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**CULTURAL DYNAMICS AND COMPLEXITY WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS:  
THE CASE OF CHEFS IN HOTELS**

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**Key Words**

OCCUPATIONAL CULTURE, ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE, ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, CULTURAL TYPOLOGIES

**SUMMARY**

The aim here is to review and clarify a useful theoretical framework in order to investigate the dynamics between (i) the organizational climate and culture of hotels and (ii) the occupational culture of chefs. Essentially, a critical review of current work in progress for doctoral studies (first author) will be presented, forming the background for further empirical enquiry. At this early research stage, it is tentatively suggested that the study of the occupational culture of chefs may have cultural significance to organizational theory, which in turn may have interesting practical managerial applications for the hospitality industry.

**OBJECTIVES**

- To review Allaire and Firsirotu's (1984) cultural typologies within organizational and occupational culture.
- To highlight the distinction between climate and culture.

**INTRODUCTION**

Current research suggests that the values an individual gives with respect to their occupation may be far greater than given to any one organization (Hofstede 1990). Management, the public and ultimately the consumer often see the chef and the occupational group they represent as complex enigmas. However, as an occupational group they are workers who often represent a cohesive cultural group entrenched in traditional values. They may consequently, passionately exhibit disharmony to an organization and in particular, its management should their

standing be threatened. The challenge for management therefore, is to interpret the cultural complexities of particular occupations such as chefs in order to address such occurrences.

#### Locating a theoretical framework: cultural typologies

A relative dearth of research pertaining to issues surrounding climate, culture and occupation is evident within the hospitality literature. However, cultural phenomena can be displayed within the conceptual framework of cultural typologies (Allaire and Firsirtou, 1984). Utilising such typologies therefore may place management in a more favourable position to decipher how to either manipulate or, at best, interpret components of cultural meaning. Smircich, (1983) supports this view, advocating that cultural typologies may assist management in formulating practical applications of organizational theory to a given phenomenon. Without such interpretation an organizational culture is likely to have a visionary agenda that may not always be accepted. Instead, an organisational culture merely stands for 'what is to be learned' (Verbeke *et al* 1998) as opposed to what should be truly shared.

Cultural typologies are derived from anthropology and consequently can be closely linked with sociology. From a sociocultural viewpoint, organizations represent the society as political, social, economical and technological institutions. Hence, competitively organizations need to abide to 'functionalist' (Malinowski 1944) and 'functionalist-structuralist' (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952) environmental regulation. Organizations are required to be positivist agents to change; they exist only to serve members of society Malinowski (1944). Organizations therefore, need to be discontinuous in design if they are to remain competitive. In addition, structural forms (modifications within organisations) can sometimes be gradual and sometimes sudden (Radcliffe-Brown 1952, p.193). Located within organizational theory, these arguments may well represent theories relating to organizational climate. The study of organizational climate therefore appears to require moving beyond interpretative descriptors such as complexities of occupational culture.

#### Distinctions between climate & culture

The distinction between climate and culture offer a potentially interesting line of research investigation. According to Denison (196 p. 645) the distinction however, is the "...differences in the interpretation rather than differences in the phenomenon". Climate aims to make rational sense of a given cultural phenomenon in order to sustain or increase input-output processes of productivity. In comparison, organizational culture is seen as being "the subjective side of organizational life... its study represented an ontological rebellion against the dominant functionalist or 'scientific' paradigm" (Meyerson 1991 cited in Denison 1996, p. 619). Consequently, organizational climate does not sit comfortably with cultural subjectivity. This perspective of culture, therefore, implies 'what it is' whereas, *climate* sways more towards the Radcliffe-Brown camp in that "culture is a component of the social system..." Allaire and Firsirtou (1984 p. 196). Culture, from this viewpoint is therefore 'what it should be'. Arguably, the nearer the convergence between culture and climate the closer the representation of shared values there are within an organization.

#### FURTHER RESEARCH

Thus far cultural typologies have been identified as a useful vehicle for examination and distinctions between culture and climate explored. Further critical evaluation of the literature will examine:

- the reciprocal affects of occupation culture and organisation culture (Cameron *et al*, 1998).
- literature relating to occupational communities (Chivers, 1973; Salaman, 1974).
- the relationship between functional-occupational commitment, (Becker and Carper 1956; Fine 1996; Peterson and Birg 1988; Rose and O'Reilly 1997; Riley *et al* 1998)
- conceptual frameworks associated with job satisfaction and commitment issues (Mowday, 1979; Lincoln 1996; and Iverson and Deery 1997).

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