

Multiple unit levels, and external factors, exert cultural influence on individual Soldiers.

Conceptualizing Unit Culture: Analyzing Data from Soldiers Interviews

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U.S. Army and Culture

The Army currently trains Soldiers on recognizing and assessing the cultural norms of the people they will interact with outside the United States during deployment or missions.

While such culturally competent engagement outside of the U.S. is important, it is equally important to be able to recognize and assess the cultural norms of Army units themselves.

To conceptualize Army unit culture, the U.S. Army Research Institute (ARI) established a multidisciplinary research team, including expertise in anthropology, organizational psychology, and sociology.

Researchers conducted 504 inductive, semi-structured interviews representing nine active component brigade-sized units at installations throughout the continental United States (CONUS).

Analysis Phase 2

In a secondary, companion analysis, two paired infantry brigades were analyzed to discover each unit's uniqueness and commonality with respect to unit culture.

Researchers identified approximately 50 potential codes within the sub-sample, 25 of which had the potential to inform an analysis of enduring values, norms, and beliefs within units.

Teams of researchers coded and analyzed all interview transcripts from each unit.

Researchers then condensed this analysis into narratives that represented the culture of both units.

Ultimately, the two infantry units were found to have values, beliefs and norms that were in common as well as distinct.



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Analysis Phase 1

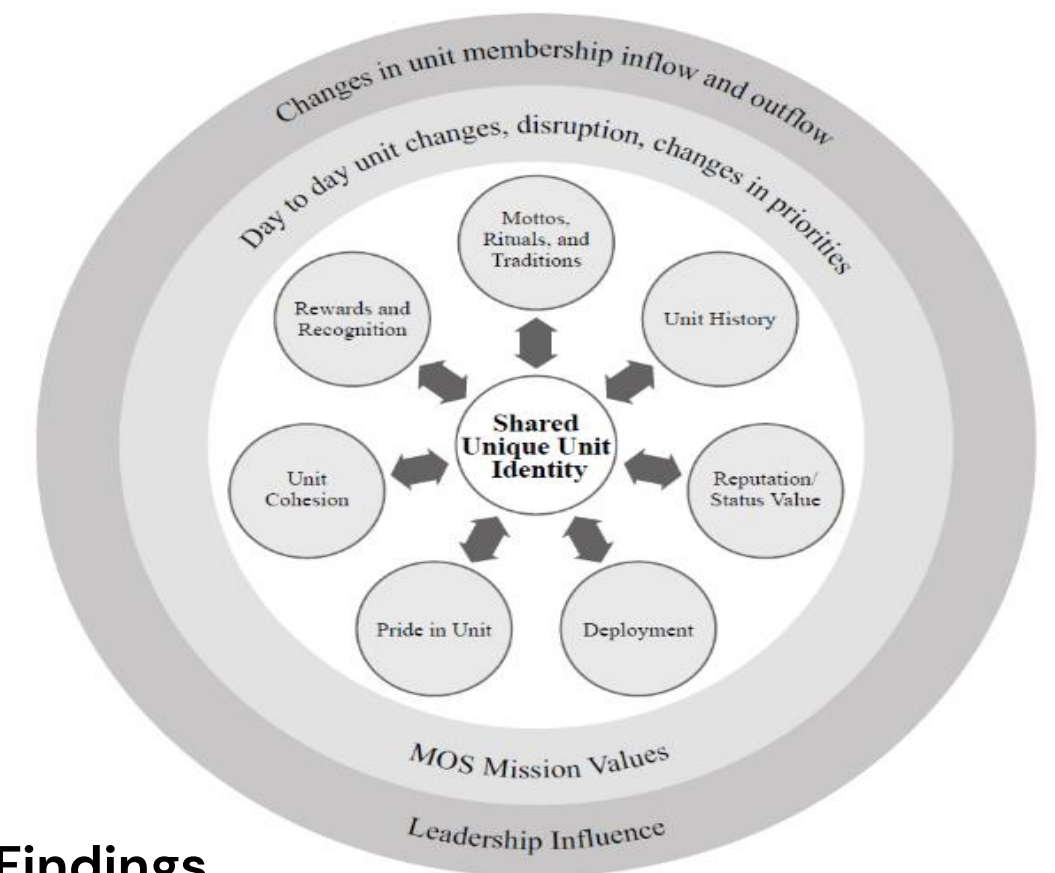
Initial analysis included a stratified sub-sample of 48 of the interviews which were appropriately stratified by sub-unit and unit member rank.

A team of twelve researchers either coded or analyzed data.

Researchers identified 31 codes within the sub-sample, seven of which had the potential to inform an analysis of enduring values, norms, and beliefs within units

Researchers were required to meet a 70% interrater reliability threshold as an approximate indicator of sufficient consensus for coding.

Findings from this analysis allowed researchers to construct the following model that approximates what broad categories have universal importance for the culture of units.



Findings

Unit Culture is a phenomena with various influences acting to shape and form it.

Unit Culture is nested:

- Multiple levels of units exist, each potential exerting a cultural influence on individual Soldiers.
- Influences external to the unit also exist including installation, Army, and societal.

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14. ABSTRACT The Army has framed its understanding of culture comparatively, training Soldiers on the enduring values, beliefs, and norms of groups that they might engage with outside the United States during deployment or missions. What remains to be known is what the enduring values, beliefs, and norms of Army units themselves are and how consistent or different this culture is across Army units. The Army Research Institute established a multidisciplinary research team and used grounded theory to develop protocols used to conduct 504 inductive, semi-structured interviews representing nine active component brigade-sized units at installations throughout the continental US. Initial analysis included a sub-sample of 48 of the interviews which were stratified by sub-unit and unit member rank. Twelve researchers either coded or analyzed data. A model was constructed that approximates what broad categories have universal importance for unit culture. In a companion analysis, two paired infantry brigades were analyzed for their unit cultures' uniqueness and commonality. Researchers then coded and analyzed all interview transcripts and condensed them into narratives that represented the culture of both units. The two infantry units were found to have values, beliefs and norms that were in common as well as distinct. Findings from this work can guide unit leaders and members can instigate actions to sustain positive, efficient, and effective unit cultures and enact change or mitigation of negative and dysfunctional culture components.				
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