as the organizational climate, a concept akin to an organizational mood or feeling tone, which was introduced in the concluding pages of Chapter 2.

Figure 3-5 demonstrates how the typology can be used as the framework for analyzing and synthesizing organizational culture concepts, elements, tools for change, research methods, and empirical data.

A FUNCTIONAL DEFINITION OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Earlier, I asserted that there are two predominant ways to define a concept, inductively and deductively. But other methods exist as well. One other way to define something is functionally or, in Meehan's (1981) phraseology, *pragmatically*. As the name implies, a functional definition is a statement of the functions performed by the concept being defined. In the listing of points of general agreement about organizational culture was "a few functions it performs." Interestingly, general agreement about substantive functions exists across the literature of organizational culture, because they are the same regardless of how culture is defined formally. To say the same thing a

different way, the substantive functions do not differ materially whether organizational culture is defined as artifacts, patterns of behavior, beliefs and values, or basic assumptions. The functional “hows” and the selection of words vary, but the basic functions do not.

There is general agreement across the literature about four functions of organizational culture, and they can be viewed as the core of a functional definition of organizational culture. These functions, as modified and extended from Siehl and Martin (1984, pp. 228–229), are listed below. Examples from cases and descriptions in Chapters 1 and 2 are noted in parentheses. It is important to remember that the functions only need to serve useful purposes *of some sort*. There is no reason to assume that they are necessarily rational or consistent with an organization’s stated purposes or mission.

1. It provides shared patterns of cognitive interpretations or perceptions, so organization members know how they are expected to act and think. (At AT&T, technological superiority will prevail in the marketplace. At State Health, private health care providers will not act in the public interest. At Jones & Jones, clients are stupid.)
2. It provides shared patterns of affect, an emotional sense of involvement and commitment to organizational values and moral codes—of things worth working for and believing in—so organizational members know what they are expected to value and how they are expected to feel. (At the Community Center, it is important to keep parents of clients satisfied. When they are satisfied, life is happier for staff. At the Mountain State Chapter, the Board of Directors should function as a valued, caring extended family.)
3. It defines and maintains boundaries, allowing identification of members and nonmembers. (Only people in the EMS Office of State Health subculture believe that private physicians can and should design and implement systems of medical care. Members of Jones & Jones call clients “assholes”.)
4. It functions as an organizational control system, prescribing and prohibiting certain behaviors. (At State Health, members do not permit private physicians to serve on policy-making bodies. At the Community Center, staff should evaluate proposed program changes against the criterion of respite for parents. At the Mountain State Chapter, directors should not disagree openly at Board meetings. At Jones & Jones, accountants will not waste time talking with existing clients.)

Agreement on a fifth function is not universal: organizational culture strongly affects organizational performance. Quality and quantity of organizational performance holds the most hope for truly

valuable applications of the organizational culture perspective. Intuitively, there should be a relationship between organizational culture and performance. Many writers, including Allen and Kraft (1982); Davis (1984); Deal and Kennedy (1982); Kilmann (1984); Ouchi (1981); Peters and Waterman (1982); and Pascale and Athos (1981) have *assumed* the linkage exists; but, to date, there is no convincing empirical evidence to support the assumption (Wilkins 1983). The relationships between aspects, types, intensities, etc., of organizational culture and organizational performance remain to be proven.

Organizational culture can be defined functionally or pragmatically as a social force that controls patterns of organizational behavior by shaping members' cognitions and perceptions of meanings and realities, providing affective energy for mobilization, and identifying who belongs and who does not. The functional definition of organizational culture is quite straightforward. So why not use it and stop belaboring the comparatively complicated inductive/deductive approach that defines organizational culture by classifying its component elements? The answer is equally straightforward. The functional definition does not provide any direction for managing in, changing, or studying organizational culture. If John Thomas wants to strengthen or change aspects of the Mountain State Chapter's organizational culture, what does he go to work on—its symbols, artifacts, patterns of behavior, beliefs, values, assumptions, or all of them? What tools and strategies does a chief executive officer at AT&T, Jones & Jones, or the Community Center use to reinforce or change organizational culture? What does a researcher, manager, or consultant study, using what types of diagnosing/deciphering procedures and instruments?

A functional definition provides important understandings about the functions organizational culture performs and why organizational cultures continue to exist. Nevertheless, it is far from adequate by itself for those who would work with and in organizational cultures.

SUMMARY

So what is organizational culture? First, it is a concept, and there is no concrete way to "prove" what a concept is. There is no method for conclusively ending debates about "the truth." *Truth* is created rather than discovered, so there is no single true definition or concept of organizational culture. However, by creating a typology of organizational culture, the multitude of definitions that have been proposed by many writers have been collapsed into three and one-half levels.⁷

⁷Three and one half because Schein's Level 1 has been divided into Levels 1A and 1B.

The levels (or points on a continuum) represent theoretical constructs from Keesing (1974) and Schein (1981, 1984, 1985). Two preliminary tests of the typology (Figure 3–4 and Figure 3–5) show how it can be analytically useful.

Appendix to Chapter 3

A SAMPLING OF DEFINITIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The following excerpted definitions are from fifty-eight books and articles on organizational culture or closely related subjects. The selections are representative of the literature but certainly are not exhaustive. Some cited authors do not use the phrase “organizational culture” but clearly are addressing the same or very similar concepts and constructs—for example, Jongeward (1976). A few definitions of general culture (rather than organizational culture) have been included because of their pertinence, and they are noted with an asterisk in Figure 3–5—for example, S. I. Hayakawa (1953).

When a definition overlaps substantially with other definitions, an incomplete definition is used in order to minimize repetition—for example, Hall (1977). The citations are not listed in any particular order. Quotations and paraphrasings are used liberally to retain the authors’ color and flavor.

- Symbols, language, ideologies, rituals, and myths (Pettigrew, 1979).
- Behavioral regularities (Goffman, 1959, 1967; Van Maanen, 1979).
- Patterns of interactions, values, and attitudes, which are derived from traditions, precedents, and past practices and are most visible in the team formations within which managers work. The assumptions and beliefs people live by (Blake & Mouton, 1969).
- Organizational scripts derived from the personal scripts of the organization’s founder(s) or dominant leader(s) (Jongeward, 1976).
- The philosophy that guides an organization’s policy (Ouchi, 1981; Pascale & Athos, 1981).
- Beliefs, practical syllogisms, justifications for behavior (Sproull, 1981; Morley, 1984).

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- The philosophy that guides an organization’s policy (Ouchi, 1981; Pascale & Athos, 1981).
- Beliefs, practical syllogisms, justifications for behavior (Sproull, 1981; Morley, 1984).

- Ideologies, a rationale for dos and don'ts (Harrison, 1972; Meyer, 1984).
- Core values that determine the organizational philosophy or mission (Selznick, 1957).
- Organizational climate, attitudes toward work, degree of personal responsibility for work (Lippitt, Langseth, & Mossop, 1985; Miles & Schmuck, 1971; Tagiuri & Litwin, 1968).
- Patterns of cognitive processes (Weick, 1979).
- Speech, communication patterns, language, nonverbal communication (Evered, 1983; Meissner, 1976).
- Myths, anecdotes, and stories (Cohen, 1969).
- Stories that control organizations (Wilkins, 1983).
- A belief in and a commitment to excellence (Peters & Waterman, 1982).
- The organization's ethic—for example, the "public service ethic" (Buchanan, 1975).
- Values and norms (Tichy & Ulrich, 1984; Hall, 1977).
- Symbols, language, and art (Hayakawa, 1953).
- The source of norms, rules, group attitudes, customs, and roles (Wharton & Worthley, 1983).
- The degree of consensus within consensus spheres on general values; organization goals; means, policy, and tactics; commitment to participate in the organization; performance obligations; cognitive perspectives (for example, common language, shared frame of reference, and an agreed-upon set of canons for empirical test) among the different status groups in the organization (Etzioni, 1975).
- (By inference) The who's who, what's what, why's why of an organization's informal society (Barnard, 1938, 1968).
- The *rules of the game* for getting along in an organization (Schein, 1968; Ritti & Funkhouser, 1977; Van Maanen, 1976).
- A *mind-set*—"the realm of feelings and sentiments" (p. 26). The basic values, assumptions, or expectations that have emerged from the organization's particular history, leadership, and contingency factors and that are supported by present-day management policies and practices (p. 27); also, worldview and beliefs, meanings and symbols, historical vestiges, traditions, and customs (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1985).
- "A quality of perceived organizational specialness—that it possesses some unusual quality that distinguishes it from others in the field" (Gold, 1982, pp. 571–572).

- “An amalgamation of some of the more interesting definitions would result in the following: organizational culture can be thought of as the glue that holds an organization together through a sharing of patterns of meaning. The culture focuses on the values, beliefs, and expectations that members come to share” (Siehl & Martin, 1984, p. 227).
- Familiar management tasks or practices (Martin & Siehl, 1983).
- Language or jargon (Edelman, 1977; Hirsch, 1980; Pondy, 1978).
- Organizational stories and scripts (Martin, 1982b; Wilkins, 1978, 1983). Also, to an extent, Clark (1970).
- The customary and traditional way of thinking and doing things (Jaques, 1952).
- Rituals and ceremonies (Gephart, 1978; Smircich, 1983).
- Physical arrangements (Edelman, 1971; Steele & Jenks, 1977).
- “The pattern of shared beliefs and values that give the members of an institution meaning, and provide them with the rules for behavior in their organization. Every organization will have its own words or phrases to describe what it means by culture; some of these are: being, core, culture, ethos, identity, ideology, manner, patterns, philosophy, purpose, roots, spirit, style, vision, and way. To most managers, these mean pretty much the same thing” (Davis, 1984, p. 1).
- Values, heroes, rites and rituals, and communications. “A strong culture is a system of informal rules that spells out how people are to behave most of the time” (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 15).
- Values, norms, and knowledge (Clark, 1970).
- “*Culture*: The set of important assumptions (often unstated) that members of a community share in common. *Company Culture*: The culture of the corporation or the company as a whole” (Sathe, 1985, p. 2). (Emphasis in original text.)
- “A pattern of basic assumptions—invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration—that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.”
 “Because such assumptions have worked repeatedly, they are likely to be taken for granted and to have dropped out of aware-

ness. Note that the definition does not include overt behavior patterns. I believe that overt behavior is always determined both by the cultural predisposition . . . and by the situational contingencies that arise from the external environment. Behavioral regularities could thus be as much a reflection of the environment as of the culture and should, therefore, not be a prime basis for defining the culture” (Schein, 1985, p. 9).

- “A standard definition of culture would include the system of values, symbols, and shared meanings of a group including the embodiment of these values, symbols, and meanings into material objects and ritualized practices. Culture governs what is of worth for a particular group and how group members should think, feel and behave. The stuff of culture includes customs and traditions, historical accounts be they mythical or actual, tacit understandings, habits, norms and expectations, common meanings associated with fixed objects and established rites, shared assumptions, and intersubjective meanings” (Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1984, p. vii).
- “The links between language, metaphor, and ritual and their celebration of particular social ideals or myths form the essential administrative culture of the school. The culture is a translation of myths into action and relationship” (Bates, 1984, p. 268).
- “This concept is close to that of enactment as described by Weick (1977). Weick argues that organizational members share perceptions of what factors comprise the environment of the organization. This process of enacting the environment in a sense creates the reality of organizational environments. This then is similar to Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) concept of the social construction of reality. We would only add that the frameworks we are suggesting include the definition of the organization itself and of internal organizational processes” (Duncan & Weiss, 1979, pp. 90–91). (Duncan and Weiss do not explicitly state that the frameworks are the culture, but the linkage can be inferred.)