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WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE? A NATIVE'S POINT OF VIEW ON A DECADE OF PARADIGM WARS

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Recently, organizational culture researchers have applied quantitative survey methods and identified comparative "dimensions" of culture in a way that appears to contradict some of the original foundations of culture research within organizational studies. This new quantitative culture research also bears a strong resemblance to earlier research on organizational climate. This article examines the implications of this development by first considering the differences between the literatures on organizational culture and organizational climate and then examining the many similarities between these two literatures. The literatures are compared by focusing on their definition of the phenomena, their epistemology and methodology, and their theoretical foundations. The implications of the differing theoretical foundations and their underlying assumptions about the phenomenon are discussed at some length, as are some of the consequences of the continued separation of these two literatures. The final discussion focuses on the implications of these developments for future research on organizational cultures and contexts.

Since the early 1980s, when the culture perspective originally burst onto the organizational studies scene, the literature has evolved through many interesting stages. Early on, as Meyerson (1991: 256) noted, "culture was the code word for the subjective side of organizational life . . . its study represented an ontological rebellion against the dominant functionalist or 'scientific' paradigm." This reaction against the pervasive

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positivism, quantification, and managerialism of mainstream organizational studies helped initiate a decade-long reexamination of the foundations of organizational studies that still continues (Alvesson, 1989; Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992).

By the mid-1980s, however, many researchers were concerned that culture research was falling short of its promise (Alvesson, 1985; Frost, 1985; Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg, & Martin, 1991; Smircich & Calás, 1987). The "paradigm wars" that challenged the dominant perspective had sharpened researchers' skills at epistemological repartee, but culture research still seemed to have fallen short of theoretical and practical expectations, even as it became an established area in the field. Since that time, the area has "matured" in a number of ways, including the publication of several books on organizational culture, such as the integrative overviews offered by Schein (1985, 1992), Ott (1989), Trice and Beyer (1992), and Alvesson (1993); new perspectives introduced by Sackmann (1991), Martin (1992), Alvesson and Berg (1992), and Czarniawska-Joerges (1992); and new empirical studies and ethnographies presented by Denison (1990), Kunda (1992), and Kotter and Heskett (1992).

A more curious development in the literature, however, is the appearance of a number of articles that apply quantitative research methods to the study of culture (Calori & Sarnin, 1991; Chatman, 1991; Chatman & Caldwell, 1991; Denison & Mishra, 1995; Gordon & DiTomaso, 1992; Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990; Jermier, Slocum, Fry, & Gaines, 1991). In general, these authors have applied survey methods to study comparative "dimensions" of culture in a way that appears to contradict the epistemological foundations of culture research within organizational studies. Some of these studies have combined qualitative and quantitative methods, but they nonetheless bear a strong resemblance to the type of research that served as the antithesis of culture research a decade ago. With some alarm, Siehl and Martin (1990: 274) argued that this type of research runs the risk of reducing culture to "just another variable in existing models of organizational performance."

Even more perplexing, however, is the fact that many of these recent quantitative culture studies have become virtually indistinguishable from the research in the older and now neglected tradition of organizational climate. Why is it, for example, that when Chatman (1991) asked questions about risk taking as an organizational trait, the field of organizational studies labeled it as "organizational culture," yet when Litwin and Stringer (1968) asked similar questions about risk taking, that the field labeled it as "organizational climate"? Why is it that when Joyce and Slocum (1982) examined person-environment fit, this was perceived as a "climate study," but when O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell (1991) examined person-environment fit, it was called a "culture study"? What implications do these similarities and differences have for the recent history and future trajectory of research on organizational culture?

Several authors have attempted to compare these two literatures and explore areas of integration (Pettigrew, 1990; Reichers & Schneider, 1990; Schneider, 1985; 1990), but the similarities and differences between culture and climate research generally have been neglected in discussions of the culture perspective (Alvesson, 1993; Schein, 1990; Smircich & Calas, 1987; Trice & Beyer, 1992). This article attempts to examine these issues more carefully by comparing and contrasting the culture and climate literatures in an effort to understand the differences and similarities between these two perspectives and their implications for future research.

This article begins with a review of the differences between culture and climate as they have typically been presented in the literature. The second section of this article, however, explores a more controversial alternative, arguing that the primary difference between these two literatures is not a substantive difference in the phenomena under investigation, but rather it is a difference in the perspective *taken* on the phenomenon. This thesis is explored through an examination of the definitions, epistemologies, and methods applied in this literature as well as the more fundamental differences in their theoretical foundations. The article also explores the implications of these theoretical foundations as well as some of the unfortunate consequences of the separation between these two literatures. The final discussion section then focuses on some suggestions regarding future research on organizational cultures.

CONTRASTING THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE LITERATURES

During the early evolution of the culture perspective, the distinction between culture and climate was quite clear. Schwartz and Davis (1981: 32) perhaps put it most simply when they said that whatever culture is, it is not climate ("one way to understand culture is to understand what it is not"). Studying culture required qualitative research methods and an appreciation for the unique aspects of individual social settings. Studying organizational climate, in contrast, required quantitative methods and the assumption that generalization across social settings not only was warranted but also was the primary objective of the research. If researchers carried field notes, quotes, or stories, and presented qualitative data to support their ideas, then they were studying culture. If researchers carried computer printouts and questionnaires and presented quantitative analysis to support their ideas, then they were studying climate.

Other factors also helped to distinguish these two topics in the literature. Culture researchers were more concerned with the evolution of social systems over time (Mirvis & Sales, 1990; Mohr, 1982; Pettigrew, 1979; Rohlen, 1974; Schein, 1985, 1990; Van Maanen, 1979), whereas climate researchers were generally less concerned with evolution but more concerned with the impact that organizational systems have on groups and individuals (Ekvall, 1987; Joyce & Slocum, 1984; Koyes & DeCotiis, 1991). Culture

researchers argued for the importance of a deep understanding of underlying assumptions (Kunda, 1992; Schein, 1985, 1990), individual meaning (Geertz, 1973; Pondy, Frost, Morgan, & Dandridge, 1983), and the insider's point of view of the organization. Climate researchers, in contrast, typically placed greater emphasis on organizational members' perceptions of "observable" practices and procedures that are closer to the "surface" of organizational life (Guion, 1973; James & Jones, 1974) and the categorization of these practices and perceptions into analytic dimensions defined by the researchers.

The culture perspective has many exemplars, but it is perhaps best represented by book-length ethnographies, by authors such as Jaques (1951), Dalton (1959), Rohlen (1974), Schein (1985), or Kunda (1992). It is worth noting that many of these works appeared before the culture perspective itself emerged within organizational studies and, in contrast, that relatively few have appeared since. In addition, these early studies often are not distinct from more general contributions to organizational studies, such as Crozier's (1964) or Selznick's (1957) works, that were based on comparative case analyses. Rohlen's (1974) ethnography of white-collar workers in a Japanese bank is an exemplary piece of organizational culture research, presenting a thorough analysis of social structure, career pathways, organizational cultures, individual meaning, and organizational adaptation in a wholistic manner that illustrates the insights that can be gained from applying ethnographic methods to a modern organization.

Article-length descriptions of cultural analyses have also made an important contribution to the organizational culture literature. One of the classics is certainly Whyte's (1949) analysis of the social structure of a restaurant, which presents organization as a negotiated set of interaction patterns among different status, gender, and occupational groupings as it examines these factors as the context within which work occurs. More recent examples include Barley's (1983) analysis of the semiotics of the organizational and occupational cultures of funeral parlors and his analysis of the structuration processes that occur when new technology is introduced in medical imaging departments (Barley, 1986). Both of these analyses portray organizational cultures as the confluence of occupational cultures (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984) that define the nature of individual meaning and practice at work. Other worthy contributions include Martin, Sitkin, and Boehm's (1985) analyses of how the different meanings attributed to an organizational story can be used to distinguish the "old guard" from the "new guard" during an organizational transition; Van Maanen's studies of new police recruits (1973, 1975); Rosen's (1985, 1991) analyses of the symbolism of power, status, prosperity, and greed within an advertising firm; and Trice and Beyer's (1992) analysis of the importance of rituals. More cognitive approaches to the study of cultures were offered by Geertz (1971) through his analysis of the symbolism and meaning in a Balinese cock fight and by Weick and Roberts (1993) in their focus on the cognitive

representations of coordination shared by the crew of an aircraft carrier. Other authors such as Geertz (1973), Smircich (1983), Allaire and Firsirotu (1984), Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg, and Martin (1985, 1991), Smircich and Calás (1987), Czarniawska-Jorges (1992), Martin (1992), and Trice and Beyer (1992) also have made important contributions through their analyses of the culture literature.

The evolution of the climate perspective has followed a very different pattern. The concept has its roots in Lewin's studies of experimentally created social climates (Lewin, 1951; Lewin, Lippit, & White, 1939) and qualitative observation of natural organizational settings (Barker, 1965; Likert, 1961). Within the field of organizational studies, attention was first focused on climate as a topic of study in two books published in 1968. The first (Tagiuri & Litwin, 1968) was a widely cited collection of essays that presented a variety of approaches ranging from climate as an "objective" set of organizational conditions to climate as the "subjective interpretation" of individual and organizational characteristics. The second book (Litwin & Stringer, 1968) focused on the consequences of organizational climate for individual motivation, thus supporting the general idea that climate encompasses both organizational conditions and individual reactions. Likert (1961, 1967) and Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler, and Weick (1970) also contributed to this early literature by each defining a set of dimensions thought to represent the most salient aspects of organizational climate. Litwin and Stringer (1968), for example, sought to define organizational environments in terms of nine climate dimensions: structure, responsibility, reward, risk, warmth, support, standards, conflict, and identity.

After this initial burst of activity, a major issue of concern became the integration of climate research with the rest of the growing field of organizational studies. Thus, for example, there is an extensive literature that attempts to distinguish climate from seemingly "adjacent" topics such as individual satisfaction (Guion, 1973; Johannesson, 1976; LaFollette & Sims, 1975; Payne, Fineman, & Wall, 1976; Schneider & Snyder, 1975) and organizational structure (Drexler, 1977; James, 1982; Lawler, Hall, & Oldham, 1974; Payne & Pugh, 1976). A series of review articles in the mid-1970s (Hellriegel & Slocum, 1974; James & Jones, 1974; Payne & Pugh, 1976) helped to clarify this issue by building consensus around three distinct approaches to the study of climate: (a) the perceptual measurement of individual attributes, (b) the perceptual measurement of organizational attributes, and (c) the multiple measurement of organizational attributes combining perceptual and more "objective" measurements. These perspectives were distinguished by characterizing the first as "psychological climate" and characterizing the second and third perspectives as "organizational climate."

The central issue of whether climate is a "shared perception" or a "shared set of conditions" has remained a basic issue of debate in the climate literature. In one of the more memorable statements of this era,

Guion (1973), using one meteorological analogy to clarify another, suggested that the concept of organizational climate was actually like the wind chill index, in that it involved the subjective perception of the joint effects of two objective characteristics, temperature and wind speed. This reasoning was used to argue that research on organizational climate would require the measurement of both objective organizational conditions and the individual perceptions of those conditions. More recently, Glick's (1985, 1988) debate with James, Joyce, and Slocum (1988) provided a spirited inquiry into the logic associated with both the psychological and the organizational perspectives on climate research.

Perhaps in part because of the growing influence of the culture perspective in the 1980s, climate researchers became more concerned with the formation of organizational climates and began to ask a more fundamental question, "Where do organizational climates come from?" Schneider and Reichers (1983), Schneider (1987), and Reichers (1987) explored this issue through what they called the "attraction-selection-retention" process. This process, interestingly, portrays the dynamics of climate formation in terms of membership changes coupled with socialization processes. Several other notable authors (Ashforth, 1985; Poole, 1985; Poole & McPhee, 1983) have taken a social construction approach to the formation of organizational climates and have provided a persuasive rationale for viewing "climates" as an outgrowth of the more basic value systems of organizations.

This brief overview of these two literatures helps to sketch out the dominant perspectives that have existed in these areas over the past decade. The two literatures present contrasting perspectives with little overlap in style or substance. This contrast tends to support perhaps the most widely accepted distinction between the two phenomena: *Culture* refers to the deep structure of organizations, which is rooted in the values, beliefs, and assumptions held by organizational members. Meaning is established through socialization to a variety of identity groups that converge in the workplace. Interaction reproduces a symbolic world that gives culture both a great stability and a certain precarious and fragile nature rooted in the dependence of the system on individual cognition and action. *Climate*, in contrast, portrays organizational environments as being rooted in the organization's value system, but tends to present these social environments in relatively static terms, describing them in terms of a fixed (and broadly applicable) set of dimensions. Thus, climate is often considered as relatively temporary, subject to direct control, and largely limited to those aspects of the social environment that are consciously perceived by organizational members.

Table 1 presents a summary of this widely accepted view of these two literatures by pointing out contrasts in epistemology, point of view, methodology, level of analysis, temporal orientation, theoretical foundations, and disciplinary base of the culture and climate perspectives.

TABLE 1
Contrasting Organizational Culture and Organizational Climate
Research Perspectives

Differences	Culture Literature	Climate Literature
Epistemology	Contextualized and idiographic	Comparative & nomothetic
Point of View	Emic (native point of view)	Etic (researcher's viewpoint)
Methodology	Qualitative field observation	Quantitative survey data
Level of Analysis	Underlying values and assumptions	Surface-level manifestations
Temporal Orientation	Historical evolution	Ahistorical snapshot
Theoretical Foundations	Social construction; critical theory	Lewinian field theory
Discipline	Sociology & anthropology	Psychology

After presenting the basic distinction between these two topics, however, I now turn to a more controversial thesis: Although it is clear that culture and climate are, in fact, very different perspectives on organizational environments, it is far less clear that they actually examine distinct organizational phenomena. In this next section, I present a more detailed comparison of some of the central issues in each literature, giving careful attention to areas in which the two perspectives overlap.

ARE CULTURE AND CLIMATE DIFFERENT PHENOMENA OR DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW?

The differences noted thus far help to describe the dominant perspectives taken in these two literatures. However, at many points, it is unclear whether culture and climate represent two entirely separate phenomena or whether they represent closely related phenomena that are examined from different perspectives. Thus, the second part of this discussion explores the possibility that organizational culture and organizational climate have similarities as well as differences and that the differences may be more closely linked to differences of perspective rather than differences of substance. Both perspectives, for example, could be regarded as examining *the internal social psychological environment of organizations and the relationship of that environment to individual meaning and organizational adaptation*. Both perspectives entertain the possibility of a shared, holistic, collectively defined social context that emerges over time as organizations struggle with the joint problems of adaptation, individual meaning, and social integration.

Several of these areas of similarity are apparent through even a simple comparison between well-known definitions of culture and climate. For example, Schein (1985: 19, 1992: 12) defined culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members

as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems." Values and behavior, Schein argued, are more superficial representations of this underlying structure. Tagiuri and Litwin (1968: 25), defined climate as "the relatively enduring quality of the total [organizational] environment that (a) is experienced by the occupants, (b) influences their behavior, and (c) can be described in terms of the values of a particular set of characteristics (or attributes) of the environment." To this definition, he added that climate is "phenomenologically external" yet "in the actor's head." Although Tagiuri and Litwin's definition places more emphasis on the way in which the social environment is experienced by the actors, and Schein's definition places more emphasis on how the social environment is created by the actors, both authors focused on the collective cognitive representation of patterns of social learning over time. These two definitions also show similarities in other areas: Both attempt to describe the holistic nature of social contexts in organizations, the durability of these organizational contexts over time, and the roots of these contexts in the organization's system of beliefs, values, and assumptions. Comparing these two definitions thus suggests that these two literatures may have a far more complex set of similarities and differences than those suggested by the presentation of the literature in the first part of this article.

Further comparison of other definitions of culture and climate help to support the idea that there are both differences and similarities in the phenomena under investigation in these two literatures. This potential overlap thus requires a more careful examination of the research that is actually done when authors use these concepts. Thus, the following sections present a more careful and deliberate comparison of these two literatures in terms of their central theoretical issues, their content and substance, their methodologies and epistemologies, and their theoretical foundations. These similarities between the two literatures are summarized in Table 2.

Central Theoretical Issues

Several examples help to illustrate how theorists in both areas have struggled with a highly similar set of generic problems. As a first illustration, both perspectives attempt to address the problem of social contexts simultaneously being the *product* of individual interaction and a powerful *influence* on individual interaction. That is, organizations are made up of individual interactions but are also a determining context for those interactions (Ashforth, 1985; Barley, 1986; Giddens, 1979; Golden, 1992; Moran & Volkwein, 1992; Poole, 1985; Poole & McPhee, 1983; Riley, 1983; Schneider & Reichers, 1983). Authors of both literatures have attempted to understand this process of reciprocal evolution, but they often have been more successful at explaining one process or the other, rather than both at the same time. As the Schein (1985, 1992) and Tagiuri and Litwin (1968) definitions showed, the culture literature often focuses on how social contexts develop out of interaction, whereas the climate literature is more

TABLE 2
Areas of Convergence in the Culture and Climate Literature

Areas of Convergence	Examples of Convergence
Definition of the Phenomenon	Both focus on the internal social psychological environment as a holistic, collectively defined social context
Central Theoretical Issues	Shared dilemma: context is created by interaction, but context determines interaction Definition of domain varies greatly by individual theorist Dynamics between the whole and the part -Multiple layers of analysis -Dimensions vs. holistic analysis -Subcultures vs. unitary culture
Content & Substance	High overlap between the dimensions studied by quantitative culture researcher and earlier studies by climate researchers
Epistemology & Methods	Recent emergence of quantitative culture studies and qualitative climate studies
Theoretical Foundations	Roots of culture research are in social constructionism Roots of climate research are in Lewinian field theory Many recent studies have crossed or combined these traditions

likely to focus on the perception of social contexts and their impacts. Nonetheless, both literatures address a similar generic problem.

A second example, closely related to the first, is the "multilayered" nature of both culture and climate (Glick, 1985; James & Jones, 1974; Lundberg, 1982; Schein, 1985, 1990). The alternatives presented in each of the perspectives once again have notable similarities. In culture research, for example, there is a frequent distinction made between the overt, surface manifestations of a culture such as artifacts, structures, symbols, rituals, or practices and the underlying assumptions or values that those manifestations exemplify. In climate research, a similar debate exists surrounding the quasi-objective "set of conditions" that exist in an organizational system and the subjective perception of those conditions by organizational members. Some theorists in fact argue that the set of conditions is the climate, whereas others argue that the climate is in fact the selective perceptions (Glick, 1988; James, Joyce, & Slocum, 1988). A careful comparison of Schein's (1985, 1990) hierarchy of artifacts, values, beliefs, and assumptions in culture research with James and Jones's (1974) or Glick's (1985) discussion of the levels of organizational and psychological climate also shows several parallels.

For example, Schein (1985), Lundberg (1982), and others have distinguished levels of analysis, ranging from core assumptions that represent the deepest level of culture, to beliefs and values as an intermediate level, to norms and artifacts that are visible at the surface level. Climate researchers also have relied on a three-part typology (Glick, 1985; James & Jones, 1974) that distinguishes psychological climate (James, James, &

Asch, 1990), or the experienced organizational environment perceived by organizational members, from a social psychological set of conditions called organizational climate, to an objective and structural set of socially constructed conditions also called organizational climate. Although these levels of analysis used in the two literatures do not, of course, match directly, their common attempt to distinguish the manifest from the latent, the cognitive from the social, and the object from the subject share many similarities. Both literatures also might be criticized for giving more attention to the distinction among levels of culture, rather than to the integration across levels (Weick & Roberts, 1993).

A third issue that appears in both literatures stems from the holistic or global nature of the phenomena (Ekvall, 1987; Schneider, 1975; Schneider & Reichers, 1983). In both literatures researchers struggle with the inherent expansiveness of an explicitly broad and inclusive phenomenon. Accordingly, it is often difficult, if not impossible, to define the content of the domain of culture or climate independent of the interests of individual theorists and researchers. Thus, the content of culture as defined by Schein (1985, 1990), Hofstede (1991), Martin (1992), Kunda (1992), Kotter and Heskett (1992), Hofstede (1991), or Peters and Waterman (1982) varies greatly. Climate research, as Denison (1990) noted, shows a very similar pattern: The content varies by theorist, and there seems to be no natural limit to the climate domain other than the ability of theorists, researchers, and practitioners to evoke new adjectives to describe perceived social psychological environments.

The typical focus of the climate literature on the features of organizational contexts has often led to the conclusion that climate refers to the features rather than to the underlying context itself. As Poole (1985: 86) noted, "these types [i.e., contexts] can be rated on dimensions—for example, a democratic climate is high in supportiveness, low in structure, and emphasizes rewards rather than punishments—but cannot be reduced to dimensions, because they are wholes." Describing holistic contexts in terms of features can be a useful strategy for research—it can aid in the discovery of new contexts and can enable comparisons among types. However, "featurization" can often do violence to the representation of climate as a holistic phenomenon because there is always much more to a context than can be encompassed by any list of dimensions or attributes (Poole, 1985).

The relationship between the unitary whole and its constituent parts is also reflected in several other ways in the two literatures (Drexler, 1977; Ekvall, 1987; Gregory, 1983; Joyce & Slocum, 1984; Martin, 1992; Riley, 1983; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984). For example, many authors have written about the importance of subcultures (Martin, 1992) or distinctive subunit climates (Joyce & Slocum, 1982) and their relationships to the organizational whole. In addition, this issue is also reflected in each literature when specific content areas are defined, such as a climate for creativity

(Cummings, 1965), safety (Zohar, 1980), or service (Bowen & Schneider, 1988) or a culture of absence (Nicholson & Johns, 1985).

Also, neither literature is immune from the problems of an intrigue with one aspect of the problem leading to a neglect of the whole. As Czarniawska-Joerges (1992: 108) noted,

Organization theorists have located new aspects of organizational life and its function to study during the second half of the decade. Among these we can find jokes, coffee breaks, how people are dressed, how they behave at the corporation's Christmas party, how they sit at meetings, how they get fired (the "rite" of getting fired), what stories about present and former figures of authority are told, and so on. . . . It could be argued that these are of marginal importance compared to, for example, the organization's hierarchy and the way in which work is organized, controlled, and carried out.

This section has outlined a common set of problems, including the reciprocal nature of the social construction of organizational environments, the understanding of organizational contexts as a multilevel phenomenon, and the problem of the relationship between the organizational whole and its constituent parts. As such, it reveals a number of instances in which the two literatures may well be compatible, if not complementary, and suggests that organizational theory might in fact benefit from more explicit integration between the culture and climate literatures.

Content and Substance

Another area of surprising similarity between these two literatures becomes apparent when the "content" of traditional climate research is compared to the "content" of recent culture studies. Of course, not all (nor perhaps even most) culture researchers would choose to describe culture in terms of comparative traits or dimensions. However, when they do, the content of the culture domain begins to take on a strong resemblance to the topics that climate researchers have been concerned with for decades. For example, Hofstede's concept of power distance—the appropriate social and emotional distance that should be maintained between individuals of different status and power—is highly similar to the concept of "aloofness" introduced in one of the earliest studies of organizational climate (Halpin & Croft, 1962). Interestingly, Halpin and Crofts, working in the context of American public school systems, cast this dimension in a pejorative light, whereas Hofstede's observations across national cultures appear to lead him to cast this in far more neutral terms. Nonetheless, the underlying substance of these two dimensions is highly similar.

A careful comparison of the content of culture and climate studies yields many such similarities. Schwartz and Davis (1981), after carefully pointing out that whatever culture is, it is clearly not climate, go on to list a set of "tasks" that can reveal an organization's culture. Their list includes dimensions such as decision making, communicating, and organizing.

Thus, these authors show an interesting overlap with Taylor and Bowers (1973), who list decision-making practices, communication flow, and the organization of work among their key climate dimensions. Other examples abound: O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell's (1991) dimension of risk taking is highly similar to Litwin and Stringer's (1968); Joyce and Slocum's (1982) emphasis on peer relations is similar to Schein's (1985, 1992); Wilkins's (1978) concept of social control bears some similarity to Porter and Lawler's (1973) concept of autonomy; and Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler, and Weick's (1970) dimension of consideration closely resembles Cooke and Rousseau's (1988) concept of humanistic culture.

Table 3 presents a partial summary of some of these similarities by examining a set of five dimensions that have been described by six different authors, three from the culture literature and three from the climate literature. Closer examination of the individual items in these scales also shows a striking set of similarities (Gordon & Christensen, 1993).

The purpose of this comparison, of course, is not to deny the differences between the two literatures, but rather to highlight some of the similarities. These similarities become most apparent when a particular type of culture research—that which has tried to make generalizations about the features or dimensions of organizational cultures—is compared to earlier climate research. Culture researchers who have not made explicit generalizations about the features and dimensions of the social contexts they study may, of course, show fewer similarities to the climate literature. Nonetheless, this similarity and overlap suggest that a more thoughtful dialogue between these two literatures may have value.

Methodology and Epistemology

As indicated by the quote from Meyerson (1991) at the beginning of this article, culture research in organizational studies came about, in part, as a reaction to the existing orthodoxy in organizational studies. This reaction also was a part of a broader trend of the growing influence of postmodernism on the social sciences. As Parker noted, postmodernists often have indicted positivist social science for "elevat[ing] a faith in reason to a level at which it becomes equated with progress" (1992: 3). As such, postmodernists often are harshly critical of attempts to systematize, define, and impose rational comparative logics on the social and organizational world. Instead, it is suggested that "all of our attempts to discover truth should be seen for what they are—forms of discourse" (Parker, 1992: 3). Following this logic, knowledge must then be situated in time and place and hence relativized. As Bruno LaTour (1988: 179) wrote in *The Pasteurization of France*, "the very act of comparing, an effort to uncover similarities and differences, is a meaningless activity because post-modern epistemology holds it impossible ever to define adequately the elements to be contrasted and likened."

This perspective, of course, wreaked havoc with the classic positivist approach of climate researchers, who often took as their central mandate

TABLE 3
A Comparison of Selected Dimensions Used by Culture and Climate Researchers

	Culture Researchers			Climate Researchers		
	Hofstede (1990)	O'Reilly & Chatman (1992)	Cooke & Rousseau (1988)	Litwin & Stringer (1968)	Hellriegel & Slocum (1974)	Koys & DeCottils (1991)
Structure	Authority	Stability	Conventional culture	Structure	Centralization	?????
Support	Power distance	Respect for people	Humanistic culture	Support	Supportiveness	Support
Risk	Security	Innovation	Avoidance culture	Risk	Innovation	Innovation
Cohesiveness	Collectivism	Teamwork	Affiliative culture	Identity	Peer relations	Cohesion
Outcome Orientation	Results orientation	Outcome orientation	Achievement culture	Standards	Motivation to achieve	Pressure

the development of a universal set of dimensions that would allow for comparative generalizations regarding perceived social and psychological environments. The primary epistemological issues framed in the climate literature centered on whether climate was a property of the individual, the social environment, or the interaction of the two, and researchers generally did not question the validity of comparing any of these features of social context. The epistemological critique of positivism that was so central to the early evolution of culture research made it easy for scholars to dismiss earlier climate research as a prime example of "what not to do" and to resist discussion of areas of integration and overlap, suggesting instead that research on the phenomenon of organizational culture could only be conducted from a postmodern perspective that pursued a qualitative understanding of the unique aspects of individual social contexts.

From these reformist beginnings, research from the culture perspective made an impact in a number of different topic areas, including socialization (Louis, 1980; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), symbolism (Alvesson & Berg, 1992; Dandridge, 1983; Pondy, Frost, Morgan, & Dandridge, 1983; Smircich & Calás, 1987), and organizational change (Frost et al., 1985, 1991; Martin et al., 1985; Schein, 1985, 1992). Nonetheless, by the mid-1980s the influence of the culture perspective had begun to wane (Calás & Smircich, 1987), leading culture researchers to talk about "Rekindling the Flame" (Frost, 1985). Even though culture researchers had developed a distinctive point of view, they had done less to define a substantive research agenda and paradigm. The critique of positivism, once made, did not necessarily suggest a future direction. This perhaps echoes one of Terry Eagleton's (1983: 144) more provocative comments about the limits of the postmodernist critique in the field of literature: "It allows you to drive a coach and horses through anyone else's beliefs while not saddling you with the inconvenience of having to adopt any yourself."

Since this period of the middle 1980s, however, the perspectives of culture researchers have expanded in several significant ways. In addition to authors whose work continued to reflect the image of "culture" research established in the early 1980s (Kunda, 1992; Martin, 1992; Smircich, 1983; Smircich & Calás, 1987; Van Maanen, 1988), "culture" research also took a curious turn as authors included studies that pursued a more conventional agenda of comparison and generalization, exemplified by a series of more recent culture articles that have used either quantitative methods exclusively or some combination of quantitative and qualitative methods (Chatman, 1991; Denison & Mishra, 1995; Gordon & DiTomaso, 1992; Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990; Jermier et al., 1991; O'Reilly et al., 1991). These most recent studies, although extending culture research in several important directions, present many overlaps with the methods and epistemology represented by the climate literature and thus invite a more careful analysis of the similarities.

In this context, the work of Geert Hofstede (1980a,b, 1986, 1991; Hofstede et al., 1990) represents an interesting example. Hofstede's quantitative and

comparative work on *national* culture received wide acclaim during the early and mid-1980s (Sondergaard, 1994), during a period when researchers of *organizational* culture studiously avoided quantitative methods and comparison across settings (Schein, 1985). Thus, it is important to ask, "How is it that quantitative comparisons of national culture across many nations received widespread acceptance, at a time when quantitative comparisons of organizational cultures within a single cultural context (usually Western, English-speaking, and often American at that) were seen as unfounded?" Comparative logic was rejected in the relatively homogeneous settings that concerned researchers of organizational culture at the same time that it was largely accepted in the relatively heterogeneous setting that concerned researchers of national culture. Hofstede and his colleagues further confounded the epistemological sensibilities of traditional culture researchers when they published a study of organizational culture comparing 20 Dutch and Danish firms. They showed that there were substantial differences between firms on several dimensions of organizational culture, which were closely linked to the dimensions of national culture developed in earlier research (Hofstede et al., 1990).

A similar example is provided by the work of O'Reilly and colleagues (1991). Their use of quantitative measures of culture, a comparative framework, and a concern with person-organization fit shows many similarities to earlier research in the climate literature. In fact, this study has virtually the same design as Joyce and Slocum's (1982) study of the discrepancy between psychological climate and organizational climate as a predictor of performance and job satisfaction. In addition, Martin and colleagues (1985), writing in the culture literature and using qualitative methods, also used a similar design to distinguish members of the old guard and the new guard based upon their perceptions of the organizational context.

A very different set of overlaps is suggested by the work of authors who have examined the formation of organizational climates (Ashforth, 1985; Moran & Volkwein, 1992; Poole, 1985; Poole & McPhee, 1983; Schneider, 1987; Schneider & Reichers, 1983). These authors vary in the degree to which they consciously incorporate the tenets of postmodern epistemology, but this stream of climate literature nonetheless shares much in common with the methodological and epistemological sensibilities of culture researchers.

An interesting example of this overlap was provided by Poole (1985) and Poole and McPhee (1983). Poole drew on Giddens's (1979) concept of generative rules and resources as the basis of the social reproduction process to define climate as a "belief and value structure members employ as they act in the organization" (Poole, 1985: 101). Ashforth (1985) also took a similar approach in his examination of the formation of organizational climates. One might even argue that the approach taken by Schneider (1987) and Schneider and Reichers (1983), although far less consciously postmodern than either Poole's or Ashforth's, still describes the creation of organizational climates in a manner that fits well with the implicit

assumptions about the situated nature of social contexts and the inherently problematic nature of comparison.

Although the methods and epistemologies of culture and climate research generally are very different, a careful analysis of the culture literature reveals a broad range of epistemological approaches that overlap to a significant degree with earlier research on organizational climate. By the same token, more recent research on the formation of organizational climates reflects the emphasis on postmodern epistemology and qualitative methods that has been advocated by culture researchers. Like the convergence of substance and content described in the previous section, this trend also makes it more difficult to distinguish culture and climate research solely on the basis of epistemology or method.

Theoretical Foundations: The Difference That Makes A Difference

Perhaps the most significant difference between the culture and climate literatures lies not in the nature of the phenomenon or the methods used to study it, but in the theoretical traditions that have been borrowed from other branches of the social sciences. The climate literature has its roots in the field theory of Kurt Lewin (1951), whereas the culture literature is grounded in the symbolic interaction and social construction perspectives developed by Mead (1934) and Berger and Luckmann (1966). This section contrasts the different ontologies (Smircich, 1983; Smircich & Calás, 1987) that underlie these two perspectives and examines the influence that they have had on the literatures.

Many of the differences between climate and culture can be understood by examining Lewin's basic concept of the relationship between individuals and their social environments and then considering the implications of this framework for the study of organizations. Lewin expressed his basic formulation in terms of a simple equation:

$$B = f(P, E)$$

in which B = behavior, E = the environment, and P = the person.

Quite apart from the unending complexities of actually computing the predictions of such an equation, Lewin's framework makes a far more basic assumption that has had a strong influence on the study of organizational climates. According to Lewinian field theory, the social world can be neatly divided into Bs, Ps, and Es. Thus, in order to study a phenomenon such as organizational climate (or culture) from Lewin's perspective, *the person must, by definition, be analytically separate from the social context.* This perspective characterizes the approach taken in the climate literature quite well. The "agents" of an organizational system, such as management, are often assumed, but seldom studied directly. They create the climate that others work in. The "subjects" of that system, most often employees, workers, or subordinates, are the primary objects of study. They work within the climate, but they do not create it. The impacts that the system has on its subjects are primarily examined with a nonrecursive

logic (Poole, Ashforth, & Schneider notwithstanding) that conveniently neglects the process by which the social environment is constructed by the individual members it comprises.

In contrast to proponents of the Lewinian logic who analytically separate the person from the environment and tend to assume that individuals are either subjects or agents of a social system, users of the symbolic interaction perspective (Mead, 1934) and the social construction perspective (Berger & Luckman, 1966) underlying the organizational culture literature assume that the individual cannot be analytically separated from the environment and that the members of social systems are best regarded as being agents and subjects simultaneously. Thus, social context is regarded as both the medium and the outcome of social interaction. Furthermore, this literature often defines the primary topic of interest as the recursive dynamics between the individual and the system (Giddens, 1979; Lave & Wenger, 1990; Riley, 1983), rather than the impact of the system on its members.

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE DIFFERENT THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

These seemingly modest theoretical differences in the conceptualization of social contexts have wide-ranging ramifications. Three are examined here. The first is the capacity of each of these perspectives for developing an understanding of the evolution of social process over time. The second is the potential of each of these perspectives for comparing contexts across different organizational settings, and the third is the connection of each of these perspectives to the ideology of managerialism. These three implications are summarized in Table 4.

TABLE 4
**Some Implications of the Theoretical Foundations of Culture and
Climate Research**

Theoretical Foundations		
Implications For	Social Constructionism	Lewinian Field Theory
Social Process & Evolution	Highly valuable for understanding the evolution of social context on a case-by-case basis	Difficult to use for understanding evolution; useful for understanding the impact of social context
Comparative Research	Difficult to make comparisons, except for studies with a small number of cases	Useful for comparison; less useful for an in-depth understanding of individual cases
Managerial Ideology	Control of the organization's value system is contested by varied stakeholders, power groups, and subcultures	Accepts the distinction between the managerial creators of "context" and the nonmanagerial employees that are affected by the context

Social Process and Evolution

One of the distinct advantages of the symbolic interactionist and social constructionist frameworks is the perspective that they provide on the evolution of social process over time. The simultaneous creation of meaning and social structure, the evolution of interaction patterns into systems of normative control, and the close connection between the symbolic and material world can be well understood through the culture perspective. This facet of the culture perspective has been elaborated by authors such as Rohlen (1974), Van Maanen (1979), Mohr (1982), Schein (1985, 1990, 1992), Kunda (1992), and Hatch (1993).

The Lewinian perspective, in contrast, provides an awkward framework within which to understand the evolution of social process. By analytically separating the person from the social environment, it becomes quite difficult to devise a theory of how that social environment evolves. Despite several noteworthy attempts at conceptualizing the formation and evolution of social contexts that appear in the climate literature (Ashforth, 1985; Poole, 1985; Poole & McPhee, 1983; Schneider & Reichers, 1983), the Lewinian perspective still appears to be more useful for conceptualizing the influence of context on human behavior than for understanding the process by which social context develops.

The strength of the Lewinian perspective is in conceptualizing a particular type of social process involving the influence of an established context on organizational members who are in subordinate positions of power. Thus, for studies of the impact of the system on its members, particularly when a time lag occurs between the systemic stimulus and the individual response, the Lewinian framework is a highly useful perspective. As this article has shown, researchers from both literatures have adopted a Lewinian perspective to study these types of problems.

Two substantive examples help to illustrate the utility of this contrast. Research on socialization (Chatman, 1991; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991; Schneider & Reichers, 1983; Van Maanen, 1973, 1975; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) illustrates a phenomenon in which the agents of socialization, who are representatives of the system, are quite distinct from the subjects of the system, who are newcomers being socialized. Within this context, Lewinian field theory with its core concept of separate individuals and environments provides a useful conceptual framework. Interestingly, even authors who write about socialization from a clinical perspective (e.g., Van Maanen, 1973, 1975; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) and view socialization as a process of learning a culture maintain a relatively clear distinction between agents and subjects of socialization. At the beginning of this process, newcomers are highly distinct from other organizational members, whereas at the end of the process, they are much less distinct.

Innovation, in contrast, provides an example in which it may be less useful to separate the individuals from the environment that they are a part of. For example, Kidder's (1981) analysis of a team designing a new

computer makes a good case for the coevolution of team culture and individual identity. The innovation process thus becomes difficult to understand when studied within a framework that analytically separates the individual from the environment. Barley (1986) reached a similar conclusion from his study of the adoption of a new form of medical technology. Thus, the evolutionary processes in innovation are difficult to understand, unless there is a core concept of the coevolution of the individual and the environment as suggested by the social constructionist perspective.

The Viability of Comparative Research

The differences between these two theoretical perspectives also have strong implications for a second point, the viability of comparative research. If environments are considered as existing independently of individuals, as in Lewinian field theory, then they are more likely to be conceptualized, dimensionalized, measured, and compared as social entities. In addition, the relationship between organizational contexts and individual perceptions also can be conceptualized and operationalized in a way that allows for generalization across social settings. This logic fits well with the climate metaphor, and it is congruent with the idea that social environments exist separately from the individuals who comprise them. In contrast, the idea of comparing, generalizing, and dimensionalizing cultures clashes quite badly with the concept of cultures as unique social constructions that create unique meaning systems for their members. Thus, if all social action is situated, as suggested by the social construction and symbolic interaction perspectives (Lave & Wenger, 1990), then comparison across settings becomes a much more questionable enterprise (LaTour, 1988).

Some examples from the two literatures help to illustrate the different logics of comparison that derive from the Lewinian and social construction frameworks. For example, Joyce and Slocum (1984) argued that individuals who experience a similar set of social psychological conditions should be regarded as sharing the same "climate," even if they have no interaction, interdependence, collective history, or identity. Poole (1985) referred to this same phenomenon as "co-orientation." In this example, climate is conceptualized as a characteristic of individual-organizational dyads that can be disaggregated or reaggregated with little attention to the original situation in which the climate originated. Not only can climate be generalized and dimensionalized, but the climate itself also can be analytically detached from the social setting in which it was generated and then reaggregated.

In contrast, many culture researchers have argued that meaning and symbolic representation can be understood only with respect to specific settings. All cultures are thus unique, and attempts at generalization are inherently futile. Thus, the goal of research must be to understand and describe individual cultures at a level that allows for an understanding of individual meaning and organizational symbolism, or what Geertz (1973)

called *thick description*. In this case, generalizations about the relationship between the individual and the organizational environment cannot, with confidence, be carried beyond the situations in which they arise.

Given this context, the recent turn of organizational culture research to the comparative and quantitative approaches noted previously in this article becomes very interesting. One must ask, "Which cultural phenomenon are these studies comparing and generalizing?" Authors of these studies acknowledge the existence of "levels of culture" and the limitations of comparative research to truly understand deeper levels of culture such as assumptions and beliefs. However, each of these studies selects an "intermediate" level of culture, such as values and cultural traits, about which to generalize. This approach does not deny the existence of either deeper level assumptions unique to a culture or the more surface-level practices, artifacts, and symbols that may have highly situational meaning. Instead, each of the studies has been focused on generalizing about cultures at an intermediate level of values or traits.

Several examples help to illustrate how this intermediate level of culture may be more useful for comparison and generalization than either the deeper level of cultural assumptions or the more superficial level of cultural artifacts and symbols. First, consider O'Reilly and colleagues' (1991) concept of innovation. Their analysis does not assume that innovation has the same deep cultural meaning across organizational settings or that organizational members attribute the same meaning to risk taking in each of the organizations they studied. In contrast, they also do not focus on the symbolic representation of risk or the particular practices used to manage innovation in the organizations that they studied. Instead, they focus on the intermediate level of values or traits as a means to generalize about culture.

As a second example, Trompenaars (1993) described differences among individualistic and collectivistic cultures by contrasting the way that individuals from those cultures react to different scenarios. This contrast does not address the underlying meaning of individualism and collectivism in each of the cultures, and it does not deal with the specific meaning of the artifacts and symbols that are used at a more superficial level to represent individualism and collectivism in each culture. Like the previous example, Trompenaars' research was focused on the intermediate level of values and traits. Trompenaars also gave an interesting example of how the same symbol or artifact may, in fact, have *exactly the opposite* meaning in two different contexts. As he explained, Japanese in Tokyo will often wear a face mask when they have a cold to prevent it from spreading to others, whereas Americans in New York or Los Angeles are far more likely to wear the same face mask to protect *themselves* from the effects of smog or airborne disease. These examples from O'Reilly and colleagues (1991) and Trompenaars (1993) help to illustrate how several authors conducting comparative culture research appear to have chosen the level of values and traits as the point of comparison.

The Ideology of Managerialism

The theoretical foundations underlying culture and climate research also have implications for the positions taken in each literature with respect to managerial ideology. Within the culture literature, a number of authors have been critical of the manipulation inherent in the managerial perspective (Alvesson, 1985, 1989; Frost et al., 1985, 1991; Kunda, 1992; Martin, 1992), whereas others have taken an approach that is openly managerial (Barney, 1986; Kotter & Heskett, 1992; Schein, 1985, 1992; Wilkins, 1989; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983). Climate researchers, in contrast, appear to be less critical of managerial ideology. They tend to accept the organizational contexts created by management as a given, while concentrating on the perceptions and reactions of the individuals who work within those contexts (Ekvall, 1987; Glick, 1985; Guion, 1973; James & Jones, 1974; Koys & Decotiis, 1991).

Once again, the key analytical step of separating the person from the environment appears to be central to this distinction. A "separate" environment, as suggested by Lewinian framework, is more consistent with both the illusion and the reality of unidirectional managerial control. This classic Lewinian distinction between the managerial creators of the organizational context and the survey respondents who perceive the context clearly reflects a managerial bias. However, climate researchers often counter this bias by directing their primary interests and concerns to their nonmanagerial respondents (James et al., 1990). This approach often leaves climate researchers in the tacit position of playing both sides of the managerial issue. They seldom contest the managerial creation of organizational contexts, but they often represent the interests and perspectives of the nonmanagerial employees who operate within that context.

In contrast to the climate literature, in which issues of managerialism are seldom addressed directly, culture researchers frequently discuss the political and ideological consequences of their work. For example, Alvesson (1985, 1989, 1993), who wrote from the perspective of a critical theorist (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Habermas, 1971; Mills, 1978), was highly critical of the managerialism of culture research and organizational studies in general and argued that the most important role of organization and management theory should be to further the emancipatory interests of organizational members. As a theorist, Alvesson appears to have achieved an "emancipatory high ground" through his critique, but it comes at the cost of a principled detachment that seems to ensure that the emancipation he sought for organizational members will be difficult to achieve on either practical or conceptual terms. Interestingly, in a more recent applied case study of a computer consultancy company, Alvesson's (1992) interest in emancipation showed many similarities to the focus of those who have studied participation and empowerment in more traditional applied ways (Block, 1991; Lawler, 1986; Semler, 1989).

Because the social construction framework that serves as a foundation for most culture research presumes that social environments are created

through emergent social processes, politics and ideology become a much more salient issue. Thus, it is far less clear who is in "control" of the organizational context. Top management? Labor? Bioengineers? New executives from the consumer goods industry? The Dutch? Men? Women? Blacks? Whites? New Yorkers? Californians? In short, with social construction as an organizing framework, competing cultural influences are engaged in a power struggle to define the organizational culture. As Jermier (1991) noted, "organizational culture is a contested reality." Subcultures (Martin, 1992; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984) may thus be of as much interest as organizational cultures, and the value system of the elite is but one influence on the ultimate form of the organization. The political agendas of culture researchers thus range from a focus on the emancipatory interests of organizational members (Alvesson, 1989; Staeblein & Nord, 1985) to a focus on building corporate character (Wilkins, 1989). Culture researchers present a variety of viewpoints on the issue of managerialism and cultural control, but nearly all of these issues are rooted in the inherent diversity of social construction rather than the tidy distinction between person and environment provided by the Lewinian framework.

SOME UNFORTUNATE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DISJUNCTURE BETWEEN THESE TWO LITERATURES

The lack of integration between the culture and climate literatures and their research traditions has a number of consequences that deserve further consideration. In general, a tendency to view these two research areas as competing perspectives in a paradigm war allows for far less integration than might otherwise occur based on the similarities of the substantive agenda. In this section I focus on three specific consequences of the separation between these two research traditions.

A Tendency to Overplay the Implications of Each Perspective

The juxtaposition of the logics of culture and climate research has resulted in a tendency to define two contrasting orthodoxies in the study of social contexts. However, as Czarniawska-Joerges (1992: 66) noted,

The phenomena are complex, so why do we persist in studying them with such simple methods? Or worse yet, contorting the phenomenon through selective definition and proscriptive rep-
arantee until it becomes that which can only be legitimately
"seen" through a very selective set of lenses.

In short, the conceptualizations of organizational contexts provided by the culture and climate literature often tend to create a contrast between the two literatures that is more apparent than real. The inadequacies of one approach become the justification for the other. The interests of researchers in each "camp" may in fact be served by maintaining the ongoing paradigm wars, even though these dynamics may detract from progress in understanding the underlying phenomenon.

This tendency also may result in more attention being given to extreme, rather than integrative, points of view. To build on an earlier example, the climate literature has presented what might be called a "radically de-situated" view of climate (James, Demaree, Mulaik, & Ladd, 1992; Joyce & Slocum, 1984; Poole, 1985), which argues that individuals do not need to share the same social setting to experience the same perceived climate, thus redefining a contextual construct as a cognitive one. In contrast, the culture literature has presented a "radically situated" view of culture (LaTour, 1988; Parker, 1992), summarized previously in this article, implying that no valid generalization can be made outside of a particular setting. Both of these extremes appear to receive more attention in the respective literatures than does the central question of the relative uniqueness and generality of culture in different organizational settings (Martin, Feldman, Hatch, & Sitkin, 1983; Rentsch, 1990).

Differences of perspective also tend to become confused with differences of phenomenon. For example, Martin (1992) discussed three different perspectives on culture, describing them as though they were three different phenomena. Although these three perspectives provide a useful and insightful overview of the culture literature, issues of integration among the three perspectives were generally neglected. Thus, the reader is left with the impression that the field deals with three distinct phenomena, rather than the single phenomenon of organizational context, viewed from three different perspectives. This divergence is all the more interesting when one notes that the three perspectives elaborated by Martin (1992) were originally presented by Meyerson and Martin (1987) in their analysis of the Peace Corps, a single organizational context that they analyzed from three perspectives.

As another example of the tendency to overplay the implications of the culture and climate perspectives, culture researchers often have criticized positivist organizational research, focusing on its comparative logic, quantitative methods, and managerial bias. This critique has generated some interesting repartee. A noteworthy example was provided by Siehl and Martin (1990) in their commentary on the research linking organizational culture and performance (e.g., Calori & Sarnin, 1991; Denison, 1984, 1990; Denison & Mishra, 1995; Gordon, 1985; Gordon & DiTomaso, 1992; Hansen & Wernerfelt, 1989; Kotter & Heskett, 1992). Each of these studies, to varying degrees, is quantitative and comparative, and they represent examples of the type of culture research that bears some similarity to earlier research on organizational climate.

A brief analysis of their critique shows that Siehl and Martin (1990) questioned the contribution of quantification and comparison and infer that research on the links between culture and performance is intended to legitimate the direct managerial control of organizational cultures. Based on this analysis, they warned of the "pernicious social effects" of linking culture and performance (Siehl & Martin, 1990: 273). Interestingly, however, a very similar set of findings regarding culture and performance

can be found in research conducted from a labor perspective linking employee involvement and cooperative labor relations with effectiveness criteria such as quality and productivity (e.g., Cooke, 1992, 1993; Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1991; Ichniowski, Shaw, & Prennushi, 1994; Kochan, Goebelle, & Katz, 1983). Thus, Siehl and Martin (1990) seemed to group the elements that they viewed as *pernicious* (managerial manipulation, comparative research, survey data, and positivist epistemology) into one convenient target. A more thoughtful and fine-grained analysis might reveal a more complex yet more integrative set of dynamics underlying these issues.

A Lack of Legitimacy for Research Combining the Two Perspectives

With limited dialogue between these two perspectives, integrative studies that combine sufficient depth of analysis to gain a qualitative understanding with a broad enough sample to give some comparative leverage are very unlikely to occur. The experience of authors of qualitative culture research encountering positivist reviewers who demanded comparative analysis and the experience of authors of quantitative culture research encountering reviewers who demanded to know how their research was different from climate research are both common symptoms of a parochial outlook that currently exists regarding research on organizational context. Greater dialogue can legitimate more integrative research combining these perspectives.

My own experience in attempting to publish research that combines qualitative case studies with quantitative analysis bears this out. In an integrative article attempting to develop and test a theory of culture and effectiveness, my coauthor and I selected a set of five case studies based on prior analysis, used those to develop a model, and then collected quantitative survey data from a large sample of firms to test the model (Denison & Mishra, 1995). To our dismay, when we tried to get this work published, we found that Reviewer A said, "I love these case studies, but you should get rid of the survey data." Reviewer B added, "the quantitative study is very solid, but I would omit the case studies—they add very little." Reviewer C (predictably) suggested that we "focus on theory building—the article is too 'data driven'."¹

This lack of integration poses an interesting question: Which tradition "owns" those research designs that study more than one case, but fewer cases than would be needed for a "statistically valid" sample? Currently, this type of design is not "owned" or legitimated by either tradition and thus is more difficult to apply. Interestingly, however, this state of affairs clashes rather badly with the major contributions that traditionally have been made in organizational studies using this type of design (Blau, 1995;

¹ A footnote at the end of this article gives added description of the author's background and perspective.

Burns & Stalker, 1961; Clark, 1970, 1972; Crozier, 1964; Dalton, 1959; Eisenhardt, 1989; Gouldner, 1954; Jackall, 1988; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Schein, 1985, 1992). In each of these cases, researchers took a comparative perspective on a relative small sample of organizations (a sample size of 3–8 covers most of these examples) and have studied each of those organizations with a deep understanding, while still trying to develop generalizations that can explain the differences and similarities among the firms.

Increased Distance From the Phenomenon

When organizational culture research began in the early 1980s, it was all about being close to the phenomenon. Culture researchers originally gained great energy from the observation that organizational research had lost much of its fidelity—the verisimilitude with respect to organizational life itself—and suggested that the antidote to this problem was in description, ethnography, and an attempt to understand the native's point of view. Unfortunately, many of the original champions of "up close and personal" haven't hit the field in years. The paradigm wars over epistemology and methodology have directed researchers' energy away from the sizable investment of time required to do thick description. Thus, as Kunda (1993) pointed out, "thin description" may now be a more accurate description of most field research on organizational culture.

Interestingly, the call for staying close to the phenomenon also can be heard within the climate literature. Note Payne and Pugh's (1976: 1168) comments in their well-known review of the climate literature:

Future research can ignore most of these [quantitative climate] studies and utilize a completely different approach. We need deep involvement from the members of a complex system to gather meaningful data which accurately reflect these people's experience . . . the researcher needs to swap data interpretations with his subjects so that interpretations are more realistic.

Climate researchers often have seemed inextricably (and inexplicably?) wedded to a limited form of contact with the organizations that they study: the collection of questionnaire data, the sine qua non of climate research (Trice & Beyer, 1992). This approach may require some contact with a research site (at least by mail), but it seldom requires direct contact with the social psychological phenomena that are the primary objects of study.

Thus, in both literatures, the discussion of research methods and approaches often outweighs the discussion of the organizational contexts that are ostensibly under investigation. Several authors have openly questioned whether organizational studies should be regarded as the study of *organizations* or the study of *discourse about organizations* (Parker, 1992; Smircich & Calás, 1987). The problems inherent in this position have perhaps been best described by Czarniawska-Joerges (1992: 192):

Revolutionary attempts to reform organizational theory finish up by theorizing about organizational theory. There is no objection to this, but I would insist on learning something about social reality that is beyond social science. Otherwise, the following sarcastic comment will find its full application: "The language of science became the object of science and what had begun as perception unmediated by concepts became conception unmediated by percepts (Tyler, 1986: 124).

Distance from the phenomenon often helps sustain the powerful generalizations that fuel paradigm wars (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1995), but unfortunately these same powerful generalizations also can deter integration. As a result, the paradigms and the conflicts between them become the phenomenon of study rather than organizational life itself. This poses difficult problems for progress in the study of organizational contexts, because as Czarniawska-Joerges (1992: 192) put it, "When all is said and done, there is one main obstacle to the emergence of an anthropology of complex organizations: access." In contrast, a focus on the phenomenon, drawing in an eclectic manner from a variety of theories, methods, and perspectives, seems far more likely to make a contribution to the substantive understanding of organizational cultures.

DISCUSSION

This article has attempted to address a remarkable paradox in the culture literature: With the recent appearance of culture studies based upon quantitative survey research methods, culture research has begun to emulate a substantive and epistemological research agenda that served as its antithesis less than a decade ago. Culture research is now being published in the leading organizational journals, but (ironically) only by emulating the same positivist research model that culture researchers originally deplored. Furthermore, a comparison of this recent culture research with the organizational "climate" literature of the 1960s and 1970s shows a curious similarity and suggests that it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish some of the current culture research from the earlier climate paradigm on the basis of either the substantive phenomenon or the methods and epistemology.

On the surface, the distinction between organizational climate and organizational culture may appear to be quite clear: Climate refers to a *situation* and its link to thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of organizational members. Thus, it is temporal, subjective, and often subject to direct manipulation by people with power and influence. Culture, in contrast, refers to an *evolved context* (within which a situation may be embedded). Thus, it is rooted in history, collectively held, and sufficiently complex to resist many attempts at direct manipulation. The two perspectives have generated distinct theories, methods, and epistemologies as well as a distinct set of findings, failings, and future agendas.

However, at a deeper level, when one begins to compare the individual studies that make up these two literatures, these seemingly clear distinctions begin to disappear. Over time, the underlying similarity of the two research topics has led a number of culture researchers to apply the quantitative, comparative, and Lewinian approaches associated with climate research, whereas several climate researchers have studied the evolution of social contexts from a social constructionist point of view that makes it difficult to distinguish from culture research. Despite these points of convergence, however, considerable effort is still devoted to the maintenance of a narrow orthodoxy within each literature that makes it difficult, if not impossible, to build on some of the obvious points of integration.

I have argued that one of the most enduring differences between culture and climate stems from their respective theoretical foundations. Both are rooted in the dominant theoretical traditions of their time, climate research growing out of Lewinian field theory (Lewin, 1951) and culture research growing out of the social construction framework (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Mead, 1934). However, even this boundary is not always so clear. The research of Chatman (1991) and O'Reilly and colleagues (1991) reflects many aspects of the Lewinian framework, and the works of Ashforth (1985), Poole and McPhee (1983), Poole (1985), and Schneider and Reichers (1983) can easily be viewed as describing the social construction of organizational contexts.

The analysis in this article has led me to conclude that these two research traditions should be viewed as differences in *interpretation* rather than differences in the *phenomenon*. I also have argued that this approach will provide a stronger foundation for integration than the currently held assumption that culture and climate are fundamentally different and nonoverlapping phenomena. This conclusion has several implications. First, at a minimum, this conclusion provides a strong rationale for the continued integration of quantitative and qualitative methods in the study of organizational culture and the continued borrowing of theoretical foundations, epistemological arguments, and research strategies from either tradition in order to serve future research. Different researchers will, of course, generate different forms of evidence and different ways of interpreting each other's results, sustaining a rich source of diversity. But the endless debate over what constitutes the "right" kind of data can be given a decent burial. The debate over whether rituals or regressions or surveys or semiotics constitute the best data can become subordinate to the debate over what these multiple data sources and strategies can reveal about social contexts and their influence on individuals and organizations. Perhaps this conclusion also will temper the temerity of reviewers or editors whose knee-jerk reaction to uncovering quantitative data in a culture study is to ask, "but then, isn't this really a climate study?" Data, one must conclude, are actually rather benign. It is our interpretations that bring meaning to them, label the phenomenon, and conceptualize the link between research and action. The capacity to tolerate (and encourage)

multifaceted interpretations of eclectic forms of evidence may in fact be a requisite level of complexity for understanding the extraordinarily complex topic of organizational culture.

Second, a stronger interpretation of my conclusions is that the culture and climate literatures actually address a common phenomenon: the creation and influence of social contexts in organizations. If one raises the level of abstraction slightly, it then becomes clear that this article is a discussion of two dominant traditions in the study of organizational contexts over a period of several decades. Because the culture literature is the more recent of these two traditions, it seems fair to assume that this tradition is more dominant at the present time. This conclusion implies that the future study of organizational contexts can perhaps best be served if researchers more explicitly incorporate the traditions of climate research within the culture literature, so that the lessons of both literatures can be applied to future research.

Nowhere is the need to achieve better integration between these two traditions greater than when one encounters practicing managers. The epistemological debates that have consumed culture researchers for the past decade (including many of the arguments in this article!) typically mean nothing to them. They can't tell the difference. Confronted with this observation, one of my colleagues recently observed, "that's because we are smarter than they are!" Although I would like to believe that there is perhaps some truth in this observation, sounder advice would suggest that culture, climate, or social context researchers who work directly with managers, executives, and other practitioners would do well to understand and adopt the natural language that organizational members use to describe their own context. That natural language may refer to culture, climate, context, the work environment, "this organization," or other ways of describing the phenomenon we are studying. Once they learn the local language, it is far easier for scholars and researchers to apply their insights. Transplanting our own language, with all of its implicit assumptions about the finer points of theory and epistemology, can be confusing and misleading. Many practitioners have now become sophisticated managers of social contexts and cultures and frequently apply our research in an eclectic, problem-driven manner. However, the effective translation of the insights of our research literature usually depends on a clear understanding of the existing concepts and vocabulary that an organization uses to describe its own context.

Finally, it is important to remember that one of the most powerful contributions of the culture literature in the early 1980s was the observation that organizational research had lost much of its fidelity with respect to organizational life itself. The efforts of these early culture researchers served to return organizational life, as it is understood by those who experience it, to center stage in the literature. But much of that basic insight has now been lost amid the paradigm wars. Can this fundamental insight be reinstated as a strength of the culture literature? I hope it can

be, and I hope the debate over how research should be conducted and which conceptual and methodological resources should be applied can assume a secondary role, subordinate to the primary goal of understanding the evolution and influence of social contexts in organizations.

A few years ago there was a great debate raging: statistics versus the case study. The debate is no longer waged publicly, but it still troubles many of us. On the one hand, we see that an individual case study, skillfully analyzed, yields interesting insights—but not scientific knowledge. On the other hand, we find that nearly all statistical work in sociology has dealt with the characteristics of aggregates: How much of a given phenomenon is to be found in a given population? Such an approach does not tell us anything about the relations among the individuals making up that population. And yet, if we are to believe the textbooks, the relations among individuals, the group life they lead, are the very heart of sociology.

So let us have more individual case studies, but let us also place the individual in the social system in which he participates and note how his attitudes and goals change with changes in the relations he experiences. And let us have more quantitative work, but let us at last bring it to bear upon the heart of sociology, measuring the relations among individuals in their organizations. (Whyte, 1949: 310)

This article is written from the perspective of one member of the community of scholars who study organizational cultures. This "native" was originally drawn to the social sciences by studying George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism as an undergraduate student, later indoctrinated in Parsonian structural-functionalism as a master's student in sociology, and then trained in general systems theory and survey research as a doctoral student in organizational psychology. After completing a quantitative dissertation on organizational culture and financial performance, I was driven by a desire to find out what was behind the statistical results (and by a distinct preference for interacting with human beings rather than statistical analysis packages . . .) and went into the field to do a series of case studies as a complement to the quantitative study. Combining qualitative theory building with quantitative theory testing felt like a constructive and integrative result.

Gaining acceptance for integrative work, however, proved much more difficult than I had anticipated. Narrow and parochial perspectives were very powerful and made it difficult to combine theory and practice. I was attracted to the field and the topic in part because it offered the opportunity to do work that was theoretical and applied, and was quantitative and qualitative, but the "culture of organizational culture research" made it seem far easier to declare allegiance to one single approach than to attempt to combine them. In addition, the experiences of many of my culture colleagues with the review process suggested that an inordinate amount of time was being spent on epistemological posturing. Many felt that their articles were often accepted or rejected primarily because of the perspective they had taken, rather than what they had learned about organizations and their cultures. This brief background helps explain some of the influences that led me to write this essay.

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