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A REVIEW OF THE FRAMEWORK ORIENTED LITERATURE
ON CULTURE AND A PROPOSED INTEGRATION

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by

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Abstract

This paper reviews the empirically oriented literature on corporate culture that is appropriate for top management level of analysis. The key premise of the paper is that adequate and useful description of key dimensions of culture is a necessary condition for understanding subtleties of culture and for understanding how to ultimately measure and change culture. The theme of the paper is top management as "administrative architect" which is the role of crafting key strategic subsystems. Strategy and culture are the two subsystems of interest here. In the paper, various authors' hypothesized dimensions of culture are synthesized to present a comprehensive, though tentative, list of dimensions. Finally, a call is made to begin relatively large scale empirical attempts to discern a more parsimonious list of underlying dimensions and, in fact, which dimensions are the most useful in describing culture for top management level of analysis.

A REVIEW OF THE FRAMEWORK ORIENTED LITERATURE ON
CULTURE AND A PROPOSED INTEGRATION

The purpose of this paper is to review some of the empirical and framework oriented literature on culture that is consistent with the level of the organization that has strategy making authority: top management. A comparison of the various views will be done and then an integrated framework will be suggested. In a companion paper, the author will advance a synthesis of the strategy-culture linkage by integrating the framework suggested above with Porter's value-chain concept (Porter, 1985). Finally a schema for analyzing the strategy-culture linkage and planning needed changes in either strategy or culture (or both) will be suggested.

I. Various Dimensions of Culture

Several authors have suggested what the underlying dimensions of corporate culture are. They have delved into a variety of literatures for conceptual support. That conceptual support (recently brought together in ASQ, 1983; Organizational Dynamics, 1983; and Schein, 1985) is not the direct subject of this paper. What follows is a listing of the dimensions of culture as espoused by various authors that is appropriate for top management level of analysis. Given this criterion, empirical works such as Denison (1984) will be excluded because his measures used for culture (ISR Survey of Organizations) are appropriate for lower levels of the organization. Likewise, such empirical works as Hofstede (1980) and Defrank, Matheson, Schweiger and Ivancevich (1985) will be excluded because they delve into cultural differences across nationalities for comparative purposes. This paper is concerned with empirical attempts to measure culture in terms of underlying dimensions

that are appropriate for CEO and top management level of analysis. This review is not meant to be exhaustive, only suggestive of the work done so far. In fact, this listing has to be only representative because much of the work is done in consulting firms and is not widely available.

A. Hay and Associates

The Hay and Associates approach to understanding and measuring corporate culture developed out of their studies on climate. Following Davis' (1984) recent distinction between climate (the "temperature" of the organization in terms of degree of satisfaction) and culture (the pervasive shared values in an organization) Gordon (1984) has recently summarized the empirical advances of the Hay group's notion of culture. According to Gordon (1984), the dimensions of culture are:

1. Clarity of Direction -- is the extent to which the company emphasizes creating clear objectives and plans to meet them.
2. Company Stretch -- is the extent to which the company sets venture-goals and approaches its business innovatively.
3. Integration -- is the extent to which units are encouraged to operate in a coordinated manner.
4. Top Management Contact -- is the extent to which people get clear communication and support from top management.
5. Encouragement of Individual Initiative -- describes an emphasis on a high degree of delegation.
6. Overt Conflict Resolution -- is the extent to which people are encouraged to air conflicts and criticisms openly.
7. Performance Clarity -- is the extent to which the company makes performance expectation clear to individuals.

8. Performance Emphasis -- is the extent to which the company demands high levels of performance from individuals and holds them personally accountable for results.
9. Action Orientation -- refers to the timeliness with which decisions are made, a sense of urgency to get things done and a responsiveness to changes in the market place.
10. Compensation -- is the extent to which people perceive the company as paying competitively and fairly, as well as relating that pay to performance.
11. Human Resources Development -- is the extent to which companies provide opportunities for individuals to grow and develop within the company.

These eleven dimensions attempt to tap "... a picture of the value system in a company" which respects the inherently "symbolic value" of the phenomenon of culture (Gordon, 1984:69). Hay and Associates use these eleven dimensions to isolate what the configuration looks like for high performing firms and firms that are not high performers.

B. Reynolds (1984a,b)

Reynolds provides the most empirically backed study of culture known to this author. Reynolds (1984b:2) defines culture as "... the shared beliefs, assumptions, structures and procedures -- overt and covert, emergent and deliberately designed -- found in organizations." This definition is founded on a voluminous literature review that spans many literatures (Ansoff, 1979; Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Harrison, 1972, 1978; Hofstede, 1980; and Peters and Waterman, 1982 are only illustrative). Based on his literature review, Reynolds posits these fourteen dimensions of culture:

1. External vs. Internal Emphasis -- the emphasis on the task or satisfying the consumer. Here, the internal portion of this dimension focuses on the extent of internal organizational activities such as committees and bureaucratic procedures.
2. Task vs. Social Focus -- Here the distinction is between the focus on the "work" vs. concern for the personal and social needs of the organizational members.
3. Risk Propensity -- is the tendency to be cautious and conservative vs. trying new products or procedures when confronted with new challenges or opportunities.
4. Recognition of Individual Distinctiveness -- the extent to which organizations tolerate or encourage participants to be distinctive and idiosyncratic in their work contributions and social life.
5. Balance of Rewards to Groups and Individuals -- are rewards distributed to members of a work unit or are individual contributions emphasized.
6. Individual vs. Collective Decision Making -- are major decisions individual matters or do decisions rely on the inputs of various individuals.
7. Centralized vs. Decentralized Decision-Making -- this dimension is related to the previous one but asks the extent to which powerful individuals or groups retain the decision-making power.
8. Change/Action Orientation -- the extent to which firms vary in their tendency to seek change and modification of their products, services or internal procedures.
9. Bias Toward Innovation - this dimension is different than the one above in that it tries to measure the difference between a reluctance

to adopt any new procedure that is not well established vs. the constant search for novel and distinct new goods, services and procedures.

10. Work Group/Peer Relationships -- this dimension measures whether individual members consider their work peers as competitors for scarce rewards or as trusted colleagues assisting with the competition with outsiders.
11. Basis for Commitment -- measures the primary reason for being involved with a work organization: financial rewards, prestige of membership, interesting or challenging work, opportunity for self-fulfillment or expression, or satisfying personal relationships with colleagues.
12. Complexity -- refers to the tendency of organizations to develop elaborate procedures and structures.
13. Formalization -- refers to the tendency to have a formal mechanism for all procedures and decision-making. This dimension ranges from elaborate written forms and documents to only verbal expression.
14. Organization Loyalty -- measures the degree of loyalty to the organization relative to other groups such as family, professional colleagues, etc. Organizations vary in the extent to which members place the firm above these other groups.

Reynolds (1984a,b) has begun to use these dimensions to picture differences in culture among different industry settings. He is having success in showing patterns of differences among industries, although the findings are still tentative and non-conclusive along some dimensions.

C. Miller (1984)

Miller (1984) presents an analysis of the political/ideological fabric of American enterprise. Along with this panoramic view, he presents a picture of the dimensions that go to form corporate cultures that can sustain productivity and excellence. Miller provides a very explicit list of primary and secondary values, various "forces of influence" which set an internal context for the primary and secondary values and then finally forces in the external environment that set an external context for the primary and secondary values. In this order, these various factors are:

a). Primary Values

1. Purpose Driven vs. Lacking Purpose
2. Consensus vs. Command Decision Making
3. Excellence Ethic vs. Comfort Satisfaction Dominant
4. Unity of Interest vs. Class Distinct Interests
5. Performance Based Rewards vs. Power or Tenure Based Rewards
6. Empirical vs. Non-rational Decision Making
7. Intimate Concern vs. Disposable Labor
8. Integrity Priority vs. Expedient Priority

b). Secondary Values

1. Customer Focused vs. Product Focused
2. Disciplined Control vs. Loose Control
3. Entrepreneurial vs. Tried and True Strategies and Tactics
4. Fast Decision Making vs. Slow Decision Making
5. Short Term Focus vs. Long Term Focus
6. High Technology Orientation vs. Low Technology Orientation

c). Internal Forces of Influence on the Primary and Secondary Values

1. Stereotypes -- Engineers, Salespersons, "Bean Counters"
 2. Age and Sex
 3. High Risk vs. Low Risk
 4. Education and Skills Requirements
 5. Centralized vs. Decentralized
 6. Many Layers vs. Few Layers in the Organization
 7. Cost Center vs. Profit Center
- d). External Environmental Forces on the Primary and Secondary Values
1. Products, Services and Customers Chosen in the Strategy of the Firm
 2. Market Change and Stability
 3. Product/Market Life Cycle
 4. Technological Change and Stability
 5. Regulation: Tight Control vs. Loose Control
 6. Resource Availability

Miller makes the distinction that these primary and secondary values as influenced by the above contextual factors can be seen through overt behaviors, values or emotional responses. Unlike the Hay and Reynolds approaches which have an empirical base, Miller's exposition is conceptual and philosophical covering both political and economic aspects.

D. Vancil (1984)

Vancil (1984) presents a very short analysis of the dimensions of culture in a more full explication of the dimensions involved in implementing strategy. While his analysis is sketchy, it is a succinct and to the point presentation. His dimensions of culture are:

1. Paternalism vs. Performance
2. Courtliness vs. Competitiveness

3. Cooperative vs. Aggressive
4. Style/Process vs. Results/Substance

E. O'Reilly (1983)

O'Reilly (1983) presents an analysis of culture and then posits four underlying dimensions. Through the use of reliability measures, he isolates four key dimensions:

1. Company Philosophy -- Four scales that measure such things as whether goals mean something to employees, the vision of the firm is known to workers, the company has a distinct philosophy and finally whether top management decisions are consistent with the company philosophy.
2. Management Concern -- Two scales that measure whether top management cares about work done in lower units and whether top management is concerned about short term profitability or employee welfare.
3. Use of Sanctions -- Two scales attempt to measure whether the respondent feels that rewards and punishment are fairly administered and whether discipline, when meted out, is deserved.
4. Trust -- Three items measure the feeling of the underlying degree of trust and confidence managers have in each other.

Through factor analysis, O'Reilly was able to condense the component items into the four dimensions listed above. He defines culture both as artifacts (stories, myths, etc.) and the pattern of roles, values and beliefs in the firm.

F. Schein, 1985; Organizational Dynamics, 1983: Sathe, Wilkins, Kiprowski, Martin and Siehl

The authors reviewed above have provided lucid and exacting analysis of the dimensions inherent in the construct of culture and some pitfalls practitioners must be wary of as they try to change their cultures. These studies are primarily concerned with describing culture. The implicit premise here is that adequate and useful description of dimensions is a condition for understanding subtleties and for understanding how to ultimately measure and even change culture. Schein (1985) catalogs the various definitions that various authors have used for culture. Culture has been defined as:

1. Observed behavioral regularities when people interact such as language and rituals.
2. The norms that evolve in working groups, such as the particular norm of "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay ..."
3. The dominant values espoused by an organization such as "product quality" or "price leadership ..."
4. The philosophy that guides an organization's policy toward employees and/or customers.
5. The rules of the game for getting along in the organization, the "ropes" that a newcomer must learn in order to become a new member.
6. The feeling or climate that is conveyed in an organization of the physical layout and the way in which members of the organization interact with customers and other outsiders.

These definitions can be arrayed along several levels of culture as seen by Figure 1 (Schein, 1985: 14). Most of the authors cited in the previous section of the paper attempt an analysis using one or more of Schein's definitions. As such, this literature cited above can be used as the basis for the rather schematic purpose of this paper. However, Schein would be critical of

this current attempt. Schein goes on to say:

"If one looks at the existing cultural descriptions or methods of studying culture, one finds that most analysts simply list the major categories that strike them as important. Rarely does one find a theoretical underpinning or rationale for the categories listed. One of the main reasons for adopting a dynamic evolutionary perspective is that such a perspective generates a logical set of categories for analysis" (1985: 46).

This author can make the following argument why at this time a more utilitarian, schematic form of analysis would be useful. We now have enough authors who have posited dimensions of culture. What would be useful is to summarize the current views of these dimensions so that a tentative, integrated and synthetic list of such dimensions can be put to empirical test. Strategists and strategic management researchers are interested in the rather practical issue of whether certain patterns of culture are best suited for different types of strategy. In other words, do the strategic imperatives of a business suggest certain appropriate patterns of culture? This author feels that we are ready to begin some initial empirical forays to test the above assertion. This is an extremely important point to make, do research on and debate because there is a school of thought that posits that to unearth and describe the issue and texture of culture in social groups destroys its very fabric. According to this view, to make public so to speak the subtleties of culture that perhaps have taken years to develop is to destroy the supple linkages of shared values. This cautious view then represents a rather bold proposition: culture cannot be rationally or empirically studied. To do so risks destroying or tearing in two the phenomenon of culture. This author suggests though that we need some initial attempts to test this assertion. For if we cannot do

justice to the study of culture by rational and empirical means, then we will have to study culture only tangentially or obliquely by methods that are perhaps more artistic than empirical. This author feels that we need an explicit attempt to understand the strategy-culture linkage issue.

II. SYNTHESIS OF THE EMPIRICAL LITERATURE ON CULTURE

Figure 2 depicts the author's attempt to synthesize the empirical and framework oriented literature reviewed above. While the figure is largely self explanatory, some interesting observations can be made. The major frameworks that need to be compared are that of Hay and Associates, Miller and Reynolds. The dimensions of Vancil and O'Reilly are subsumed in the work of the three larger frameworks. In addition, Miller's primary dimensions, while very exhaustive, are not defined in sufficient enough detail so as to assess exactly whether there is agreement with the dimensions of either Hay and Associates or Reynolds. Miller's secondary values and internal forces can be construed to operationalize other constructs than culture: structure, strategy, demographics, etc. In addition, the environmental factors are just that -- they are external contextual factors which condition culture perhaps, but are not in and of themselves dimensions of culture. So this analysis for Miller will be a rather cursory look at the eight primary values. The various dimensions listed are at the level of values and artifacts and creations (see Figure 1, Schein, 1985: 14). Perhaps the best way to present the analysis is to list those dimensions that one author proposes that the others do not. From this list of exceptions then we can posit an integrative and comprehensive (though tentative) list of the dimensions of culture.

A. Dimensions Listed in Reynolds (1984a,b) but not in Hay & Associates

The following dimensions are listed by Reynolds as important but the Hay and Associates framework does not explicitly include them:

Dimension #

1. External vs. Internal Emphasis
9. Bias Toward Innovation
12. Complexity
13. Formalization

The omission by Hay of the dimensions of Complexity and Formalization may not be one of active design. Much of the early work in Organization Theory treated these two dimensions as structural dimensions and not culture. The author will have more to say about the direct omission of the other scales in a summary section.

B. Dimensions Listed in Miller (1984) but Not in Hay & Associates

The following dimensions are listed in the Miller framework but are not included directly in the Hay and Associates scheme:

Dimension #

6. Empirical vs. Non-rational Decision Making
7. Intimate Concern vs. Disposable Labor
8. Integrity Priority vs. Expedient Priority

Hay does not have a dimension and scales that cover Miller's dimension #6. One of the Hay scales used to operationalize their dimension #1, Clarity of Direction, is Completeness of Planning. This could be indirectly related to Miller's dimension #6, but only in a tangential way. Hay's omission of

Miller's dimensions #7 and #8 is due to the fact that Hay's dimensions are very strategic and tactical in their orientation and as such do not have any of the normative or value laden overtones that some of Miller's dimensions have. This difference in the two frameworks then is due more to differences in the purpose of the proposed framework and not due to rival hypotheses as to what the true underlying dimensions of culture are. Some of the Reynolds scales approach having a normative tone to them also. Again the differences in the Reynolds and Hay frameworks may be due more to purpose and orientation than to rigorous academic debate about the true dimensions of culture.

C. Proposed Synthesis of the Dimensions

Given the purpose of this paper, which was to review the framework oriented papers on culture, we can now venture a synthesis of the major frameworks. We can use the Hay dimensions as a base to work around and add to them the dimensions which Reynolds and Miller posit but which Hay does not directly include. This author chose to use the Hay dimensions as the base for the following reasons:

1. The dimensions have been used at Hay for twenty years in a variety of industry settings. Although no reliability and validity statistics have been published, the author knows that the dimensions and scales have at least face reliability and validity within the Hay consultancy.
2. Hay has released their scales and they have been widely used.
3. There is face validity support for their useability among Hay clients.

The academic community would like to have more definitive reliability and validity reports with a more rigorous treatment of the underlying theory that gave birth to the dimensions. But as the author stated in the opening of the

paper, this is all of the empirically based work known to this author. Given this situation though, we can posit the following synthetic list of the dimensions of culture:

1. Clarity of Direction
2. Company Stretch
3. Integration
4. Top Management Contact
5. Encouragement of Individual Initiative
6. Conflict Resolution
7. Performance Clarity
8. Performance Emphasis
9. Action Orientation
10. Compensation
11. Human Resources Development
12. External vs. Internal Emphasis
13. Bias Toward Innovation
14. Complexity
15. Formalization
16. Empirical vs. Non-rational Decision Making
17. Intimate Concern vs. Disposable Labor
18. Integrity Priority vs. Expedient Priority

The author is not claiming that this list of eighteen dimensions is the truth with respect to culture. It does though fill a void in the literature by bringing together those authors who have ventured to posit what the underlying dimensions of culture are. It is from this base that we can begin to forge empirical agendas to measure culture and through academic debate decide what the most useful dimensions of culture are for the purpose at hand.

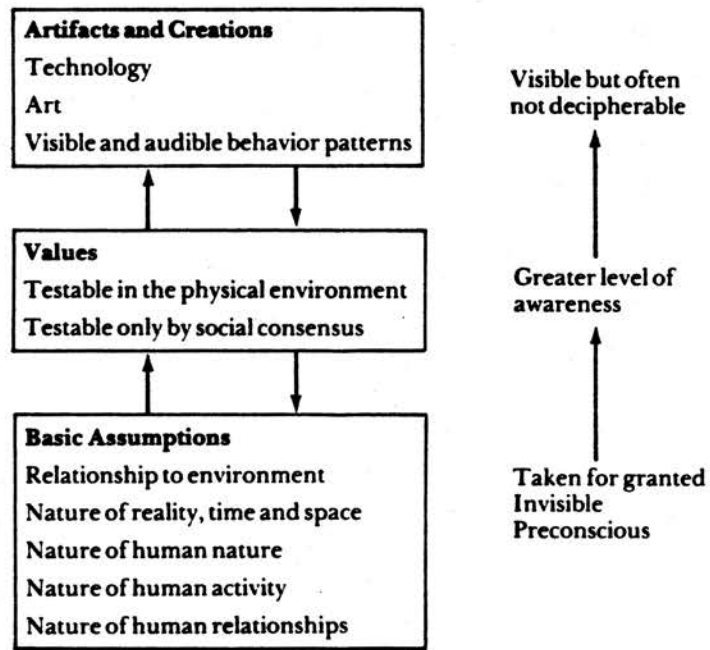
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Figure 1

LEVELS OF CULTURE AND THEIR INTERACTION



Source: Adapted from Schein, 1980, p. 4.

Source: Schein, E. H., Organizational Culture and Leadership: A Dynamic View, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1985, Figure 1, p.14.

FIGURE 2

		<u>HAY & ASSOCIATES*</u>										
<u>REYNOLDS</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		11
										a	b	
1		x?										✓
2								xxx				
3									x			
4					xxx							
5			x		xxx							
6			x		xxx							
7				x?								
8		x							x			
9												✓
10			x									
11			x									x
12												✓
13												✓
14												x
	✓					✓	✓			✓	✓	
<u>MILLER</u>	1	x					x					
2					x							
3							x					
4			x									
5									x	x		
6												✓
7											x?	✓
8											x?	✓
		✓		✓		✓			✓			

		<u>MILLER</u>							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1									✓
2		x	?	x?	x?		x?		
3									✓
4		x			x?		x?	x?	
5									✓
6		x							
7		x							
8									✓
9									✓
10				x?	x?		x?		
11					x?		x?	x?	
12									✓
13						x?			
14				x?				x?	
	✓		✓						

* x indicates agreement on dimensions. Number of xs means approximate strength of agreement. Question mark means questionable agreement.

✓ Means for a row or a column there is no agreement between the two respective frameworks.

Source: Primary

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