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5 May 2013

Online at <https://mpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/48858/>  
MPRA Paper No. 48858, posted 06 Aug 2013 17:06 UTC

# Disorganizing Organizational Culture

## Comment on the Individual and Family Factors

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### Abstract

Defining culture in relation to organizational culture has also focused on the operation level of culture. This latter as discussed by Maurice Thévenet (1993) concludes that culture is a collective phenomenon that concerns an enterprise as a human organization. By this collective point of assemblage, and in this measure, I intend to present the framework whereby entrepreneurial activities in collectivist cultures are constructed via two non-identical cultures: individual culture and family culture. I am concerned with questions like: What is the divergent line between the cultural beings and the organizational culture? How do individual and family cultures disorganize the organizational culture? What is their addition?

**Keywords:** Organizational Culture, Collectivism, Disorganizing, Culture, Family Culture, Family Business, Individual Culture

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Too much seems to be uncomprehendingly related to our understanding of our own cultural and organizational behaviors. Many of our decisions are boosted after the immensity of organizational forces and their cultural motives. Both culture and organization seem complementary but distinct. However, let us not confuse between the two. There are several levels evoked in the notion of culture in relation to entrepreneurship and specifically to theories on organizations. Some authors have discussed culture as a personal/psychological trait in relation to entrepreneurial intentions<sup>†</sup> and others have focused on the particularities of national cultures.<sup>‡</sup> With a focus on culture as a determinant element of entrepreneurship, some debate on the role of social norms in being a point of cultural connection with organizations.<sup>§</sup> These have pioneered on the notion of climate as an indicator of country differences in relation to the entourage that enhances the culture of organizations. Recent subsequent examination has shown that an enterprise is a susceptible entity that can construct its own culture<sup>\*\*</sup>.

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<sup>†</sup> Amitai Etzioni, "Entrepreneurship, Adaptation, and Legitimation: A Macro-behavioral Perspective" (Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization 8, 1987, 175-189. North-Holland)

<sup>‡</sup> See: Hofstede, G. *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values* (Beverly-Hills: Sage, 1980) Also: Hofstede, G. *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (London: McGraw-Hill, 1991). And also: Hofstede, G. *Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations*, London, Sage, 2001)

<sup>§</sup> Mariassunta Giannetti and Andrei Simonov, "On the Determinants of Entrepreneurial Activity: Social Norms, Economic Environment and Individual Characteristics", Swedish Economic Policy Review 11, 2004, 269-313

<sup>\*\*</sup> Jacques Rojot, *Théorie des Organisations* (2<sup>nd</sup> Editions, Paris : Edition ESKA, 2005)

Among the different attempts to define organizational cultures, we find two prominent schools: one that emphasizes on shared values<sup>††</sup> and one that focuses on working practices.<sup>‡‡</sup> Defining culture in relation to organizational culture has also focused on the operation level of culture. This latter as discussed by Maurice Thévenet (1993)<sup>§§</sup> concludes that culture is a collective phenomenon that concerns an enterprise as a human organization. By this collective point of assemblage, and in this measure, I intend to present the framework whereby entrepreneurial activities in collectivist cultures are constructed via two non-identical cultures: individual culture and family culture. I am concerned with questions like: What is the divergent line between the cultural beings and the organizational culture? How do individual and family cultures disorganize the organizational culture? What is their addition?

Despite the fact that individual and family cultures are different in kind they do mitigate into one construct. This bond will constructively enhance the assessment of the role of collectivism in being the sole climate that determines and directs the organizational culture. Unlike what Hofstede<sup>\*\*\*</sup> represents about the organizational climate as having an evaluative connotation, I attempt to introduce collectivism, as a cultural typology that is less evaluative, as the sole climate where both the

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<sup>††</sup> Peters, Tom, and Robert Waterman, *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best Run Companies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982)

<sup>‡‡</sup> Hofstede, G. *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations* (London, Sage, 2001)

<sup>§§</sup> Maurice Thévenet, *La Culture d'Entreprise*, (Que sais-je?, Press Universitaire de France, 1993)

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Ibid.

individual stimulus and the family philosophy create a cultural sense of entrepreneurship within the organization. In this section's terminology, the three notions of individual culture, family culture and organizational culture are contextually paired. This complementariness will build what shall be introduced throughout this paper as business in collectivist societies. In line with the distinction between collectivism and individualism, the three cultures can separately represent different but compulsory amassed levels of connectedness.

In respect to providing a basic definition of organizational culture, I shall cautiously opt for Hofstede's (2001) description. Such line redirects our attention to more clarity on the specific aspects of the organizational culture. In this he says that the organizational culture is (1) holistic, (2) historically influenced, (3) related to anthropological concepts, (4) socially constructed, (5) soft, and (6) relatively stable - that is, difficult to change. While drawing such image, it gets quite hard in both adapting and perpetuating such definition. For more tentative certitudes, let us dwell on what is the organizational culture via a massive scanning of some of the prominent points surrounding this notion.

\*First Things First!\* Elliott Jaques with his impressive work entitled *The Changing Culture of a Factory* (1951) is considered to be the first to make reference to culture within the literature of management. His major thesis instructs on the codes of the organization and the interaction between social structures, culture and the personality. There are several sublevels within each personality. This

can be deduced in both what the individual personality consciously opts for and what it unconsciously does not. Randy Pennington (2006)<sup>††</sup> states that: “the difference between humans and organizations - organizations can choose to change their genetic makeup.” (p.15). By personality, it is agreed that the totally distinguished psychological makeup is definitively stable and dynamic all at once. While issuing this, it is also crystal clear that there are definite aspects of the personality that are both apparent for the self and for the others<sup>‡‡</sup>.

It is in its particular shape of arrangement that culture and its cultural beings - personalities - do mitigate to create a unique challenging, but concerting character within the organization. At the interior level of the organizational culture there exists a historical change of culture which hails back to a change framework of the whole organization. In this line Jaques says that:

The culture of the factory is its customary and traditional way of thinking and doing things, which is shared to a greater or lesser degree by all its members, and which new members must learn, and at least partially accept, in order to be accepted into service in the firm. Culture in this sense covers a wide range of behavior [...] (p. 251)

Such past research on the field of organizational culture and management has been quite fruitful in assembling scholars to agree that there exists a duality of more or less conflicting personalities in the

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<sup>††</sup> Pennington, R., *Results Rule*, (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., USA, 2006)

<sup>‡‡</sup> Elliott Jaques, *The Changing Culture of a Factory*, (Routledge, London, 2001).

organization. This consists of the organizational personality and the individual personality. This intersection between the two has been studied by Chester Irving Barnard<sup>sss</sup>. Notwithstanding, and without immunity, Jaques attempts to argue that there should be a minimum level of compatibility and cultural allowances among new individuals joining the organization. Their individual culture can either mitigate or clash with the organizational codes of behaviors. Such process of interaction in culture can occur in special enclosed contexts or climates.

If one tends to understand how organizations act vis-à-vis the two cultures - individual and family cultures - one has to precise the cultural *demarche* by which culture fatedly operates. This can dynamically lead this study to precise the nature of human relation and how they relate to each other in different behavioral contexts such as determining either a loose or tight cultural regulation, low or high power distance, open or close affection distribution, and the most important specification is whether the culture generates its organizational assertiveness on the basis of individualism or collectivism.

According to Schein (1990), the study of a particular organizational culture considers a distinction between three fundamental levels at which culture manifests itself: (a) observable artifacts, (b) values, and (c) basic underlying assumptions. This view point intentionally assumes that the organizational culture can systematically be built and established among both the existing members and

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<sup>sss</sup> Chester Irving Barnard, *The Functions of the Executive*, (Harvard University Press, 1968)

the organization. The first level which is the artifact is rather palpable and less demonstrative in terms of the individuals' reactions over their own cultural acts. The initial image or feeling one can get from the organization does not necessarily explain that they are compatible with that of the members. In fact, it is quite impossible to understand the reaction of the members as it is complicated to mention that these artifacts are not only related fundamentally to the two other levels - values & assumptions - but also related personally and historically to the personality of the members.

Despite the hardship of being sure on whether studies have been able to measure and even reach the level of artifacts, it is, nonetheless, certainly true that many procedures of ethnography have the expertise over explaining the two other levels of culture: the believed *values* and norms and the felt *assumptions* of a certain culture. Such measures pioneer even questions on why such norms indicate a certain *artifact*.

Jaques (2001) draws our attention in the difficulties posed while attempting to deconstruct what constitutes the conscious aspects of the personality which are apparent to the individual and to the others as well. And because even individuals are unaware of why they behave in a certain way, it is much harder for empirical research tools to reach such point. Continuously, Jaques makes a significant remark on that point and states that:

The importance of these unconscious factors in human behavior is that people, unknown to themselves, can subscribe to numbers of



opposing and inconsistent beliefs, and be driven by conflicting motives, some of which are conscious and some are not. (p. 252)

In exploring these points of matching, Hallowell (1955) sheds light on the idea that there is a probability that individuals will develop an understanding of themselves as substantially distinct and separable from others. Both the precise components and nature of the inner and outer self may vary significantly by culture.<sup>\*\*\*</sup> In these analyses, I continuously draw on research efforts devoted to characterizing the limits of connecting the individuals, as cultural beings within the organizational culture. Such effort straddles the instability of the cultural experience of the individuals. In this, it gets noteworthy to mention Schein's<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> (1990, p. 111) statement on the ambiguity of the concept of the organization itself and the hardship of specifying what we are looking from culture. He states that:

We cannot start with some "cultural phenomena" and then use their existence as evidence for the existence of a group. We must first specify that a given set of people has had enough stability and common history to have allowed a culture to form [...] organizations can be presumed to have "strong" cultures because of a long shared history or because they have shared important intense experiences.

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<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Hazel Rose Markus & Shinobu Kitayama, "Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation", (American Psychological Association, 1991, Vol. 98, No. 2, 224-253)

<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> Edgar H. Schein, "Organizational Culture", (American Psychologist, February 1990, Vol. 45, No. 2, 109-119)

Some authors talk about the change phenomena in organizations because many are the newcomers to the firm, and hence, change is boosted by each individual's conflicting culture with the actual organizational culture. Such occurrences, fortunately, though this can render the situation much more complicated, might limitedly occur in organizations in collectivist societies. Because the immense, but relative, majority of employees are either integrated as heirs of family businesses or recruited as family members, they have an open accessibility to longer period of time, and thus, of contribution. The organizational culture becomes theoretically and timely stable but practically and individually uncertain. In family businesses in collectivist societies, whatever form of an existing culture in the organization is becomes less dependent on the other labels of culture: individual, national and programmed organizational culture. This point of separateness of impartiality can be considered a strong form of organizational culture. Nevertheless, there exists one bias line among the other two levels of culture - individual/family cultures. In most modern forms of organization, those that adapt the global juridical type of enterprises, the organizational culture becomes very interdependent on the other cultures surrounding it. Yet, this is less important when considering the cultural dynamism of individuals, as cultural beings, in the organization.

By no means of contrast, the aim of my analysis is not to solely analyze the gaps of studying organizational cultures, but to mainly show the deep cultural itineraries that construct and disorganize

organizational cultures. This aim will attempt to analyze the points of influences between the family culture and the organizational culture and how they ‘socialize’. This is to be taken from a perspective that links family culture and collectivism together as they intertwine to impact the entrepreneurial activity.

In a very constructive work by Alexandra Sharp <sup>###</sup> (2012), there certainly exist possible matching qualities between the family culture and the organizational culture. Such connection can certainly render the business more powerful especially at the level of competitiveness. Yet, let us dwell more on the structure of such matching points. Sharp argues that when a collectivist family owns an organization, there are two possible consequences. Either to keep a separate line between the two cultures and create a new organizational culture, which can be seen as a positive separateness, or match the two cultures and uphold the complexities of this tie, which can be seen as an affirmative improbability. This view suggests that the two possibilities are not important as there is exactitude to apply Schein’s (1990) model of levels of culture. With a profound point of contrast, this hypothesis is still reducing the family culture to only the group itself while it neglects the presence of historical cultural records of the individuals. Culture by virtue is a person and group based. Hitherto, one’s culture cannot be considered a group culture.

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<sup>###</sup> Alexandra Sharp, “ Attawafuq bayna Ta’qafat Al-A’ila wa Ta’qafat Asharika: Kayfiyat Ijad Miiza Tanafusiya” “Compatibility between Family Culture and Organizational Culture: how to Create a Competitive Advantage”, (Tharawat Magazin, 2012, N: 15)

In his constructive work, Schein<sup>ssss</sup> (1983) introduces possible mechanisms for the founding entrepreneurs/groups to be able to transmit a collective culture to the managers, heads and other members of the organization. Though he determines, among other conclusions, that when family members interfere in the management of their father's business - who is namely the founding entrepreneur - several cases of one-sidedness in the distribution of tasks and achievements' appreciation can occur, and thus, result in dissatisfied attitudes of the other out-group workers. Nonetheless, such proposition assumes that there should certainly be a humanly palpable and controllable environment where the deep assumptions of the culture being thought should be framed in a continuous orb of internal and external negotiability. In contrasts, while attempting to apply this in collectivist cultures, one observes that there will be a level of confusion and tension between collectivism as the first collective culture and the organizational culture as the second communal culture. What can be noticed in here is a kind of belatedness while having one individual/family cultures preceding the organizational culture.

This line of thinking shall articulate a novel point of start to consider that in collectivist societies, especially at the level of family businesses, the family culture can prime over both the arbitrarily assembled personal culture and the systematically built organizational culture. In fact, the ground of

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<sup>ssss</sup> Edgar H. Schein, "The Role of the Founder in Creating Organizational Culture" American Management Associations, Organizational Dynamics, Summer 1983)

organizational culture can considerably be either developed or replaced unequivocally by the family culture. Since the latter is collectively accepted and individually appreciated, family culture can have more chances in becoming the 'sole' organizational culture. This is not to be validated until all the parties, including (1) the individuals as the entrepreneur and the employees and (2) the entourage as in space and time, and (3) the history as the whole way of life, are to be spontaneously and unconsciously meeting and mingling within the rules of collectivism.

I do not see a unique organizational culture based on a unique family culture, but I see great potential for family cultures<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> to generate a stable communication among the members (entrepreneurs & employees) who are more culturally oriented. Of course this is limited in considering other external parties of the organization - stakeholders; partners, suppliers, and others. Equally important, Edgar H. Schein (1990, p. 118) constantly states that the "organizational culture is a complex phenomenon, and we should not rush to measure things until we understand better what we are measuring." Hence, I suggest that for many collectivist cultures, the family and the organization can operate in smooth dispositional attitudes; yet, have to acquire a better understanding over the instability of the family

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<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> I use family culture here in its plural form as I do not assume that all collectivist family cultures are homogeneous in their formation and manifestation. Such point can relatively instruct that family cultures, in both collectivism and individualism, can consist of different cultural forms that are enhanced by both generational considerations and ethnic/national differences. See Schein's work on different cultural contexts at the organizational level: macrocultures, subcultures, and organizational cultures: Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass (2010)

members' culture vis-à-vis the readiness to accept a timely step-by-step built organizational culture.

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