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Organizational Values

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Organizational Cultures and Values as They Impact on
Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment

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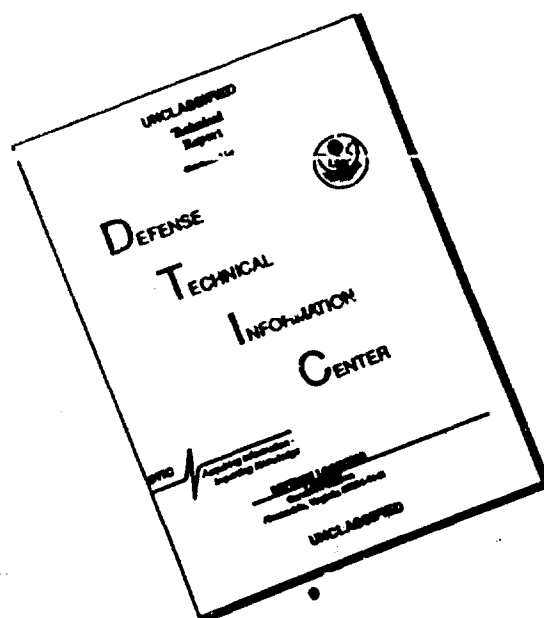
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1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE 1993	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED THESIS/DISSERTATION	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Organizational Cultures and Values as they Impact on Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Sean M Farrell				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) AFIT Student Attending:Wright-State University			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER AFIT/CI/CIA- 93-103	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE AFIT/CI 2950 P STREET WRIGHT-PATTERSON AFB OH 45433-7765			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release IAW 190-1 Distribution Unlimited MICHAEL M. BRICKER, SMSgt, USAF Chief Administration			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)				
14. SUBJECT TERMS			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 35	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
APPLIED BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE PROGRAM
THESIS PROPOSAL APPROVAL SHEET

Student: Sean M. Farrell

Title: Organizational Cultures and Values as They Impact
on Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment

The committee has met with the student for the defense of this proposal on:

June 7, 1993

Committee Action on Proposal:

Deny ☐ Approve ☒ Approve With Recommendations ☐

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Thesis Director: Jan E. Jay

Member: Janette Sawyer Member: R. Mark Smith

Member: _____ Member: _____

Student: SM Farrell

Fall 1992

Abstract

The following proposal attempts to explain the significance of shared values and organizational outcomes. The way researchers generally view organizations now, as cultures, is important to this problem. The organization studied is viewed as a culture and thus its values were taken as important variables that affect organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

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**Organizational Cultures and Values as They Impact on
Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment**

Introduction

The problem investigated by this research will involve the identification of an organizational culture and certain inherent qualities which affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The qualities in the organizational culture that will be identified are the values of the organization and the values of the employees in the organization. The actual communicated corporate values will be determined as will a value congruency or set of shared values.

The importance of a clearly communicated set of organizational values for the increased effectiveness of the organization will be introduced. Corporate values have long been referred to as the central dimension of an organization's culture and have been recognized as powerful influences differentiating one firm from another (Hunt, Wood and Chonko, 1989, p. 79). Theorists, including Maslow (1959) and Rokeach (1968) believe those personal values most important to the members of an organization have a profound influence

upon their decisions (Brunson, 1985).

The study of an organization's value system must include the study of an organization as a cultural phenomenon. Organizational culture can be described as a network and system of rules and norms created and sustained through the process of communication.

"Communication in such forms as stories, rumor, reported events, and role expectations convey normative information about the appropriateness and desirability of behaviors" (Cooke and Rousseau, 1988, p. 247). The cultural environment is essential in creating and posturing a system of values. This system of values' congruence with workers' value systems may be a factor in such outcomes as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. "Culture provides a pre-made and socially shared enacted environment to which the individual must accommodate in order to fit in and, in certain cases, to survive" (Cooke and Rousseau, 1988, p. 248). It is apparent that culture is a key to organizational research and values are key toward the understanding of cultures.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to identify communication in the organization that promotes organizational values and then identify the organizational values held by members of the organization. The question proposed is: what is the relationship between organizational values and value congruency and the effect those factors have on job satisfaction and job commitment?

Background of the Problem

"An organization's performance should be greatly enhanced if the cultural values are congruent with the desired beliefs and values of its employees" (Boxx, Odom and Dunn, 1991, p. 195). This statement assumes that the values of an organization are known to its employees. Thus, a positive communication environment must also be present. Pincus (1986, p. 395) states that "most researchers and professionals believe intuitively that a positively perceived communication environment substantially contributes to organizational effectiveness".

Assumptions

There is an assumption in this study that must be addressed. The generalization of the results of this research must be made with great caution. The impact of the organizational culture used in this study may not be used to describe outcomes such as job satisfaction and commitment in far different organizational climates. "Describing a culture which is appropriate for all organizations is an impossible task" (Boxx, Odom and Dunn, 1991, p. 204).

Scope

This study will analyze one organization, a U.S.A.F agency, which contains about 350 people in one physical structure that does not include members of the organization not physically located at the headquarters office. A sample of 75 employees and managers will be taken from a department that has agreed to participate in the study.

Definition of Terms

A brief definition of terms is required to fully understand what variables will be sought. Scott and Kluckhohn et al. (cited in Connor and Becker, 1975)

define values as a conception of the desirable: "a value is a conception, explicit or implicit ... of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action" (Connor and Becker, 1975, p. 551) while Rokeach (1975) describes values as "abstract ideals, positive or negative, not tied to any specific object or situation, representing a person's beliefs about modes of conduct". So values are wide beliefs that guide actions and judgments for a wide variety of situations. Connor and Becker (1975) state that values may be thought of "as global beliefs about desirable end-states underlying attitudinal and behavioral processes". Hunt, Wood and Chonko (1989, p. 80) defined corporate values as "the central dimension of an organization's culture and have been recognized as powerful influences differentiating one firm from another".

Organizational culture is a key concept when talking about organizational research. "Central to the notion of organizational culture are the complex communication processes in which organizational members engage" (Zalabak and Morley, 1989). This cultural

approach to an organization forces the researcher to study and analyze the full spectrum of organizational life, not just manager-subordinate interactions, for instance. Researchers want to indicate through the cultural approach "that what constitutes the legitimate realm of inquiry is everything that constitutes organizational life" (Pacanowsky, Trujillo, 1982, p. 122). With this broad sense of culture as it applies to organizations, Koberg and Chusmir (1987, p. 397) claim organizational culture is "a system of shared values and beliefs that produce norms of behavior and establish an organizational way of life. It shapes behavior by conveying a sense of identity to workers, encourages commitment beyond self, increases stability of the social system, and give recognized and accepted premises for decision making".

Job satisfaction has often been interchanged with ideas of morale and job attitude. The latest notion of job satisfaction is "generally considered to be an individual's perceptual/emotional reaction to important facets of work" (Pincus, 1986, p. 396). In addition, many definitions of job satisfaction incorporate a

congruence or difference between the actual and perceived notions employees have about their job.

"Value judgments (job satisfaction) reflect a dual estimate: the degree of value fulfillment ... amount of discrepancy between how much is wanted and how much is obtained; and the importance of the value in the individual's value hierarchy" (Locke, 1970, p. 485). And Locke (1976, cited in Boxx and Odom, 1991) again defined job satisfaction as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state from the appraisal of one's job or experiences".

Organizational commitment is defined generally as the extent to which employees identify with and are involved in an organization (Curry, Wakefield, Price and Mueller, 1986). Many theorists believe that one or more of the following three attitudinal elements are a function of organizational commitment: (1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (3) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (Eisenberg, Monge and Miller, 1983). Organizational

commitment places a stress on those behaviors suggested by the second and third part of the above definition, and employee attitude is also considered is the first part of the definition. "Attitudinal commitment exists when the identity of the person [is linked] to the organization" (Mowday and Steers, 1979).

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will be tested in this study:

H₁: Values held by managers will be more consistent with organizational values than those of employees.

H₂: Value consensus among the organization and subordinates is directly (positively) related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this research is applicable in two areas. First, a quantitative approach to values in an organization can give managers evidence of the degree to which values may affect organizational

outcomes. Second, the view that organizations are cultures is important to this study since the driving force for cultural rules is thought to be a strong value-based foundation. The ability of organizations to effectively communicate values to organizational members may have a significant impact on organizational effectiveness in the form of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This study attempts to describe possible relationships between communicated organizational values, value consensus, and organizational outcomes.

Literature Review

According to Paconowsky and Trujillo (1982) organizational life driven by communication is a legitimate area of inquiry for organizational communication scholars. According to their research future studies concerning organizations should not be inclusive to just discuss specific work related activities. "Organizations are places where people work and do a whole lot of other things, and all of these work things and other things constitute life in that organization" (p. 119). Their study focused on

developing new research perspectives. They found that traditional research in organizational communication was inherently biased, conducted specifically for managers, and effective organizational outcomes were determined not by employees but the managers in power.

New perspectives taken in this field of research, where we view the organization as a culture, keep the researcher from becoming limited in his or her scope of study. "Interest is not simply in listing or documenting aspects of organizational life. We are interested in understanding how that organizational life is accomplished communicatively".

From a communication standpoint, two questions must be addressed: (1) What are the key communication activities, the unfolding of which are occasions when sense-making is accomplished? (2) What is the sense members of any particular organization have made of their experiences? (p. 122). A researcher should analyze the following dimensions when looking at organizational culture: (1) Each culture has a set of relevant constructs that are used by organizational members such as staff meetings or informal bull

sessions; (2) Facts are used in organizational cultures to explain how and why organizations behave the way they do. These facts are sometimes called social knowledge; (3) Practices are referred to as tasks that are performed by members and are used by these members to accomplish organizational goals; (4) Vocabulary and (5) Metaphors are specialized jargon that members of an organization share; (6) Stories are exchanged by members of a culture and are examples of what can happen to any member of the organization; (7) Rites and rituals is the last category discussed. These rituals "orient members temporally and serve as occasions for sense-making" (p. 126).

Shockley-Zalabak and Morley (1989, p. 485) studied the deviations made by members of organizational cultures and how such deviations related to organizational communication and specific organizational outcomes. This study defined organizational environments as "both formal and informal in nature. Cultural messages are exchanged in supervisor and subordinate interactions, in group meetings, in training programs, and in all forms of

written communication. The shared realities generated from these exchanges become the operating reality of the organization." Research in this study suggested that the more similar organizational and individual values are, the more likely members will identify with the organization. "Specifically, organizational communication has been linked to job satisfaction (Goldhaber, Yates, Porter and Lesniah; 1978) perceptions of managerial effectiveness (Clampitt and Downs, 1983; Lewis, Cummings and Long, 1981), and employee productivity" (Pincus, 1986).

The two hypotheses presented in the Zalabak and Morley (1989) study were: (1) High rule-value discrepancies relate to low organizational satisfaction and low estimations of organizational quality and chances of survival. (2) Both high message receiving uncertainty and sending deficiencies are related to high rule-value discrepancy, low work satisfaction and low estimations of organizational quality and chances of survival. Both hypotheses were supported by data collected by the researcher. "The more the individual values what the organization values, the more likely

the individual is satisfied with communication activities and has positive expectations about the organization" (Zalabak and Morley, 1989, p. 496).

Koberg and Chusmir (1987) studied the relationship between three types of organizational cultures and managerial creativity, motivation, and other job-related variables. The three types of organizational cultures identified in the study were: (1) Bureaucratic cultures - clear lines of responsibility and authority; work is highly organized, compartmentalized, and systematic; (2) Innovative cultures - creative work environments where challenge and risk taking are the norm; (3) Supportive cultures - identified as friendly environments; workers are friendly and helpful to each other in this culture.

With the notion of specific culture type one might ask are there individuals that work better in specific environments? "The notion of a cultural match suggests that individual job performance is a function of the match or fit between the individuals needs (motivation) and the organization's culture". Job satisfaction and job involvement have been found to be related to the

motivational needs of the manager and how well these needs match the organizational environment. Managers with a high need for power fit best in bureaucratic cultures. Ambitious people do well in an innovative climate, so high need-for-achievement people were found to be good matches for innovative cultures. Supportive cultures were best matches for people who had a high need for affiliation (Koberg and Chusmir, 1987). "By better understanding culture and the relationship it has to the needs of its managers, an organization may be able to enhance its effectiveness and efficiency" (p. 406). These results may lead researchers to generalize the results to the satisfaction of employers as well as managers.

Cooke and Rousseau (1988) wanted to conduct a quantitative study dealing with organizational culture because "one of the most powerful strategies for organizational development is data-based change -- an approach that generally relies on the use of quantitative measures" (p. 246). The research was concerned with looking at shared norms and expectations within the organizational culture. The structure of an

organization becomes an important mechanism in the way the culture exists. From this, they wanted to see if structurally different areas of an organizational culture held different norms and expectations. The stated hypothesis was: norms and expectations measured by the organizational culture inventory are consistent between members of a specific organization but structural and hierarchical factors can lead to important differences in the actual norms and expectations measured. This research question was based on the finding that there can be different cultures in the same organization although one dominant internal culture can be identified. These subcultures arise from the structural breakdown many companies create according to the employee's function. Results of the study indicated there were differences in norms and expectations across the cultural structure and hierarchical levels. Yet there was consensus as to ideal cultural values which were expressed across the entire cultural organization. Using the Organizational Culture Inventory, Cooke and Rousseau (p. 268) found that "behavioral norms and expectations are amenable to

quantitative assessment". This study both provided a description of cultural organization and employed hypothesis testing; this combination of methods tries to link behavior produced in the organization with the type of culture present.

Interpretive research in the field of communication has used the conceptualization of organizations as cultures to view organizational events in different ways as well. Deetz (1982) puts forth the argument that organizational reality includes both identifiable concrete structures as well as "consensually shared subjective interpretations". These shared interpretations are viewed as similar values held by members of the organizational culture. Deetz states that items that create a culture such as ways of talking, stories, physical structures, and ways of doing things influence and orient a member's perceptions and provide meaning to organizational activities. "In this sense culture serves as more than a metaphor for organizations but describes the systems of meaning inscribed and made manifest in various institutional forms" (p. 134).

Schall (1983, p. 559) takes a communication rules approach in her description of organizational cultures. She takes this approach because of her belief that communication and culture are strongly interrelated. "Culture is communication and communication is culture." Culture is developed and created as well as maintained largely through member interaction and communication. The study by Schall attempted to test the accuracy of identifying groups as cultures by describing the consistently used communication rules. The rules-based cultural description was found to be very effective. She also found the existence of subcultures within organizations and reasoned that these subcultures may develop because of status, task, tenure, gender, race or work group, "or in gaps between formal and informal rules" (p. 575). The study also found that the relative strength of group cultures can be based upon the extent that members share the same value or ethical system.

Smircich (1983, p. 355) also found values as an important variable in organizational culture. "A cultural analysis moves us in the direction of

questioning taken-for-granted assumptions, raising issues of context and meaning and bringing to the surface underlying values."

The previous research in the field of cultural organizations indicates a few generalizations can be made. First, organizations are environments that encompass both formal and informal networks of communication and interaction. Second, central to the construct of cultural organizations is that they cannot be present without communication. Thus, effective organizational cultures are perhaps taking advantage of better communication techniques. Third, central to organizational culture is that it focuses on a set of shared values. According to Ouchi (1981) culture can be defined as a set of symbols, ceremonies and myths that communicate the underlying values and beliefs of the organization to its members. Do cultures affect the outcomes or behavior of its members? Swartz and Jordan (1980) defined organizational culture as a pattern of beliefs and expectations shared by organizational members that create norms shaping behavior [outcomes] (Cooke and Rousseau, 1988).

Organizational values were the focus of the Boxx, Odom and Dunn research (1991) in which they examined organizational values and value congruency and the relationship to member behavior, and measured commitment, satisfaction and cohesion. The study stated that "excellent firms possess a distinct and identifiable set of organizational values which included beliefs about superior quality, service innovation ... [and] the importance of informality to enhance education". Their research findings showed that various behavioral outcomes of organizational members such as commitment, satisfaction, and cohesion were enhanced when an organizational value system is one that the employee believes should exist.

Posner, Randolph and Schmidt (1987, p. 374) studied the affect that differences in managerial values across different organizational departments might have on organizational effectiveness. The study found that the values of an organizational member can be attributable to the location of that member in the organization. These differences in values are formed along occupations. "Values prescribe behaviors that

are appropriate." Thus if values differ by department, acceptable behaviors may differ accordingly.

Leonard Goodstein (1983) stressed the importance of knowing individual values. According to Goodstein, organizations are composed of individuals and their values and beliefs are also key to organizational success. Organizational values are general values that are espoused by most of the organization's members to represent organizational truths. "But, while we admit that values actually can be held only by individual members of an organization, organizational selection and socialization do produce a general, cohesive set of values that typifies the organization" (p. 204).

Brunson (1985) used the Rokeach Value Survey to determine a personal value typology of a management team of a successful organization. Brunson states that personal values most important to members of an organization have a significant effect on their decisions. From the study two separate value profiles were found among the managers. "These two profiles suggest that two different sets of value orientations exist within the same team: (1) pragmatic and (2)

moralistic-humanistic" (p. 129). This suggests that because the team being studied was successful, the two different value orientations were complementary.

A study by Posner, Kouzes and Schmidt (1985) concluded that clearly articulated organizational values do make a significant difference in employee satisfaction and organizational performance. The focus of the research was on the importance of shared values. According to the survey, shared values are related to the following occurrences: (1) feelings of personal success; (2) organizational commitment; (3) self confidence; (4) ethical behavior; and (5) organizational goals (1985). Posner et al. concluded that the understanding and improvement of shared values of an organization and its employees is an important area of research.

Hunt, Wood and Chonko (1989, p. 87) studied corporate ethical values and organizational commitment in marketing. The results of their research suggest organizational commitment in marketing is associated with corporate ethical values. The authors then suggest "top managers should define, refine, evaluate,

communicate and thus institutionalize the ethical principles underlying their policies, practices and goals".

The importance of organizational values and the extent of shared values is evident. Clearly communicated organizational values are important in the achievement of organizational effectiveness.

Methodology

Research Setting

A large Air Force international contracting headquarters serves as the setting for this study.

Target Population

The subjects of this research will be fifteen managers (designated by the division head as top level managers) and sixty employees from one division. This is considered a convenience sample because they are the division (one of four) that volunteered for the study. This sample (consisting of the one division) is not known to be similar or dissimilar to the populations being studied (the entire Organization) though it is thought to be demographically similar and generalizations will be made with this in mind.

The research setting will be either Air Force Security Assistance Command at Wright-Patterson A.F.B. requiring no travel or Defense Logistics Agency H.Q. as a back-up, this could be accomplished by travel to Washington D.C. in as little as one visit and at the most three visits depending on time needed to accomplish initial interviews. Initial support from both agencies has been given pending approval from your office.

Procedure

All sixty of the employees will be sent open-ended questionnaires that will ask the subjects to list organizational values they thought were present in the organization. After all these values are compared a list of the top twelve values will be compiled from the open-ended questionnaire.

A random sample of the sixty employees will be taken to reach twenty members. A focus group (n=20) will discuss the twelve organizational values that were found to appear most often on the previous open-ended questionnaire. At this point the list of values that a majority of the groups members identifies will be placed on a questionnaire.

The reason for the open-ended questionnaire and the focus group is to learn about values that are specific to the organizational culture being studied. This is the reason other available instruments are not being used.

Instrumentation

The organizational values found will be placed on a new survey and respondents (to include the managers)

will be asked to indicate the extent to which they feel each value exists in the organization. A seven-point semantic differential scale -- similar to Peters and Waterman (1982) -- ranging from (1) does not exist to (7) exists to a large extent will be used. Subjects will then be asked to indicate if they felt the value should exist in the organization on a seven point scale from (1) should not exist to (7) should exist to a large extent. A value congruency score then will be found between the two. Both the open-ended questionnaire and the constructed survey will be handed out at the weekly staff meetings. The managers results will be placed in a separate category for comparison.

Two other previously used instruments will also be given to the seventy-five subjects, less the members of the focus groups, in the form of another self-administered questionnaire. These two instruments will measure job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

To measure job satisfaction I will use the Multidimensional Scale of Job Satisfaction created by Shouksmith, Pajo and Jepsen (1990).

Organizational commitment will be measured by an

instrument developed by Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979).

All the survey questionnaires will be self-administered and working on them in private will be stressed. Anonymity will also be given to all respondents.

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