Employee Perceptions of Organizational Culture's influence on their Attitudes and Behaviour*

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Abstract

This study expands the limited research on the influence of organizational culture on employee perceptions of their *workworld*. It focuses on the explicit meaning of employee responses to in-depth, open-ended questions about their lived experiences with the dimensions of culture. The study illuminates those dimensions of culture that employees report have the most influence on their perceptions of organizational life. The study employs a phenomenological research paradigm. The cross-cultural research sample comprised 20 full-time employees from Eastern European companies. The study found that the cultural dimensions of *Values*, *Organizational Practices,* and *Fundamental Beliefs* most influenced respondents' perceptions of their organizations.

Keywords: Organizational culture, organizational practices, managing culture, cultural effects, behavioural change, phenomenology

Introduction

A central theme of organizational culture research has focused on its effects. Effects research has addressed diverse areas of interest, such as leadership behaviour and effectiveness (Ying /Ahmad 2009), employee attitudes and organizational effectiveness (Gregory et. al. 2009), mergers and acquisitions failure rates (Teerikangas /Very 2006), psychological contracts in the workplace (Richard, et.al. 2009), decision rules in benefits allocation (Mannix et. al. 1995), company innovation (Naranjo-Valencia et. al. 2011), and strategy and vision (Hatch/Shultz 1997). Nevertheless, there has been either little or no research conducted to examine the cognitive, affective and behavioural micro-effects that are experienced by employees as they engage on a day-to-day basis with various dimensions of organizational culture.

Simply, macro effects of culture are merely a reflection of the micro effects of culture on those responsible for system performance – leadership, managers and line staff. We believe that these micro effects derive from the cognitive processing that system actors engage in when encountering the different dimensions of

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organizational culture. We posit that the more a system actor cognitively processes – thinks about or, in the language of Petty and Cacioppo (1986), elaborates upon – specific cultural encounters, the more influential are those encounters in shaping system actor's perceptions of the organization. Consequently, if management is to harness the power of culture to improve their organizational performance, it behoves them to recognize those dimensions of culture that employees report most influence their perceptions of their *workworld*.

The purpose of this study is to further our understanding of micro-effects of organizational culture. By capturing the thoughts and feelings of a small group of employees as they experience the various dimensions of culture, we assess how those thoughts and feelings reflect their cognition, attitudes and behaviours in an organizational environment.

Our research process employs a phenomenological methodology that allows employees to describe in their own words how their 'lived experiences' (Sanders 1982, p. 355) with the various dimensions of culture affect their thinking, feelings and behaviour 'as they are presented to consciousness' (p. 358). We have chosen phenomenology as our research paradigm because it allows us to objectively study a topic that normally would be considered subjective. It provides intellectual rigor to the examination of the essence of conscious experience. Phenomenology provides a set of reductionist tools that allows the researcher to both understand and describe the phenomenon of consciousness. In Husserl's (1970, p. 240) words, it attempts to disclose the individual's 'lived experience.'

Through a phenomenological *explicitation* of respondents' narrative responses to a self-administered survey (see Appendix A), we identify those cultural encounters that elicit the most intense cognitive processing, as well as how that processing describes system actors' feelings and behaviours. The intensity of cognitive processing is operationalized as the sum of units of relevant meaning identified in each verbatim response to a specific survey question. A unit of relative meaning is a discrete word, phrase or statement isolated from those verbatim narratives that 'responds to and illuminates the research question' (Hycner, 1985).

To identify the dimensions of organizational culture for our study, we used Schein's (1984) organizational culture framework. While never operationalized, Schein's framework is a rich model that digs deepest into the metaphor of organizational culture.

Methodology

The use of qualitative research methods, such as phenomenology, in the study of organizations, has drawn greater interest and appreciation by organizational theorists. Among these methods are ethnography (Nyland 2007), ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967), grounded theory (Konecki 2002), anthropology (Czarni-

awska 2011; Jiménez 2004/2007; Kostera 2003), and hermeneutics (Sułkowski 2012), as well as phenomenology (Gill 2014).

We chose phenomenology as an organizational research paradigm because it offers a methodology appropriate for describing, analysing and making sense of verbatim accounts of human experiences. Conversely, we applied content analysis techniques to address and adeptly manage one of the major difficulties Lester (1999) identified in phenomenological research – the large quantity of data created for *explicitation*. The term *explicitation* comes from Hycner (1983) who uses the term rather than *analysis*. *Analysis*, he claims, is by definition reductionist, while *explicitation* is the act of making something fully and clearly expressed or demonstrated, leaving no room for confusion or doubt.

The first step in the content analysis of respondents' observations was to unitize the data. As Krippendorf (1980, pp. 57-60) explains, this involves identifying the sampling units that for this study were the respondents' observations recorded in their self-administered questionnaires. To deconstruct the sampling units into 'analysable parts', each was segmented into specific units for categorization.

These 'recording units' are the various dimensions that comprise organizational culture, such as *artefacts*. Finally, the recording units were 'characterized' by using 'context units' that define the segments of respondents' observations to be examined. The context units were identified by using a standard phenomenological technique of segmenting respondents' narratives into units of general meaning then into units of relevant meaning.

This process is illustrated in Table 1. These units of relevant meaning are groups of words or phrases taken directly from a respondent's verbatim cognitive response to a specific question regarding a dimension of culture, in this case, *Management Behaviours*. In addition, these self-reported observations also describe specific changes that have occurred in the respondent because of the cognitive processing that has occurred when engaging with the manager. For example, the unit of relevant meaning 'best manager I ever met' represents a positive feeling or affective change in the respondent. Consequently, units of relevant meaning indicate both the respondent's extent of cognitive processing and how that processing has changed their thinking (cognition), feelings (affect) or actions (behaviours).

As discussed above, each unit of relevant meaning is a cognitive response. The cognitive response approach posits that people's thoughts determine the extent of influence of a person, place or thing on an individual's attitudes (Petty et. al. 2002). This application of cognitive response as a measure of influence on individual attitudes is well documented in the literature (Janis/King 1956; Greenwald/Albert 1968; and Tesser et. al. 1995). Similar to our study, most cognitive

response research employs the use of the number and the valence (positive or negative) of thoughts generated to determine the extent and direction of influence on an individual's attitudes (Petty et. al. 2002).

Table 1 – Deconstructing units of relevant meaning from respondents' narratives.

Narrative	Units of General Meaning	Units of Relevant Meaning
My manager (the head of the technical translation department) was the best manager I ever met: very enthusiastic, caring, self-confident I would say charismatic and with a good sense of humor. He respected the employees and they respected him. His behavior was ethical. He was 24 hours available on the phone when his help was needed. He always gave direct and clear instructions. I felt comfortable working there.	My manager (the head of the technical translation department) was the best manager I ever met: very enthusiastic, caring, self-confident I would say charismatic and with a good sense of humor. He respected the employees and they respected him. His behavior was ethical. He was 24 hours available on the phone when his help was needed. He always gave direct and clear instructions. I felt comfortable working there	best manager I ever met very enthusiastic caring self-confident charismatic and with a good sense of humor He respected the employees His behavior was ethical 24 hours available on the phone when his help was needed always gave direct and clear instructions I felt comfortable working there

To initiate data gathering, each subject was asked to complete the questionnaire found in Appendix A. In responding to the survey questions they were asked to answer each as completely and honestly as possible. There were no restrictions on either the length of or time for, reporting these responses. As noted above, phenomenology has been employed to both collect and to categorize the data by parsing the subjects' responses into units of relevant meaning. Using content analysis, the units of relevant meaning were coded, categorized and quantified for comparative purposes.

We have adapted the phenomenological methodology by choosing to collect our narrative data through self-administered questionnaires using open-ended questions rather than the traditional use of extensive personal interviews as described by Hycner (1985). We made this change for two reasons. First, it greatly reduced the possibility of researcher influence and bias inherent in the interview process. Secondly, it allowed us to use a larger sample size than is normally found in phenomenological studies.

Schein's Three-Level Model

As noted earlier, we used Schein's (1983) three-level model of organizational culture to generate the culture dimensions: artefacts, values and fundamental beliefs and basic assumptions (see Table 2). Schein (1983) describes the first level as those 'visible artefacts' that constitute the 'constructed environment of the organization.' These visible artefacts, in Schein's description, involve a wide array of constructs ranging from an organization's architecture to member behaviour patterns. His second level of culture encompasses the 'values' that govern behaviour in the organization. Schein admits that these are difficult to discern directly. They naturally, he argues, require some form of interviewing of system members or content analysis of organizational documents, such as mission and vision statements. Moreover, these values are the direct products of unconsciously held 'underlying basic assumptions' that guide system member thinking, perceiving and behaving. These underlying assumptions form the third level of his culture model.

For the artefacts level, Schein does provide more definition, describing this level as comprising the constructs of personal enactment, ceremonies and rites, stories, rituals and symbols (Schein 1985). The next, deeper level comprises values that are espoused by the organization and those that are actually enacted by the organization. The deepest level, that of basic assumptions, is the most difficult to discern and, Schein argues, the essence of culture (Nelson/Quick 2006). These basic assumptions, Schein (1984) explains, are the 'ultimate, non-debatable, taken-for-granted values.'

For research purposes, three of the Level I artefacts – Personal Enactments, Ceremonies, and Rites and Rituals – were operationalized using terminology more understandable and applicable to respondents. Personal Enactments, as defined by Schein, refer to behaviours by leadership that demonstrate specific organizational values (Nelson/Quick 2006). Since employees may rarely see or experience such personal enactments, the artefact was operationalized as *Management Behaviour.* Management behaviours are experienced often and, we believe, valid examples of enactments of organizational culture (Nelson/Quick 2006). Similarly, the category Ceremonies and Rites may be somewhat ambiguous to our respondents so this artefact was operationalized as *Organization-Sponsored Events*. Lastly, Rituals, which may not necessarily be performed in some organizations, were redefined as commonly experienced *Organizational Practices,* such as the use of Oral and Physical Greetings. To aid the respondents understanding of the research variables, each was carefully defined in the questionnaire.

Moreover, to enhance clarity and understanding, the term 'Basic Assumptions' describing Level III was operationalized as *Fundamental Beliefs*.

The researchers were very aware of the fact that the Schein model has not been experimentally tested and contains its own cultural biases. As a model reflecting an American context, it naturally comprises levels of culture that are more or less prevalent in western organizations but which may not be either present or as important in non-western cultures.

Table 2 – Schein's model and the corresponding variables in the research design.

Schein's Three Level Model	*Dimensions of Culture*
Level 1: Artifacts	*Artifacts*
Personal Enactments	Management Behaviours
Ceremonies	Organization-Sponsored Events
Symbols	Symbols
Stories	Stories
Rites and Rituals	Organizational Practices
Level II: Values	*Values*
	Mission Statements
	Espoused Values
Level III: Basic Assumptions	*Fundamental Beliefs*

Our research instrument was designed to address system actor experiences with each of the artefacts comprising level one, and the values and basic assumptions of levels two and three, as shown in Table 2. The self-administered survey instrument comprised nine open-ended content questions and eight demographic questions. Eight of the open-ended questions addressed each dimension of the three levels of organizational culture. The final question asked respondents if their behaviour had changed in response to a fundamental belief held by the organization.

Phenomenological Method

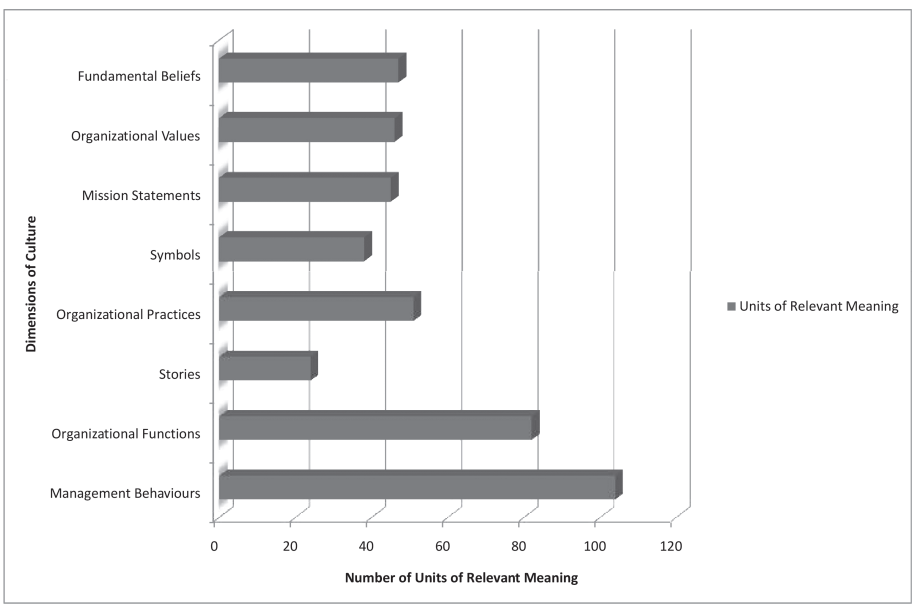
Following a phenomenological methodology, the verbatim responses to each open-ended question were deconstructed into units of general meaning and then sub-segmented into units of relevant meaning (see Table 1). Next, the units of relevant meaning were organized into categories of similar meaning for each question in all 20 cases, such as Management Style, Communication Style, and

Personality Traits. For a complete list and definition of each category of units of relevant meaning, see Appendix B.

The categorizing process is, of course, both subjective and creative. As Coailizzi (1978) explains, the phenomenological researcher is "engaged in something which cannot be precisely delineated, for here he is involved in that ineffable thing known as creative insight" (p. 59). However, while others may have categorized the units of relevant meaning differently, we believe that their results would have closely approximated our own.

As Schein (1984) noted, values may be discerned from a content analysis of an organizations 'public documents.' Among these, Nelson and Quick (2006) assert, are mission statements and annual reports. In the final step, the categories were examined to determine if there were persistent themes reflected in each.

Figure 1 – Units of relevant meaning generated by each dimension of organizational culture.



In addition, the researchers, using a codebook developed for the content analysis portion of the study, independently coded the units of relevant meaning for each question as either positive or negative. Coding disagreements were reviewed and discussed by the researchers to arrive at a consensus rating. There were only a few disagreements. Each unit of relevant meaning was also coded as a cognitive, affective, or behavioural change (see Figure 1). The researchers found that in the vast majority of cases coding the units of relevant meaning was a very straight-

forward, unambiguous process because of the clarity of the verbatim responses, as described above under Research method.

The researchers were also conscious and sensitive to the criticism of social scientists. Many of them have criticized organizational cultural studies for methodological weaknesses, lack of rigor and substantive results (Smircich 1983). They argue that such studies only give limited and local insight into organizational behaviour; perceptual value is questionable; are not representative of the population as a whole; and research methodologies have been weak. Consequently, the researchers have sampled a broad spectrum of organizations; have let the words of those experiencing culture speak for themselves; and have used a qualitative methodology combined with content analysis and descriptive statistics to provide a meaningful and accurate representation of the data.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to understand the phenomenon of how employees consciously perceive and respond to all the dimensions of Schein's three levels of organizational culture. Survey questions focused on each of these dimensions to answer the following research questions:

RQ [1]. Is there any quantifiable difference in the extent to which employees think about their experiences with each of Schein's dimensions of organizational culture as measured by the frequencies of the self-reported units of relevant meaning?

RQ [2]. When employees engage with each of Schein's dimensions of organizational culture, which of these elicit the most cognitive processing as measured by the frequencies of self-reported units of relevant meaning?

RQ [3]. Which dimension(s) of organizational culture were reported by respondents as causing the most change in their attitudes and behaviours?

RQ [4]. What were the specific changes reported by respondents when encountering each dimension of organizational culture?

Sampling Methodology

Because this was a phenomenological study, answering our research questions required understanding the essence of the employee narratives reported in their self-administered surveys. Hence, this study focused on the phenomenological aspects of the narrative texts. In phenomenology neither the sample size nor sampling method are significant issues.

With phenomenology, the validity of the data is inherent in the fact that what is reported by respondents is true for them and therefore a valid representation of

their own perceptions. Consequently, Englander (2012) has characterized sample size as 'irrelevant.'

In general, researchers (Boyd 2001; Creswell 1998) argue that between two and 10 participants are more than sufficient for a meaningful phenomenological study. At a minimum, Englander (2012) suggests no less than three subjects. However, a larger sample size can be an advantage since the broader the sampling the more sensitive the study to variations in the phenomena.

An extensive review of the literature conducted by Marshall et al. (2013) reveals that opinion varies regarding sample size in qualitative research. Moreover, sometimes the same methodologists have provided different ranges at different points in time. The most common rationale for sample size is the concept of data saturation. This point is reached when researchers believe that they have acquired sufficient data to answer their research questions and that continued collection of data would only be redundant. The point of data saturation should be the point at which the researchers can adequately and accurately answer the research question. However, identifying the appropriate level of data saturation is a matter of conjecture. Following an extensive literature review, Marshall et. al. (2013) argue that for an interview study using a phenomenological technique, 6 to 10 interviews are most often used. Though, for phenomenological studies, Creswell (1998) recommends five to 25 interviews. In our study, 20 written self-reports were collected. As Sanders (1982) notes, the most critical rule for the phenomenological researcher is to know that "more subjects do not yield more information".

Nevertheless, we were sensitive to the methodological issues inherent in our sample size. This issue plagues most, if not all, qualitative studies. Furthermore, our explicitation of respondents' self-reports found a repetitiveness of commentary that indicated to us a point of data saturation.

Sampling Technique

To obtain our sample we chose two non-probability sampling techniques: convenience and snowball sampling. Convenience sampling is simply choosing subjects that are easily accessible to the researcher. Snowball sampling uses research subjects to recruit other subjects who have knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation (Bailey 1978).

Our sample frame comprised some 60 full-time employees from Eastern European-based companies who were given an understanding of the research study and its purpose. The volunteer subjects were told that their participation was voluntary and confidential, and that the research study's questionnaire would be distributed by email. They were requested to complete and return the questionnaire to the researchers within a two-week time frame.

From the initial sample frame, 18 employees completed and returned their questionnaires. One of the respondents also recruited two other employees to participate in the study, bringing the sample size to 20. There were 14 female and 6 male participants ranging in age from 24 to 37. They were citizens of seven countries: Poland, Ukraine, Belorussia, Egypt, Nepal, Mexico and the United States. They were employed at companies of varying sizes: five (> 50 employees), seven (51-500 employees), and eight (> 500 employees). Eight of the companies are headquartered in Poland, three in the United States, two in India, and one each in the Emirates, Germany, Great Britain, Ukraine, Spain and Italy. Eight of the companies are international in scope.

Validity and Reliability

Hycner (1985) explains that in phenomenology determining validity requires three different levels of evaluation each more robust than the last. The first level is to determine if the subject's research results are true for them. In the second level, researchers must ask themselves if the 'findings ring true.' Lastly, the scientific and lay community must 'discuss and evaluate' the research results and determine if they are valid.

With a phenomenological study, validity is not an easy requirement to be met. As far as this study is concerned, we have addressed the first level of validity by making our research results available to our subjects. They were given the opportunity to comment on our findings and whether they believe them to be valid. Secondly, both researchers agree that the results 'ring true' for them since the results appear consistent with other research that has been conducted on manager-employee interactions in organizational settings. Lastly, publication of this paper in a peer-reviewed academic journal will provide both the scientific and lay community an opportunity to evaluate and validate our research methodology and results.

Reliability refers to 'the internal and external consistency of measurement' (Williams 1979). In most cases instrument reliability can be measured simply by repeated use to insure the instruments reliability in measuring the same phenomena consistently. However, with phenomenology, Hycner (1985) argues, the issue of reliability is quite different.

Determining reliability offers a different set of challenges. Georgi (1975) notes how one researcher using the same set of questions may come to different results. Consequently, in phenomenology, reliability is not an issue related to the measurement instrument but rather one focused on the researcher's interpretation of the instrument's results. So as Georgi (1975) points out, can other researchers also see 'what the researcher saw whether or not he agrees with it.'

Ethics

Since this study involved human subjects the researchers were very sensitive to the required ethical protocols. Consequently, the researchers used informed consent to ensure that all participants were well aware of the purpose of the study and the credentials of the researchers (Bailey 1978). While we did not administer an Informed Consent Form, we did ensure through oral presentation that all participants were aware of the study's purpose, benefits, research procedures, and publication of results.

Results

We have focused on presenting the data absent our own 'meanings and interpretations,' a process that phenomenologists refer to as 'bracketing' (Hycner 1985). This is the deliberate act of removing one's own prejudices, biases, and predispositions, and entering the *lifeworld* of the respondent when gathering and categorizing the data. In our conclusion we will answer our research questions in a composite summary of all the self-reports.

Units of Relevant Meaning, Categories and Themes

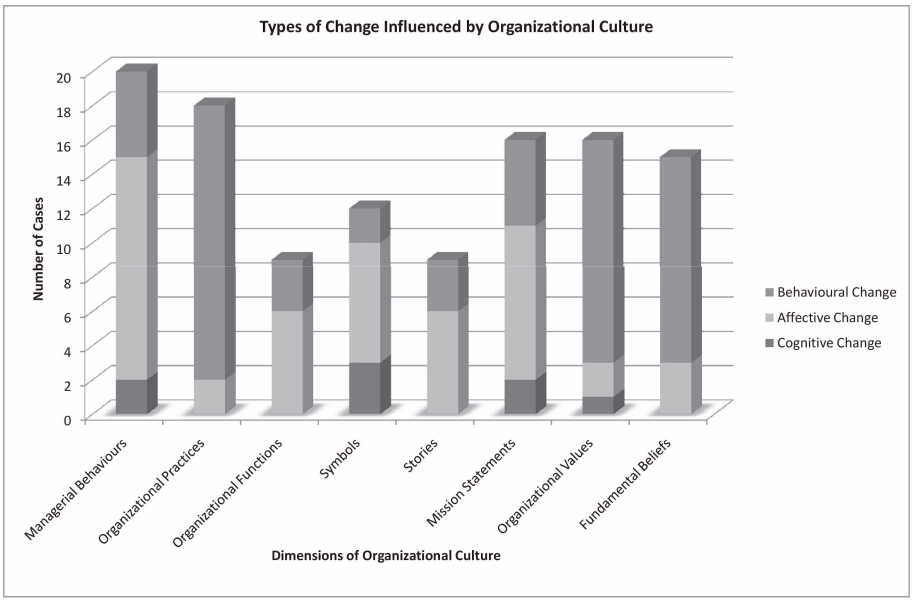
Level I – Artefact 1: Management Behaviours

The artefact of *Management Behaviours* elicited 104 units of relevant meaning (see Figure 2) organized into five categories: Management Style, Communication Style, Personality Traits, Decision Making, and Organizational Climate. Management Style was the largest category with 47 units of relevant meaning followed by Organizational Climate with 23; Personality Traits, 19; Communication Style, 11; and, finally, Decision Making, 4. Encounters with Management behaviours elicited by far the greatest units of relevant meaning among all the cultural dimensions.

Based on subject responses, the researchers rated 11 of the 20 cases negative for experiences with management behaviours. This rating was derived from numerous respondent comments such as 'she does not care for her employees,' and 'he is not helpful at all.' In cases rated with positive management behaviours, respondents described their manager behaviours as 'very enthusiastic,' and 'always eager to help everyone.'

With these categories, there were slightly more negative than positive comments resulting in 55 per cent of cases having a negative rating. These findings indicate that in a majority of cases employees had negative perceptions of their experiences with specific behaviours of their managers. These results reinforce Ying and Bin Ahmad's (2009) conclusions that managers must be cognizant of the effect their leadership style has on employee commitment in the workplace.

Figure 2 – Types of change caused by each dimension of organizational culture.



Level I – Artefact 2: Organization-sponsored Events

Question 2 asked respondents to identify and describe any organization-sponsored function that they have attended and share their thoughts and feelings about that experience. This question generated 82 units of relevant meaning (see Figure 1). These were organized into three categories: Description, Team Building and Socioemotional Response. Seven of the respondents did not respond to the question because either their organization did not sponsor events; or they were responsible for conducting the events; or they did not have the time available to attend the events. Of the 13 cases reported, 12 were rated as positive experiences and one was rated neutral.

Of the 82 units of relevant meaning, 32 were placed in the Descriptive category, 24 in the Team Building category, and 26 in the Socioemotional Response category. The Descriptive units identified the event, such as 'a Christmas Party in December.' The Team Building category comprised comments such as 'it's a perfect time for us to get to know each other better' and 'gather together in one place so that everyone can talk face to face.' The Socioemotional Response category comprised comments that related to respondents feelings about the events attended, such as 'My feelings are rather positive' and 'I couldn't really handle the whole scene.' In 11 of the 12 cases reported, employee experiences resulted in predominantly affective change with one case in which it effected behavioural

change (see Figure 2). The *Function Experiences* category elicited the second most units of relevant meaning.

Level I – Artefact 3: Organizational Stories

Organizational Stories are the narratives that employees share with one another and that convey and/or mythologize aspects of the organization's culture. For this question respondents were asked to share any stories they had heard from others in the organization when they began their employment. The researchers identified 24 units of relevant meaning (see Figure 1) organized into five categories: People with nine units; Socioemotional Response and Expectations with five each; Compensation with three; and Work Environment with two. The People category comprised stories of employees in the organization, including managers and CEOs. Socioemotional Response comprised units describing how each story made them feel. Compensation referred to salaries and advancement possibilities. Expectations referred to comments about employee hopes for their future in the company while the Work Environment described the realities of their new jobs.

Six of the 10 stories reported were rated as causing affective change: the way respondents felt about their compensation, their immediate supervisor, or CEO (see Figure 2). Three of the stories resulted in behavioural changes, such as managing interactions with their CEO, fellow employees, or a stressful workplace. A common theme of these responses is that story telling focused on either manager behaviours or job expectations; not on organizational values or beliefs. As a cultural dimension, *Stories* elicited the lowest number of units of relevant meaning.

Level I – Artefact 4: Organizational Practices

This question addressed *Organizational Practices*: those behaviours that employees engage in as traditional rituals for developing and maintaining relationships among and with their fellow employees and managers. This question resulted in 51 units of relevant meaning (see Figure 1). These were organized into five categories: Physical Greetings, Oral Greetings, Social Activities, Socioemotional Responses, and Organizational Climate. As expected, the Oral Greetings category comprised the largest number of units of relevant meaning with 22. Emotional Responses, Organizational Climate, and Physical Greetings, all with 12; and Social Activities with 5

As the most prevalent form of *Organizational Practice*, the Oral Greetings category featured the most common forms of individual greeting, such as "hello" and 'good morning.' Such greetings were considered *de riguer* in the vast majority of cases. Socioemotional Responses categorized feelings of employees as

they engaged in various organizational practices, characterized by such comments as 'I feel that calling them by name, gives us a sense of confidence and makes us feel closer to them.' Organizational Climate included comments like 'atmosphere in my department was too formal and led to lack of any commitment or relations with other members of the team.' Physical Greetings referred to the act of handshakes and was also a very common organizational practice among employees and between employees and managers, but not always. As one respondent explained: 'We shake hands only with members of a team. My boss does not shake hands.' Social Activities comprised comments related to various socially oriented practices in individual work units. Typical practices included the ubiquitous coffee break, as respondents described here: 'We have some specific time for going together to the kitchen to make coffee or going for a cigarette;' and 'almost first thing in the morning … is making coffee in our kitchen … we sit and chat for a few minutes.'

The researchers categorized the Organizational Practices culture dimension as causing behavioural change in 17 of the 20 cases examined (see Figure 2). It appears that organizational traditions required employees to engage in these specific rituals to gain access to and acceptance by the group. Of the three cases that were not rated as causing behavioural change, the researchers identified two in which change could not be determined from the responses, while the third was rated as causing an affective change.

The major theme that runs throughout these comments is that common group practices have a profound impact on how the respondents perceive their work environment. Such simple unscripted acts as the use of both formal and informal greetings, and gathering in small groups to talk about their everyday lives, appear to significantly influence employee perceptions of organizational life and the culture that imbues it.

Level I – Artefact 5: Symbols

The fifth question asked respondents if they could recall and express their thoughts and feelings about any *Symbols* or icons used by their organizations. Eighteen of the 20 respondents identified a commonly used symbol in their organizations; almost universally they identified their corporate logotype. There were 38 units of relevant meaning (see Figure 1) categorized as Descriptive, Socioemotional, Mission, or Cognition. The Socioemotional category had the largest number of units of relevant meaning with 16, followed by Descriptive 13, Cognition 5, and Mission with 4.

Typical of the Descriptive units were comments such as 'My company's logo is a green tree on a yellow book'; and 'My company has a specific logo with dots and the name of the company.' The Socioemotional category reflected respondents visceral attachment or feelings about their corporate symbol, with com-

ments such as 'is very attractive, warm and nice,' and 'honestly, I don't have any feelings and thoughts connected with the logo itself.' In only two cases did respondents identify a connection between their organization's corporate logo and its mission. In the first case, the respondent described their logo as 'It means that our company is ready for any service…. it is always ahead in service.' In the second case, the respondent expressed a belief that 'The tree represents the growth of a human by learning something new and teaching others is the goal of my company.' Lastly, the Cognition category described changes in respondent's understanding and/or knowledge. Typical examples are: 'I have rather negative connotations (associated with the logo) such as dirtiness and low quality'; and 'Such a logo is very problematic for marketing operations.'

The most dominant theme running throughout these responses is that for the organizations represented, there is little use of graphic symbology, other than corporate logotypes, to convey aspects of organizational culture. Moreover, in cases where corporate logotypes were identified, the researchers rated more than half of respondents' comments as either negative or neutral.

Level II – Organizational Values: Mission Statement

Organizational Values were measured using research subjects' responses to questions regarding corporate *Mission Statements* and *Value Systems*. Since mission statements are more ubiquitous and accessible, we asked respondents to share their thoughts and feelings about their organization's mission statement. Nine of the 20 respondents identified and described in detail the mission statement of their organization while four stated that a mission statement is non-existent in their institutions.

There were 45 units of relevant meaning (see Figure 1) organized into three categories: Mission, Descriptive, and Socioemotional Response categories. Mission units represented the citing of mission statements; Descriptive units comprised explanations of either corporate objectives or behaviours towards employees, competitors and other constituencies; and Socioemotional Responses referred to comments related to respondents thoughts and feelings about their institutions and/or their mission statements.

In cases where the corporate mission was identified, half of respondents' comments were positive. In these cases respondents identified an immediate link between their corporate mission, as a declaration of the purpose for their business, and the company's actual attitude and behaviours towards employees, customers, competitors and others. Consequently, respondents would often describe their corporate mission as 'inspiring' and 'not included in just one statement but in its everyday actions.' In the other half of cases, with dominant negative comments, the corporate missions were characterized by such phrases as 'these are only phrases' and 'unfortunately it's totally different than reality.'

The most dominant theme running throughout these responses is that corporate mission can play a motivating or demotivating role for employees. Positive effects can be achieved when the mission is well communicated and recognized, and above all, is consistent with how the institution actually behaves towards its various audiences.

Level II – Organizational Values: Organizational Value System

The second component of the *Organizational Values* dimension is the *Organization's Value System*. The respondents were asked to identify a value held by their organization and describe how that value is enacted in their workplace. Then they were asked to share their thoughts and feelings about that value and how it shaped their behaviour. This question created 46 units of relevant meaning (see Figure 1) organized into three categories: Values, Description, and Socioemotional Response. The Values category illustrated values that govern behaviour in the organization. The Descriptive category comprised units depicting how owners, managers, and employees practically followed the values within the organization. The Socioemotional Response category comprised comments that referred to respondents' feelings about the values and the consequent modification in respondents' behaviours or/and other system member behaviours.

The researchers rated each *Value* as either positive or negative. Four of the respondents did not answer this question, one of which stated that their institution 'does not have formally approved and announced company values.' Three others did not respond because they were unable to identify any particular value. Of the 46 units of relevant meaning, 16 were placed in the Values, 15 in the Descriptive, and 15 in the Socioemotional Response categories.

In four of the 13 cases recorded, the researchers determined that the reported values elicited an affective change and in nine cases produced behavioural change (see Figure 2). In the affective category we find statements, such as, 'I don't identify as much with our Headquarter ideas' and 'I do not feel being respected there.' Behavioural change was reflected in statements such as 'I try to be professional everyday even though it is sometimes very hard to focus and to be motivated'; 'I was eager to support the level of the service and to become the best one in my position'; and 'it has an impact on employee's behaviour, mine too. We try to be more creative and unconventional in our approach.' The researchers also identified one neutral statement: 'It has no influence on me because they (values) come to me naturally.'

The most dominant theme running throughout the responses is that for half of the cases, institutions depicted did not consciously develop and/or transmit any particular value. Consequently, there was little or no identification of corporate values among employees. This lack of a manifest corporate value system appears to have had a deep impact on how respondents perceive their work and

work environment. For example, in cases where corporate values were well recognized, respondents were far more positive in their assessment of both their work and work environment. Because of the reasons noted earlier, the *Values* dimension generated only 46 units of relevant meaning.

Level III – Fundamental Beliefs

Every company holds some basic beliefs or assumptions that guide behaviour and that inform organizational members how to perceive and think about the world around them. Sixteen of the 20 respondents were able to identify a fundamental organizational belief while four others were unable to, one of which claimed that their organization does not espouse any beliefs.

The researchers identified 47 units of relevant meaning (see Figure 1). They organized them into three categories: *Fundamental Beliefs* with 15 units; Descriptive, the largest category, with 19 units; and Socioemotional Response with 13.

Fundamental Beliefs units exemplify a belief or a set of beliefs identified by the respondents as core and typical for their institution. Examples included, 'creativity'; 'team work to achieve company goals'; 'optimization and efficiency'; and 'very good and passionate customer service.'

Descriptive units elucidated the way these beliefs were shared and present in everyday functioning of the organization. The respondents presented a wide variety of situations, such as, 'They ask us to have ideas about any kind of improvement we can recognize in order to make our life easier at work … encouraged us by giving money for an idea, and depending on the impact of your idea you can receive certain amount of money'; and 'It is not officially allowed to communicate with our competitors.' Socioemotional Responses comprised comments, thoughts and feelings of the respondents about their company's set of beliefs and described them as either positive or negative experiences or feelings. In the former category the researchers registered comments, such as, 'This is a great way to make people be proactive'; 'It motivates employees to do their best to achieve the goal because there are no unachievable goals'; and 'I think this is very important and helped us to behave accordingly.'

In five of the 16 cases reported, the researchers determined that the respondents experienced negative thoughts and feelings about identified beliefs of their institutions. In those cases the respondents expressed comments, such as 'They didn't motivate us in any way'; 'I do not believe in it'; and 'I hate this ridiculous rule which has nothing to do with real work.'

A common theme of these responses is that a significant number of respondents could identify fundamental beliefs of their organizations and respond to them passionately. It is important to note that in only one case did the researchers identify comments that could be classified as extensively negative: 'What you

think or believe is not important. You cannot stand still. If there is no customer find something else to do. Keep smiling even if you are about to faint.'

Fundamental Beliefs Effects on Organizational Behaviour

Lastly, respondents were asked to recall if any of their company's *Fundamental Beliefs* affected their behaviour and, if so, explain how and why.

Six respondents either could not answer the question or claimed that basic beliefs had no discernible effect on them. Of the remaining responses, seven were classified as having caused positive behaviours and five negative behaviours. These responses generated 37 units of relevant meaning (see Figure 1) categorized as Descriptive. They illustrated diverse changes in respondent's understanding, knowledge or personal behaviour.

Typical positive responses were: 'I'm more open to people from different cultures'; 'The company's positive beliefs about the future motivated me to do my best'; 'I learned to be more tolerant'; and 'I learned that you have to be involved in what you do. I implemented an idea of quality in my everyday life.' Examples of responses classified as negative include, 'It has made me feel pushed down, and unable to share creatively'; 'The company is so customer-oriented it neglect(s) employees'; and (core company's beliefs are) 'one of the reasons I'm changing companies.'

Two respondents attributed their lack of behavioural change to the congruency between the company's beliefs and their own. For example, one reported, 'Most of the company's beliefs do not interfere with my own beliefs, that is why I like my job and they do not affect my behaviour'; while the other noted, 'I was aware of this belief before so it hasn't affected my behaviour.'

However, in three cases in which the respondents claimed that the company's beliefs had no effect on them, their responses appear to indicate the opposite. They responded with comments such as, 'As I do not feel that a company cares for me, I also do not care. Ignore and play it cool'; and 'Beliefs that are announced to us and to the public have NO influence because they are only empty phrases.' These comments appear to reflect that some cognitive, affective or behavioural change has occurred whether the respondents recognized it or not.

The researchers classified seven of the 14 responding subjects as having had a positive change in behaviour as a result of engagements with organizational fundamental beliefs (see Figure 2). Five subjects indicated negative behaviour changes and two were classified as neutral. The latter included comments such as, 'I always behaved properly for my organization' and 'It is important to me not to lose my own beliefs and values.'

These findings indicate that fundamental beliefs, when perceived as factually representing the attitudes and values of the organization, can be effective behavioural motivators for these respondents. Of course, as shown above, when respondents had a negative view of fundamental beliefs those same beliefs could serve as de-motivators. It should also be noted that the fact that six of the respondents could not identify a fundamental belief should be cause for concern for those in leadership roles in the respondents' organizations.

Composite Summary

In this study we have asked four research questions. Responses to these questions follow:

RQ [1]. Is there any quantifiable difference in the extent to which employees think about their experiences with each of Schein's dimensions of organizational culture as measured by the frequencies of the self-reported units of relevant meaning?

Our results indicate that there is a discernible quantifiable difference in the extent of cognitive activity generated by the individual dimensions of Schein's culture model. As measured by units of relevant meaning, cognitive activity was defined *as the degree to which employees think about or elaborate on a specific experience, i.e., engagements with dimensions of organizational culture.* This discernible difference is underscored by the wide range in the number of units of relevant meaning from a low of 24 for *Stories* to a high of 104 for *Management Behaviours*, reflecting a broad disparity in the extent to which employees cognitively processed or thought about individual experiences.

RQ [2]. When employees encounter Schein's dimensions of organizational culture, which of these elicit the most cognitive activity as measured by the frequencies of self-reported units of relevant meaning?

The encounters that elicited the greatest number of units of relevant meaning – our measure of purposive cognitive activity – were *Management Behaviours, Organizational Practices* and *Organization-Sponsored Events.* The *Management Behaviours* culture dimension elicited the most extensive cognitive activity with 104 units of relevant meaning. These units, categorized into a broad array of five categories of similar meaning, demonstrate the varied effects of management behaviours on respondents' attitudes and behaviours. Such a result feels intuitively correct and is consistent with many organizational studies that have shown the effects of management behaviours on employee attitudes and behaviour (Redmond et. al. 1993). Similarly, *Organization-Sponsored Events* and *Organizational Practices,* which also generated significant cognitive activity, elicited 82 and 51 units of relevant meaning respectively. We believe that this reflects the reality

of organizational life wherein these two phenomena are continuously encountered.

RQ 3. Which dimension(s) of organizational culture were reported by respondents as causing the most incidences of change in their attitudes and behaviours?

For us, the results proved somewhat surprising. While we expected that *Management Behaviours* would cause the most behavioural change, it was *Organizational Practices* that proved to be the most potent change agent. For 16 of the 20 cases, *Organizational Practices* caused some form of attitudinal or behavioural change among respondents. In seven of the cases, the change was classified as positive while in four cases it was classified as negative. The remaining nine cases could not be classified as either positive or negative.

The dimensions of *Organizational Values* and *Fundamental Beliefs* ranked second and third as change agents with 13 and 12 reported cases of behavioural change respectively. With *Organizational Values*, eight of the experiences were classified as positive and four negative while *Fundamental Beliefs* had 10 positive and four negative. We believe that these results indicate that managers should pay special attention to these dimensions as means of influencing and shaping organizational culture.

While the above results were somewhat surprising, those for attitudinal change were relatively consistent with our expectations. These results showed that *Management Behaviours* generated the most incidences of attitudinal change with 13 followed by *Mission Statement* with nine. Consequently, *Management Behaviours,* which also caused behavioural change in five cases, was more influential in generating overall change when factoring together both affective and behavioural change.

RQ 4. What were the specific changes respondents reported when experiencing each dimension of organizational culture?

For purposes of this study, we describe *experiences* as comprising three components: (1) practical contact with and observations of facts or events; (2) knowledge or skills acquired; and (3) impressions.

Respondents experiences with *Management Behaviours* caused them to feel both comfortable and well respected in the workplace or the opposite, struggling to survive in a contentious and uncaring work environment. Respondents perceived *Organization-Sponsored Events* as very effective in building unit camaraderie and community. Moreover, the face-to-face communication that occurred allowed respondents to more easily and readily acculturate themselves into their work environments.

The majority of *Stories* related by respondents commonly involved negative characterizations of managers or critical comments regarding employee compensation. Such stories predisposed employees' attitudes and behaviour toward issues of compensation, interaction with managers and peers, and stress management in the workplace.

Organizational Practices included forms of welcome, (handshakes and oral greetings), forms of address, and informal group activities (coffee breaks). When respondents experienced informal practices, such as use of first names and handshakes, they perceived the work environment as informal and more relaxed. When they experienced a work environment that was too formal, they believed that it led to a lack of employee commitment and poor relations with other team members. Consequently, respondents' impressions of the work environment were informed by the various organizational practices employed to acculturate them into the work group.

While in most cases respondents had formed a visceral connection to a *Symbol* used in their organization, these were not perceived as motivating either passion or commitment. However, symbols did hold meaning for respondents. Such meanings often reinforced prior perceptions and beliefs about the organization. In some cases respondents perceived symbols as conveying negative connotations or as a marketing liability.

The cultural dimension of *Values* comprised the two sub-dimensions of *Mission Statement* and *Organizational Values*. Respondents identified the presence of an organizational *Mission Statement* in only 9 cases. For respondents, *Mission Statements* formed an obvious linkage between what a company espouses and how it behaves. When a company dealt positively with its various constituencies, employees reported being positively motivated. Similarly, negative company behaviour tended to demotivate employees.

Respondents could identify a clear articulation of *Organizational Values* in only half the cases included in the study. In such cases, respondents recounted how *Values* demonstrably affected their perceptions of work and the work environment.

Respondents characterized *Fundamental Beliefs* as intrinsically valuable, motivating them to achieve goals and to behave proactively. Respondents reported that fundamental beliefs caused change in their behaviour towards others, to be tolerant, professional, and accepting of change. These results appear to support Schein's contention (1985) that basic assumptions are the most influential aspects of organizational culture.

Limitations

The results of our research should be viewed in the light of four basic limitations. The first and most obvious is that as a phenomenological study, the results are neither generalizable to the population as a whole nor do they imply a cause and effect relationship. The second is the sample size, an issue that we addressed extensively earlier in this paper. However, we recommend that with this methodology future research employ larger sample sizes to confirm these early results. Third is the cultural bias inherent in Schien's model. And lastly, while English is the reporting language it was not the native language of the vast majority of respondents.

These limitations suggest the need for follow up research that should involve sampling specific national cultures, especially those that are English speaking. Also, when sampling groups whose primary language is not English, researchers should ensure that each variable is clearly defined in easily understood terminology.

Conclusion

Our study has shown that respondents' cognitive responses to each cultural dimension varied widely. Among respondents, *Management Behaviours, Organizational Practices* and *Organization-Sponsored Events* stimulated the highest degree of cognitive elaboration. Respondents also reported that the cultural dimensions of *Organizational Practices*, *Organizational Values* and *Fundamental Beliefs* were most influential in changing their behaviour.

As noted earlier, these results reflect only the thoughts, feelings and actions of the specific respondents themselves and are not generalizable to any specific population. Nevertheless, the results do suggest that management should consider engaging in 'proactive cultural management' as an effective strategy for supporting positive employee behaviour and commitment, as recommended by Harris and Ogbonna (2002). In addition, the study demonstrated the usefulness of Schein's three-level model as a practical paradigm for examining employee engagements with organizational culture in its manifest forms. It also reports on how lived experiences with the dimensions of Schein's organizational culture model affected respondents' work lives – informing their impressions, attitudes and behaviours toward their fellow employees, their organizations and the work they do. Moreover, it underscores, as Daymon (2000) so astutely notes, the iterative nature of organizational culture in which employees are constantly engaging, responding to, influencing, and reshaping the dimensions of culture.

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Appendix A
Organizational Behaviour Survey

Overview

Your participation in this survey is vitally important to understanding an important aspect of organizational behaviour. It will help ensure that the information collected will represent a cross section of respondents representing a wide diversity in national origin, ethnicity, jobs and organizations. This study will help the researchers better understand the nature of organizational behaviour and how managers can better prepare themselves for managing in a highly diverse, challenging, international work place. Research results will be made public through publication in an academic journal.

Instructions

Please answer each question as thoroughly as possible. Remember that each question refers to the job and company that you *currently work for*. If you are unemployed, think back to the last job you had and answer each of the questions based on that experience. When you finish answering the questions, please fill out the demographic information at the end of the survey. DO NOT put your name on any part of this form. Participation in this research project is absolutely voluntary and anonymous. When you have completed the survey please email it as an attachment to the researchers.

Please answer each question as thoroughly and as honestly as you can. If for any reason you cannot respond to a question write, "I am unable to respond." Since this is a Word document, your answers can be as short or as long as you like.

1. Please think about your manager and his or her personal behaviour on the job. Then describe these behaviours and your thoughts and feelings about them.
2. Please think about the last time you attended or participated in a company sponsored activity or event, such as celebrations or ceremonies. Describe the activity or event and your thoughts and feelings about that experience.
3. When you first began your current job, please describe any stories about your company or any member of your company that were told to you by your fellow employees. Please describe the story and what it meant to you.
4. Please recall an everyday organizational practice that you and your fellow employees engage in, such as shaking hands when you first see them or how you address your manager (Mr Mrs Sir, etc.), and describe your thoughts and feelings about this practice.

5. Please identify any symbol(s) (for example, marks, logos, emblems, icons, and mascots) that your organization uses and describe your thoughts and feelings about that symbol(s).
6. Think about your company's mission statement and share your thoughts and feelings about it.
7. Please identify at least one value that is held by your company and how that value is enacted in the workplace. Then please share your thoughts and feelings about that value and how it has affected, if at all, your behaviour.
8. When you first began your current job, please recall the way you got familiar with (1) how the organization functions; (2) rules of formal and informal relationships among employees; and (3) your new work areas, work duties, tasks, and responsibilities that needed to be accomplished.
9. Every company holds some basic beliefs that guide behaviour and that tell members of an organization how to perceive and think about things. Please identify one basic belief held by your company and describe your thoughts and feelings about it.
10. Have any of your company's basic beliefs affected your behaviour? If so, explain how and why.

Demographic Information

1. National Origin:
2. Ethnicity:
3. Age: 25
4. Sex: M **F**
5. Industry (e.g., high tech, energy, education, etc.):
6. Geographic Location of Corporate Headquarters:
7. Size of Company (circle your response):
   1-4
   5-50
   51-500
   500+

Thank you for participating in this survey.
Now please return the completed questionnaire to the researchers.

Appendix B
Glossary of Categories of Units of Relevant Meaning

Cognition: Mental action or processes of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses.

Communication Style: The manner of sharing information with other organizational members, such as assertive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, submissive, or manipulative approaches.

Decision Making: Related to the specific action or processes of deciding on something.

Description: Spoken or written representation of a person, place or thing.

Management Style: Characteristic ways of maintaining control and influence over human and material resources.

Mission: Statement defining what an organization is, why it exists, and its reason for being.

Oral Greetings: A polite word or phrase of welcome or recognition, such as 'hello' or 'good morning'.

Organizational Climate: Characterization of the work environment as people-oriented, rule-oriented, innovation-oriented, or goal-oriented.

Personality Traits: Distinguishing qualities characteristic of a manger, such as friendliness, warmth, aloofness, reasonableness, truthfulness.

Physical Greetings: The action of giving a sign of welcome or recognition, such as a handshake.

Socioemotional Response: A reaction to a person, place or thing that causes changes in an individual's emotions, personality and/or relationships with other people.

Social Activities: A thing that a person or persons take part in to enhance group relationships, such as a holiday celebration.

Team Building: Action or processes of causing people to work together effectively as a group.