



The four faces of organizational culture

Organizational
culture

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to compare and contrast four different views of organizational culture. Specifically, it will compare the human relations view of culture with three more “modern” perspectives to determine whether the meaning and the research methods associated with this phenomenon has shifted over time.

Design/methodology/approach – Each face of organizational culture research (human relations; software of the mind; process consultation; and appreciative inquiry) are described and critiqued. Methods utilized by researchers in their respective eras are compared and contrasted.

Findings – In comparing the human relations approach to defining and researching organizational culture with the three more modern faces, one thing has become apparent: the meaning of culture, over time, has changed. It has become less a permanent, manifested phenomena, and more of a manipulable asset. It is assumed that cultures can be molded quickly and easily into whatever the organizations need. Additionally, the methods for researching organizational culture today are much shallower, as surveys continue to replace in-depth interviews and long-term observations. The multidimensional levels of culture require researchers to explore this phenomenon’s varying depths, not just at the shallowest plane.

Research limitations/implications – The main research contribution of this article is that it is a true historical account of organizational culture thought going all the way back to the Hawthorne studies. It also highlights the research methods in this important area and calls for attention to historical rigor.

Originality/value – This paper fulfills the need to compare and contrast organizational culture paradigms and formally critique the current research methodology in the organizational culture field.

Keywords Human relations, Organizational culture, Multidimensional, Interpersonal relations

Paper type Literature review

Introduction

For decades, researchers have determined that an organization’s culture could be the genesis of a significant competitive advantage in the business environment (Moore, 1954; Peters and Waterman, 1982; Lawler, 1992; Alvesson, 2002). In fact, there have been many studies linking organizational performance to a strong culture (Bennett *et al.*, 1994; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). Analysts also realized that when companies expanded, merged or acquired other business entities, cultural compatibility was just as important as financial compatibility (Schein, 1985). To this end, understanding the origin, changes, and impacts of culture is one of the most important aspects of organizational research (Alvesson, 2002).

Historically, the first group of scholars to conduct experiments that revealed the nature of culture in an organizational context was from the human relations field. In the 1980s, a new generation of consultants began touting the importance of leaders developing their “organization culture”. This paper will compare the human relations era perspective to three perspectives from the modern era: namely, “software of the mind”,



“process consultation” and “appreciative inquiry”. Our literature review will not only identify some important similarities and differences between these views, it will also show how the concept of culture and the methods used to study it have changed over time. Practitioners should consider the strengths and weaknesses of each of these four faces of culture before they decide how they will try to enhance the competitiveness and performance of their organizations.

The human relations face

The industrial field research conducted from the 1920s to 1960s was called human relations. The studies conducted at the Western Electric Hawthorne plant launched this movement (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939). Although human relations field researchers only occasionally used the term “culture” (Chapple, 1943), many of them relied upon anthropological and sociological concepts and methods. Accordingly, they are regarded as the first group to conduct organization culture studies and research change efforts (Trice and Beyer, 1993).

The Hawthorne researchers launch the human relations movement

The initial lighting experiments done by the human relations group were conducted in the scientific management tradition. A test group and a control group were used. By comparing the production in the two rooms as the level of lighting was varied in the test room, it was thought the best level of lighting would become apparent. As the lighting in the test room was incremented several times, production in both rooms rose. Next, lighting was decreased in the test room. Production went up in the test room. Production also went up in the control room. Other scenarios were subsequently run. The inconclusive results eventually put an end to this study.

Elton Mayo and his associates started a new group of studies. The Relay Assembly Test Room explored the impact of rest pauses, snacks, length of work hours and length of work week on production. For some time, things were going as they anticipated. As improvements in working conditions were progressively made, production increased. When these improvements were removed, it was anticipated production would return to its original level. Yet, the higher level of production was maintained. The researchers then began to consider what could account for this.

Two inductive studies were conducted. The first was an extensive interviewing program. The second was the Bank Wiring Observation Room. A number of important conclusions were reached. Initially, the researchers employed simple deductive logic. Changes were made that were intended to cause certain results. The surprising results suggested there were important unknown underlying factors. Their inductive research revealed that the prevailing employee sentiments played an important role. Additionally, one also had to grasp the personal histories and the social situation at work. These served as the foundation for these sentiments. Only after this context was developed could one understand how a change would be interpreted. The meaning of a change could be as important, if not more important, than the substance of the change.

Instead of thinking in terms of isolated individuals, the Hawthorne researchers came to realize one should think in terms of informal groups. The formal organization was found to have a shadow counterpart that was called “the informal organization”. Employees shared their experiences, frustrations, and fears with one another. This lifted

their spirits and bonded them together. Shortcuts were learned, taught, and kept secret from managers. Some workers helped one another even though they did not have to.

Shared sentiments were discovered regarding coworkers not working too fast or too slow, not telling managers about things that would harm peers, and not acting too big. These norms were enforced via verbal requests, teasing, nicknaming, ostracism, and binging. The workers were not lazy or irrational. There were pragmatic reasons for their norms. For instance, output restriction was found to stem from the fear of productivity expectations being raised and possible reductions in the workforce. A portion of the output was often “banked”. This provided insurance for times when there was a machine problem or the employee was having a bad day. Many employees would work faster during certain portions of the day to allow for social time. Workers were clearly not just “economic men”. The Hawthorne researchers argued if the managers were placed in the same social situation as their workers, they would have reacted in much the same way.

In this process, a great deal was learned about interviewing as a method. Interviews were initiated in 1928 to get “the facts” about what the employees liked and disliked about their jobs. The researchers noticed very quickly that the employees would wander away from the prescribed questions. When these “irrelevant” responses were interrupted, the conversation would return to the “facts” for only a short time. The interviewees soon went back to what they wished to talk about.

This led the researchers to adopt a nondirective approach. The interviewees were free to choose their own topics. The length of the interviews grew from 30 to 90 minutes. The verbatim notes that were taken grew from an average of $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 10 single spaced typewritten pages. Instead of finding “facts” like the tool is dull, the employees often made statements that were a mixture of fact and sentiment, like “my boss is a slave driver”. Statements like this one could not be objectively confirmed or denied.

The researchers noticed the interviewees became more relaxed and energized as they shared their experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Nondirective interviewing evidently has strong cathartic and catalytic benefits. When frustrations were expressed to a sympathetic listener it generally lifted a person’s spirits. This vocalization also helped the person organize and come to terms with what had happened. A counseling program was therefore initiated to therapeutically help employees adjust to their work situations (Dickson and Roethlisberger, 1966). Supervisory training was also conducted based on disguised case examples gathered via this process. These scenarios were intended to sensitize managers to human relations issues, improve their analytic abilities, and help them develop a productive management style.

Other human relations contributions

Barnard (1938) theoretically described how informal association always precedes any formal organization. Once managers put formal controls in place, the informal organization adapts. The formal and informal organizations were viewed as symbiotically intertwined. One could not exist without the other.

Many other human relations field projects were conducted. Some were called “anthropological engineering” (Chapple, 1943). One would start with a study of the basic beliefs and values of the employees. The way the social system operated would be described. Next, one could consider how, if at all, the organization could be made more effective. After making a change, some ongoing observation would take place. Adjustments would then be made as needed (Moore, 1988, p. 13).

Organizations were viewed as being like living organisms (Chapple, 1941). The normal day-to-day work “equilibrium” was seen as analogous to how biological organisms operate. The various parts of the organization were interrelated in complex ways. Changes in one part of the system might have unexpected impact on other parts.

The main focus was placed on how all the various pieces came together to accomplish goals. The top management was said to be like the brain, and the communication system and authority structure were like the nervous system, in a human body (Gardner, 1945, p. 5). The degree of teamwork was expected to fluctuate on a regular basis as the environment shifted, new technologies were introduced, policies were altered, staffing changed, and unexpected problems arose.

It was recognized that the initial state of affairs mattered when a disruption arose. A calm state might absorb a disturbance, whereas an agitated state might be inflamed by the same disturbance. When the equilibrium was disturbed beyond what the natural controls could handle, an intervention might be called for to help restore healthy operations. A proper diagnosis had to be made in order to select the proper adjustments.

Starting in the 1940s, managers at Sears tried to improve performance by aligning the organization strategy, formal organization, and informal organization in a particular way (Moore, 1954). Sears adopted a flat and loose structure, hired highly qualified managers, and delegated a great deal of authority to them (Worthy, 1994). This was intended to foster flexibility, innovativeness, and entrepreneurship. It was thought this approach would lessen the gap between the formal and informal organizations.

Surveys were used as a “crude thermometer”. When problems were found in a unit, nondirective interviewing was used to flesh out the situation (Jacoby, 1986). The store manager was consulted all along the way. Corrective actions were normally taken long before a report was sent to his superiors. This would ideally ease the process.

Walker and Guest (1952) documented what it was like to work on an auto assembly line. Many important job characteristics were identified: including, the mechanical pacing of work, repetitiveness, minimum skill requirements, predetermined usage of tools and techniques, minute subdivision of the product worked on, and surface mental attention. Surveys revealed roughly 10 percent of the sample workers preferred or were indifferent to jobs with basic mass production characteristics (Walker and Guest, 1952, p. 141). Most workers reacted negatively to assembly line conditions. Some of the most prominent adverse outcomes were conflicts over line speed, poor quality work, and high levels of turnover, tardiness, and other forms of withdrawal.

Subsequently, the position of the foreman on the assembly line was studied (Walker *et al.*, 1956). It was estimated that 90 percent of the job of the foreman was learning how to properly break in and handle the men. Based on interviews, foremen were trained to treat their men as individuals, establish a personal relationship with their men apart from the job relationship, teach and promote, be a shock absorber, stick up for their men, and consult the workers and delegate responsibility to them.

Space constraints prevent us from reviewing more of these field projects. Many studies were done on incentive systems over the course of the human relations era (Whyte *et al.*, 1955). Only about 10 percent of workers fit the profile of an “economic man”. It was therefore concluded a socio-economic model was needed that recognized what actually took place in practice. Labor-management fieldwork found work groups that had power tended to exert it (Whyte, 1951; Kuhn, 1961). Sayles (1958) described four common industrial socio-technical behavior patterns, which he labeled as apathetic, erratic,

strategic, and conservative work groups. The strategic work groups, who regularly tried to improve their status and treatment, proved to also be highly productive.

The three modern faces

Fieldwork in the human relations tradition came to an end during the 1960s. Several other ways of thinking about culture emerged subsequently.

The software of the mind face

In the late 1960s, Geert Hofstede began exploring the subject of culture. Culture was defined as “the unwritten book with rules of the social game” (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). The values children are taught up the age of ten were viewed as the deepest level of culture. These values were termed “the software of the mind”. This software was socially constructed by the surrounding adults. There were also three progressive broad layers on top of these core values: namely, rituals, heroes, and symbols. A holistic mindset needed to be adopted. It was argued the most visible outer layer was the most superficial and the hidden core was more obdurate.

Hofstede drew on the work of anthropologists Benedict and Mead, the sociologist Inkeles, and the psychologist Levinson. Based on the analysis of surveys completed by IBM employees in various cultures, four cultural dimensions were identified. These have been named power distance (from small to large), collectivism versus individualism, femininity versus masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance (from weak to strong) (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005).

The subsequent exploration of these results among populations beyond IBM employees have varied somewhat. Nevertheless, three if not all four of these dimensions seem to exist in all of these data sets. Further, these differences seem to persist over time. Based on these findings, cultural sensitivity training has been conducted by various groups. This was intended to improve the trainees’ understanding of foreign cultures. The objective was to ultimately improve multinational performance.

Far less work was done on the culture of specific organizations. A study of Denmark and The Netherlands suggested another six dimensions. These reflected differences in organization practices rather than values. A total of 180 in-depth interviews were conducted to prepare new survey items and create case examples (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). These practice dimensions were process oriented versus results oriented, employee oriented versus job oriented, parochial versus professional, open system versus closed system, loose control versus tight control, and normative versus pragmatic (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005).

It was argued most organization cultures consisted mainly of practices instead of values. Practices in organizations could vary greatly in a culture with a common set of values. These common organization practices were easier to influence than values were. Practices were shaped by the founders’/leaders’ values, the socialization of new employees, and selecting people who fit the organization culture (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). Adopting a good set of practices would ideally integrate the efforts the human resources of an international conglomerate. This should improve its overall competitiveness and ultimately its performance.

In a very limited study of one Danish insurance company, the presence of subcultures was explored (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). A professional, an administrative, and a customer interface were the three subcultures found. The customer interface culture

represented a counterculture to the professional culture. Two cases of internal rebellion were documented. Little action was taken as a result of the surveys that were administered, so little more can really be said about these subcultures.

Instead of there being a “best practice” (i.e. one way to achieve excellence), Hofstede argued that what was good or bad depends on the particular situation. In other words, determining the effectiveness of a culture required that one first know where an organization wanted to go (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). He also concluded the managers needed to balance strategy, structure, culture, and control.

The shared values organization culture gurus

During the 1980s, consultants began telling business leaders how developing their “organization culture” could enhance performance (Peters and Waterman, 1982; Deal and Kennedy, 1982). If a culture was left to evolve on its own, dysfunction was seen as the likely result (Kilmann, 1985, p. 354). The culture might drift with changes in personnel, the market environment, and the organization itself. Even a positive like growth presented cultural threats. Mounting size would bring greater bureaucracy, weakened social relations, rivalries for resources, and lessened team spirit. The focus and intensity of a culture can easily be lost over time (Alvesson, 2002, p. 176). Therefore, consultants advised upper level managers to take charge of their cultures. Success depended on achieving a good fit between strategy, structure, and culture (Bennett *et al.*, 1991).

Managers were advised it was best to have a “strong” culture (Sathe, 1985). The “shared values” should be broadly known, few in number, important, and clearly ranked.

Considerable attention was focused on establishing and communicating mission, vision, and shared values statements. Slogans were used to connect with both employees and customers. Symbolic objects, such as company logos, emblems, and clothing could also serve as important parts of these culture programs. A deep emotional commitment and vigorous work ethic were seen as flowing from creating the desired image, a sense of pride, a common identity, greater loyalty, and a joint direction.

Organization culture gurus also stressed leaders can and should use their charisma to shape an organization’s culture (Schein, 1985; Srivastva and Cooperrider, 1999). This might be done via their speeches, visits, and inspirational actions. Charismatic leaders often offer an upbeat view of the organization’s future. This fosters a sense of direction, harmony, confidence, and optimism.

The importance of rituals and ceremonies was recognized (Trice and Beyer, 1993). These show what is valued. Appreciation awards were often given for employee contributions. Telling stories, myths, and legends also held the potential to powerfully shape a workforce (Wilkins, 1983; Salzer-Morling, 1998). The heroes in these sagas generally did admirable things. Listeners were meant to be inspired to act likewise. These stories could be thought of as communicating important lessons and priorities.

Some ways of changing cultures take a long time, while others can have a more rapid impact. Recruitment and selection were highlighted as a way to bring new people in who would fit the desired culture (Wiener, 1988). Hiring a few key new managers, for example, might result in a successful entry into a new market or help change the current style of production. The new employee orientation starts to socialize the newcomers into the desired culture. Meetings and newsletters communicate key messages and answer employee questions. Corporate histories might be provided. Company social events, such as meals, picnics, parties, and sporting events could be melded into this scheme.

Many consultants advocated creating a “team culture”. Typically, organization levels were reduced, formal controls were relaxed, spans of control were expanded, access to information was broadened, and a greater degree of power was delegated to teams (Lawler, 1986, 1992). The physical facilities might also be altered to a more open office format with fewer walls and status differences. Enhanced productivity, higher quality, and lower costs were foreseen. These benefits would result from employing a smaller group of more broadly trained workers. Self-control and peer discipline were to be relied upon to stay on course (Barker, 1999; Fortado and O’Brien, 2008).

Two organization development faces

The burgeoning modern culture literature has been recognized as being highly diverse. Some effort has been made to integrate these varied views into a common model (Bennett *et al.*, 1991). Although there are some benefits to integrating diverse perspectives, there are also some differences in orientation that cannot be reconciled.

The process consultation face

Each organization development (OD) change process differs to some degree. For many years, Lewin’s field theory, group dynamics, action research, and three-step change process served as a common overall foundation (Burnes, 2004). One first looks at the forces that maintain the status quo and the forces that would change the situation. The change agents think in terms of unfreezing the current situation, changing it, and refreezing in the new desired state. To begin a change process, the forces maintaining the status quo must be weakened, and the forces for change strengthened. Once the desired state was achieved via one of the various methods available, stability would be restored.

Behavioral norms were recognized as existing prior to any change effort (Kilmann *et al.*, 1986). Many modern consultants believed these were “shallow” in nature and could be easily molded. When asked, employees would readily list the existing norms. Next, they could be asked what new set of norms might be more effective to achieve higher levels of production and morale. Change then ensued.

Some OD consultants relied upon “process consultation” (Schein, 1987, 1988). There were also trainers who thought in much the same terms. One would start with a needs analysis (i.e. set goals, problem diagnosis, or identify a skills gap). The available options would then be examined. One could choose an existing program or design a new one. It would then be implemented. This would be followed by the ongoing measurement of outcomes (Alvesson, 2002). Revisions would be made as needed. The consultant was ideally helping the client managers define and solve their own problems. A plan was tailored to the situation, rather than following the latest fad.

Schein (1985), relying on the work of anthropologists Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, identified five basic underlying assumptions or dimensions around which cultures could be compared: namely, humanity’s relationship to nature, the nature of reality and truth, the nature of human nature, the nature of human activity, and the nature of human relationships. He outlined how to uncover cultural assumptions via iterative interviews of a motivated insider (Schein, 1985). This process included among other things the consultant noticing surprising things, digging into how the organization was started, and exploring how subsequent critical incidents were handled. The consultant’s hunches and hypotheses would be checked by a group feedback process.

Some OD consultants used attitude surveys as a tool to assess the status of cultures (Trice and Beyer, 1993). This might be done in combination with a limited amount of interviewing and observation. Some new measures of culture were developed. For example, managers were told to consider measures of cultural dispersion and potency (Saffold, 1988). Dispersion included four categories: namely, sociological penetration, psychological penetration, historical penetration, and artifact penetration. Potency similarly had four components: namely, elemental coherence, symbolic potency, strategic fit, and alloplasticity (i.e. the relative degree of cultural adaptability and rigidity).

The appreciative inquiry face

In sharp contrast to process consultation, some OD practitioners have rejected thinking in terms of problems or deficits. This evokes negative images and tends to lead to blame. Appreciative inquiry (AI) provided an alternative approach (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987). AI embraces many diverse views. In general, people imagine how things could be. They try to foster innovation, creativity and hope.

One hour peer interviews are used to identify:

- peak positive experiences (i.e. the best of what is);
- individual, work and organizational values (i.e. life-giving forces); and
- three wishes for change.

Next, future interactions will be built upon this foundation. When an upward spiral has been initiated, sustainable growth and change should ensue. This result is considered a co-creation of the participants and consultants (Watkins and Mohr, 2001).

AI advocates showed “a respectful irreverence for the past” (Srivastva and Barrett, 1990). In “postmodernism”, human organizations are viewed as being socially constructed. Language was formerly thought of as describing an objective reality. Discourse, however, can create new social worlds. There are many possible realities, rather than some sort of inevitable or predestined reality. In AI one thinks of dialogues as generating a shared reality among the people involved. Instead of “telling it like it is”, one can “tell it as it may become” (Srivastva *et al.*, 1990).

Since plants grow toward sunlight, managers should create positive inspirational images (Cooperrider, 1990). This is called the “heliotropic hypothesis”. A holistic perspective ought to be taken. This would replace trying to explain human situations in terms of component parts. Organizations are like living organisms, which have unpredictable emergent properties (Harman, 1990). In contrast to Lewin’s episodic process, AI thinks of change as taking place continuously as dialogues occur that create a new shared reality (Watkins and Mohr, 2001).

Existing dysfunctional and neurotic behavior can be attributed to people not being heard in the past. One therefore should listen to these emotions without blame, judgment, or reproach (Srivastva and Barrett, 1990). People can then talk through these distractions. Rapid transformations are foreseen. The evaluation of an AI program consists of listing the positive things that have been developed and doing more AI if there is a need for it (Watkins and Mohr, 2001).

Discussion

The similarities and differences of these four faces of organization culture from two eras deserve careful study (Table I). All of these perspectives argue organizational

	Human relations	Software of the mind	Organization development	
			Process consultation	Appreciative inquiry
Potential for improved results	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High
Disciplines	Psychology	Social constructionism	Psychology	Social constructionism
	Sociology	Anthropology	Social psychology	Psychology
Importance of history	Anthropology			Anthropology
	High	High	Moderate	Low
Cultural dimensions	Not considered	High	Moderate	Not considered
Informal organization	High	Low	Not considered	Not considered
Set goals, measure, revise	High	Moderate	High	Not considered
Methods	Nondirective interviews	Descriptive surveys	Structured interviews	Peer structured interview
	Observation	Preparatory interviews	Needs analysis surveys	Group feedback
	Diagnostic surveys		Group feedback Survey	
	Descriptive surveys		evaluation	
			Modest observation	

Table I.
Four faces of organization culture

performance and competitiveness can potentially be improved by making cultural changes. Organizations were viewed as “living organisms” by some authors in both eras. More emphasis was placed on this metaphor in the human relations period. The need to take a “holistic view” of situations proved to be another parallel. Constellations of interrelated variables were recognized as being important in determining outcomes. The variables considered, however, differed. The importance of achieving a good fit between strategy, structure, and culture proved to be a key congruent recommendation.

Some aspects of modern OD efforts are based upon the earlier findings from the human relations era. Advocates of creating a team culture, for example, have generally been aware of the fieldwork done on the problems involved in assembly line production (Walker and Guest, 1952). Moreover, human relations researchers described how people on the lower levels were much more willing to embrace decisions when they participated in making them. Most OD consultants share this belief. Accordingly, most recent change efforts have included some degree of employee participation.

Anthropological, sociological, and psychological literature were widely relied upon in all of these bodies of work. Peering beyond this surface commonality, there were tremendous differences in the authors and subsections of these disciplines that were cited. The literature from functional anthropology, cultural anthropology, applied anthropology, industrial anthropology, sociological functionalism, social constructionism, industrial sociology, cognitive psychology, social psychology, counseling, and industrial psychology are not all one and the same. It should be kept in mind that even within one of these disciplinary subsections, important nuances and conflicts can exist.

The same body of literature can even be applied quite differently. For instance, Hofstede's software of the mind and AI relied upon "social constructionism". The former used social constructionism to explain how things got to be a certain way. The latter used social constructionism to explain how the future can be readily shaped based upon peak historic experiences. In the human relations era, this difference in focus was cast as thinking about "what is" and "what should be". Interventions often tried to lessen the gap between the two. In contrast, these two modern perspectives focused largely on one or the other. Issues like this really need to be identified and the merits deliberated.

The four faces of organization culture differ greatly with regard to how much attention should be given to history, cultural dimensions, and informal organization. These issues are interrelated, so they should be considered together.

AI gives the least weight to history. Each organization culture is recognized as having unique aspects (Watkins and Mohr, 2001). Despite this, the subject of culture has been assumed to be well understood. Since the past was socially constructed, great faith is placed on being able to similarly mold the future. In keeping with this, no consideration was given to the existence of preexisting cultural dimensions or informal organization. Aspects of the other three faces stand in stark contrast to this.

Hofstede (software of the mind) and Schein (process consultation) both include consideration of common cultural dimensions. These dimensions characterize a culture and remain relatively stable over time. This makes it practically useful to identify them. Beyond this similarity, important differences exist. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) largely explored four common national cultural dimensions. They thought of organization culture in terms of common practices. Surveys were used to describe national differences and training was conducted to sensitize managers to these enduring differences in culture. Schein (1985), in contrast, felt it was worthwhile to have an insider identify the client organization's existing cultural dimensions and test these findings in a group feedback session. Hofstede and Schein were clearly thinking about quite different cultural dimensions. They accordingly recommended different courses of action.

Some commentators have disputed the evidence for and meaningfulness of such cultural dimensions (McSweeney, 2009). National cultural dimensions can do nothing to explain the diversity of organizational practices at any particular moment in time. Multiple cultures exist within any nation, including regional subcultures and very different organizational cultures. These cultural dimensions also do not shed light on changes over time. The survey results themselves raise further issues (McSweeney, 2009). Survey averages such as those Hofstede generated explain at best 49 percent of the variation within a country. This leaves the other 51 percent unexplained. Even worse, only 2 to 4 percent of the variation in the answers of individuals can be explained by national differences. In anthropology, the concept of cultural dimensions enjoyed some popularity in terms of explaining the authoritarianism in Japan and Germany when these nations were fascist. After the Second World War, these nations were transformed. In keeping with this, the concept of enduring cultural dimensions lost popularity in anthropology. This concept only remains popular today in the organization studies mentioned here.

Given the controversy surrounding the subject of cultural dimensions, let us consider instead the more general issue of cultural influences. One might be given the impression one must choose between considering cultural influences on a national or organizational basis. A recent field study simultaneously found evidence of both

societal and organizational cultural influences (Ailon and Kunda, 2009). Corporate managers try to both activate and suppress these conflicting identities, depending on the situation. For example, products must be sold in local markets, so there is a desire to activate and exploit local cultural knowledge. In contrast, when large differences in pay and promotion opportunities favoring those from the home country of the organization exist, integrative rhetoric and symbols are employed to lessen the tension.

In the human relations era, attention was first drawn to the important influence shared sentiments, personal histories, and social situations had on work performance. A great deal of attention was devoted to studying “informal organization”. Hofstede similarly recognized the presence of subcultures. Yet, he devoted little attention to this subject and how to manage differences in the parties’ interests. Many modern OD consultants have ignored these subjects, outside of making reference to resistance to change efforts due irrational emotional attachments to the past (Trice and Beyer, 1993).

The reasons for oppositional group norms, such as fears of unemployment and output expectations being raised, still seem pertinent today. Many organizations have reduced staffing levels and pushed the remaining employees to do more. The modern culture literature largely does not consider the differential power of work groups and the relation this has to resistance. Apparently, it has been assumed the formally stated shared values and the other integrative aspects of the cultural change efforts will suffice.

One recent study has found quality teams proved to be more stable in higher status and more powerful groups where there was a true “quid pro quo” (Strang and Jung, 2009). Groups with high levels of income inequality and occupational immobility tended to produce merely some short-term benefits, while there were longer term costs. Under these conditions, support for these quality teams tended to fade over time. This study suggests the differences in groups found in the human relations era remain relevant.

The modern faces tend not talk about puzzling results in the same way as was the case during the Hawthorne studies. It was the unexpected social complexities of work situations that led human relations researchers to adopt exploratory fieldwork. Only a few field studies of cultural changes have recently been authored by researchers who were not also serving as consultants. Unexpected resistance to cultural changes has generally been encountered in this work (Knights and McCabe, 2003; Ezzamel *et al.*, 2001; Fortado, 2001; Ackeroyd and Thompson, 1999; McKinlay and Taylor, 1996; Watson, 1994; Kunda, 1992; Grenier, 1988). A few OD consultants have also acknowledged that cultural change efforts that are done purely in the interests of upper level managers often backfire (Alvesson, 2002). Future field research appears warranted to determine whether the older or the more modern faces are more accurate.

The progressive steps from “anthropological engineering” were loosely paralleled by the problem solving approach followed by some modern day trainers and OD consultants. In human relations, a great deal of attention was given to describing the initial cultural state. Culture was generally viewed as more difficult to change, outcomes as less predictable, and ongoing adjustments as more likely to be necessary.

In sharp contrast, advocates of AI entirely reject this overall approach as being negative in orientation. Since AI does not begin with self-criticism or goal setting, it is hard to ever conclude a program has performed poorly. When the initial process has not gone well, advocates generally do more AI. The value of rooting out faults

or learning from mistakes is largely denied. When one excludes the possibility of negative results, the process is more of an ideological one rather than a scientific one.

The methods utilized under these four faces certainly deserve consideration. Questionnaires were used to describe aspects of populations in both eras (Walker and Guest, 1952; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). In traditional OD interventions, survey results may be used in both needs analysis and program evaluation. We no longer see surveys being utilized as a “thermometer” that could trigger nondirective interviews and subsequent course adjustments. Surveys are relatively quick and cheap. Yet, they do not provide in-depth descriptions of the complexities of cultures like fieldwork does.

Nondirective interviewing and extensive observation were used in human relations to explore and describe cultures. In-depth cases were created to be used in managerial training to develop human relations diagnostic skills. In process consultation, iterative structured interviews are conducted with a few select insiders. A group interview may also be utilized to diagnose where the organization falls along a given cultural dimension (Schein, 1985). When Hofstede began to study common cultural practices, 180 structured in-depth interviews were conducted in 20 organizations in two countries (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). In addition to identifying subjects to be covered in survey items, some cases were also created to provide cultural examples for a book. One hour structured peer interviews are a cornerstone of AI. Overall, the time spent gathering information in recently has been far less than the weeks, months, and even years used in the past (Moore, 1988). Fewer in-depth cases have recently been created.

Both human relations and AI consultants recognized interviewing employees could energize them. The source of this lift, though, was different. human relations nondirective interviewing produced cathartic and catalytic benefits. These were produced when employees shared their frustrations with a sympathetic listener. In AI, employees were invigorated by describing their peak work experiences. While both tap strong emotions, these are really quite different processes.

There are also other important practical differences in beliefs beyond this. The Hawthorne researchers believed it took several years of training at nondirective interviewing before a person could become proficient (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939). In contrast, AI consultants provide a set of predetermined questions to pairs of employees. The two take turns interviewing one another for one hour. Good results were anticipated even though this was a first time experience for both of them.

AI interviewers were coached with regard to how to handle interviewees who want to discuss negative examples. They initially will try to postpone these issues until the three wishes for the future question is reached. If the person persists, the interviewer is told to listen to the negativity and then try to guide the person back to the positive. The person should be asked if there was a time, even the smallest moment, when they saw an innovation. If this fails, the person would be asked to think of a positive image of how things could be done. If even this fails, the interviewer is told to reframe the negative data into affirmative images (Watkins and Mohr, 2001).

These practices stand in sharp contrast to the tenets of non-directive interviewing. Based on the interviews at the Hawthorne plant, using a predetermined set of questions, interrupting, and trying to positively rephrase things could easily suppress expression. The consultants are likely to be seen as having taken sides. This normally produces distrust and a lessened willingness to participate (Gardner and Whyte, 1946).

Human relations fieldworkers tried not take sides. They entered organizations from the top and slowly moved downward. Developing a rapport was expected to take time. They learned from experience how important it was to keep in touch with people at all levels over time. Otherwise, some contacts would close up.

Human relations fieldworkers encountered managers who thought of academics as “impractical dreamers who talk in a language they do not understand and who are out of touch with the realities they face” (Gardner and Whyte, 1946). To counteract this, they wrote reports that would be easy for a layperson to understand (Moore, 1988). Case examples were provided that were rich in detail. They sought to make their work widely accessible and understandable.

Some modern culture material contains jargon that average people would not easily be able to relate to. Talking about the “alloplasticity” of a culture is a case in point. Literature using these sorts of terms is only intended to be read by an elite group. Using this sort of language heightens status differences and social distances.

Human relations researchers believed most managers liked programs that were easy to understand, could be quickly implemented, and did not “rock the boat” (Moore, 1988). The managers they dealt with were often somewhat anxious if not outright fearful of long-term field projects that involved open-ended questioning. These skeptical managers felt they should “leave well enough alone”, and barred access rather than risk touching off “an explosion” (Gardner and Whyte, 1946). These anxieties appear to have been lessened in the modern era. For example, AI’s focus on peak experiences and positive images seems unlikely to stir things up.

Conclusion

Frequently, when organization culture is discussed, authors act like there is one commonly accepted way of thinking about this subject. Our review of the literature has shown there are at least four different faces of organization culture. Based on the above discussion, it should now be evident there are simultaneously a great number of similarities and differences between these four faces.

Some people like the idea of trying to integrate existing theories. This offers the possibility of achieving a consensus between different groups. As we have seen, there are multiple points in common between two or more of the four faces. In some instances, the modern views might be benefited by adding some of the forgotten lessons from the human relations era. Nevertheless, we believe that it is not possible to integrate every aspect of these four faces. Some aspects of these perspectives are simply not compatible. This is why practitioners need to be educated with respect to the existing similarities and differences. Once educated, managers should be better able to enhance their organizational competitiveness and performance via managing their cultures.

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