
Chapter 9

Organizational culture

Overview

This chapter explores the influence of organizational culture in sport. It examines why organizational culture is pivotal, highlights its impact and explains how it can be diagnosed. Several cases and numerous examples will be used throughout the chapter to help explain the role of culture in a sport organization's performance.

By the end of this chapter the reader should be able to:

- Define the meaning of organizational culture;
- Specify why culture is important to sport organizations;
- Explain how different contexts can affect an organizational culture;
- Identify how sport organizational cultures can be diagnosed;
- Show the dimensions across which sport organizational cultures can be measured; and
- Discuss how sport organizational culture can be changed.

What is organizational culture?

Culture was originally ^{referred} defined by anthropologists as the values and beliefs common to a group of people. These researchers set themselves the task of investigating, interpreting and translating the behavioural and social patterns of groups of individuals by trying to understand the manner in which they relate to their environment. From an organizational perspective, researchers like Miles (1975) and Pettigrew (1979) observed that while people in organizations run the technology and invent the processes, they in turn, as part of the process, have much of their behaviour determined

strong point

by the system they operate. In other words, there are underlying forces that impact upon behaviour. The concept of culture is a way of putting a name to these forces.

COOL IDIA

There is no single accepted definition of organizational culture. For example, organizational culture is viewed by some as the 'personality' of an organization, while for others it represents the things which make an organization unique. Several assumptions about organizational culture are well-accepted though. These are:

REVIEW KNOWLEDGE

1. Culture tends to be inflexible and resistant to easy or rapid change.
2. Culture is shaped by an organization's circumstances, its history and its members.
3. Culture is learned and shared by members of an organization and is reflected in common understandings and beliefs.
4. Culture is often covert; the deep values and beliefs causing behaviour can be hidden from organizational members making them difficult to identify.
5. Culture is manifested in a variety of ways that affect the performance of an organization and its members.

DISCUSS ? SURFACE KNOWLEDGE

TACT

Although elements of commonality exist in the way in which researchers conceive and define culture in organizations, much inconsistency and controversy can still be found. However, for the purposes of this chapter, we shall discuss organizational culture in a way consistent with the view of Schein (1984, 1997), who invokes a more psycho-dynamic view. This means that he believes culture is, in part, an unconscious phenomenon, driven by deep level assumptions and beliefs, and where conscious views are merely artefacts and symbolic representations. For example, most sport clubs members would report that on-field winning is important. Schein's interpretation of organizational culture would lead to questions about why winning is important. Does it have to do with a need to belong to a successful group, the pressure of peers, or some other more mysterious explanation? While many people involved in sport would think this question easy to answer, it is less easy to specify the underpinning values that drive unusual rituals, ceremonies, myths, legends, stories, beliefs, memorabilia and attitudes.

APPROPRIATE FOR YOU

EDUC. DISCUSS ARTIFACTS REPRESENTATIONS (IMPERMANENT WORDS & ACTS)

JUST AN ARTIFACT OR SYMBOLIC REP.

EXAMPLES OF

In current and former nations of the British Commonwealth, cricket is played with enormous enthusiasm, but can take up to five, six-hour days to complete a single match, which often ends in a draw. Similarly, to the uninitiated, American football seems quite strange with each team comprising separate players for offensive and defensive manoeuvres. Off the field can be just as odd. In Australia, many (Australian Rules) football clubs have 'sausage-sizzles' (BBQs), 'pie-nights' (involving the traditional meal of a meat pie) and a host of rituals associated with drinking beer. In addition, many sport organizations are packed with memorabilia and expect their employees to work during evening training sessions and weekend games. Sport organizations are rich with strong, meaningful cultural symbols, which on the surface seem easy to interpret, but sometimes are only superficial symptoms of deeper issues.

COOL QUOTE

What Schein searches for is not the superficial, but rather the unconsciously held fundamental concepts of right or wrong; what an organization might perceive as correct or incorrect values. These values, which are the foundation of an organization's culture, do not simply exist or come into being by their own volition. Instead, they are painstakingly built up by members of the organization as they gradually learn to interact and achieve their collective and individual aims (Schein, 1984). The originators of the organization, together with the more powerful of the organization's past and present members, are usually the most influential in determining the culture. Thus, Schein prefers to examine the long-held assumptions and beliefs in an organization, believing that they will more likely explain the organization's culture.

For the purposes of this chapter, we shall define sport organizational culture as follows:

Sport organizational culture is a collection of fundamental values, beliefs and attitudes that are common to members of a sport organization, and which subsequently set the behavioural standards or norms for all members (Ogbonna & Harris, 2002, Pettigrew, 1979; Schein, 1985). This definition reflects the view that sport organizations have ways of approaching things that have evolved over time. In many ways, organizational culture therefore holds answers to questions about solving problems. Culture is how 'things are done around here' and how we 'think about things here'. Culture is a subtle form of 'brainwashing'.

ATTOMS
LAW AT
KNOWLEDGE OF
THIS?

DEFINITION.
LEARN IT.

Case 9.1 Cultural change at the Japan Sumo Association

Amongst the most illuminating cultural markers are the myths and legends perpetuated within sport, and no professional sport in the world has more than sumo. The Japanese legend goes that it was in fact a sumo match between two gods that created the Japanese islands. Originally a ritual act dating back to 712 AD as a dedication to the gods in exchange for a beneficial harvest, sumo became part of the imperial court, and later a form of combat training. The professional sport of today is still fixed in ceremony, ritual and strict codes of conduct. Young wrestlers enter training 'stables' from the age of 15, beginning daily practice at 4.30 am. They work hard to bulk up and rise through the rigid hierarchy of ranks with the dream of performing well in one of the six, 15 day-long Grand Tournaments held each year.

Sumo today, however, is changing. Like all sports, sumo's governing body, the Japan Sumo Association, has been faced with pressures from globalization, social change and professionalism. In fact, the Japan Sumo Association is one of the most insular sport organizations in the world, particularly considering it presides over a sport that is a national obsession. Sumo champions are superstars, beamed to over 60 percent of households during Grand Tournaments, a staggering figure considering that only 40 percent

of households in the United States watch the Super Bowl each year. The Japan Sumo Association has in the past been notorious for its hierarchy, secrecy, chauvinism, xenophobia and total resistance to change. Although still extremely slow, some of these values are softening.

Unlike martial arts, which have thoroughly inculcated the Western world, sumo has remained a Japanese sport. However, in the last 50 years, a number of foreign participants have slowly made progress in opening the sport to other nationalities. This has partly been because young Japanese men have become increasingly interested in more global sports like soccer and golf. In addition, the traditional system of sponsorship for young sumo has diminished. Sumo training stables have subsequently been more open-minded to training non-Japanese wrestlers. There are now over 50 foreign-born sumo wrestlers from a dozen different countries. Although one Hawaiian sumo whose results were sufficient was disqualified from reaching the highest ranking in the sport – the prestigious Yokozuna – because the Sumo Association considered him morally unfit, now several non-Japanese have become Yokozuna.

The Sumo Association is grappling with other cultural changes as well. The sport has periodically been subject to negative media associated with allegations of match fixing; what the officials refer to as 'spiritless' fights. The Japan Sumo Association has also caved in to pressure for women's sumo to gain greater recognition. While women's sumo is strictly amateur, the New Sumo Association has been set up to promote it as a potential Olympic sport. However, according to Shinto beliefs which lie at the heart of sumo culture, a woman is rendered impure by her menstrual cycles, and should not be allowed to even touch the sumo ring, and certainly not fight in it. This rule still holds to the point where recently a female provincial governor was precluded from presenting prize money to the winning sumo in her own region, a tradition begun by her male predecessors. More positively, the Japan Sumo Association has spearheaded initiatives banning smoking in venues and fat-testing sumo participants to discourage rampant obesity and weight-related injury and ill-health common in the sport.

CURRENT CHALLENGES TO THE LABELING CULTURE OF SUMO.

The importance of culture to sport organizations

In many countries sport has for some time been regarded as a particularly important social institution. Sporting heroes are often national heroes as well. Examples include Michael Jordan and Vince Lombardi in the United States, Roger Bannister and David Beckham in the United Kingdom, Shigeo Nagashima and Hanada Katsuji (sumo name, Wakanohana) in Japan, and Sir Donald Bradman and Ian Thorpe in Australia. Although these names are not the definitive sporting heroes of the nations identified, their sports and

personal profiles are illustrative of the national cultural pressures that influence the sport organizations they host. This quick list, for example, excludes women; a trait common to many sport organizational cultures, and one that many are seeking to change. However, the influence of the national culture means that such changes are more likely to occur in some nations than others (Hofstede, 1991).

We can expect that different types of sport organizations will possess different kinds of cultures. For example, professional clubs and major national leagues are more likely to emphasize dispassionate business values, while smaller, not-for-profit associations are more likely to value participation and fun. Some sport organizations like Italian and Spanish football (soccer) clubs are geared almost exclusively to winning and are prepared to go heavily into debt in order to do so. Others, like the company Formula One Holdings, manage the commercial rights to major events and have little other interest than to make money. While the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile seeks to regulate motor sport, others still, like the International Olympic Committee, are interested in developing sport around the world, and in so doing acquire vast sums of money and spend it liberally.

Sports organizations are increasingly compelled to join the commercial world, and are under great pressure to adopt the operational and structural characteristics of business enterprises. The influence of modern communication has been profound, with sporting results being available from overseas as readily as domestic results. Many sporting organizations have realized that in order to remain competitive they must provide similar entertainment value to that provided by other sports on television as well as the wide array of alternative leisure options available. Subsequently, corporate boxes line major sporting venues, sport is blanketed across pay or cable and free to air television, high profile athletes earn extraordinary sums, and politicians associate themselves with certain teams. The commercial and competitive pressures placed upon sport organizations from local football clubs, universities and colleges, to professional leagues and teams, has encouraged sport managers to embrace business tools and concepts like organizational culture. Culture is important to sport organizations because a better understanding of it can help to bring about change. Since organizational culture is so influential on the performance of its members, it is critical that cultural traits are both appropriate and strong. In the case of sport, it is common to have strong cultures that have been forged by tradition and a fierce sense of history, but some cultural characteristics like excessive drinking and on-field violence may no longer suit the more professional management approach that needs to be assumed.

Commentaries on organizational culture, while as disparate as the number of researchers pursuing its investigation, generally emphasize its most superficial manifestation. Moreover, organizational culture is frequently seen as mono-cultural; that is, it is perceived at one level, and as one entity. The organization is distinguished as a giant cultural mass, constructed equivalently throughout, and with little or no internal variability. However, this methodology is difficult to sustain when analysing a sporting organization. Sporting club cultures are inherently poly- (multi-) cultural, and can be perceived

DIFFERENCES OF CULTURES IN SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS

INTERESTING PT.

YOUR THOUGHTS?

MONO CULTURAL OR NOT

DETAILED SEARCH CRITERIA SEARCH JACOB SKR.

EXAMPLES

UNDERSTANDING CULTURE IS USEFUL IF YOU WISH TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE

DISCUSS

TRUE OR NOT

readily at several levels, or as several entities. For example, as an organizational or administrative unit comparable to other business organizations; as a supporter organization, whose aims, objectives and traditions may be different (such as winning matches in preference to making a financial profit); and as a player unit, where motivation may vary from glory to money. While a player may perform for a club because of loyalty or remuneration (or any number of other reasons), the supporters are usually passionately attached to the clubs' colours and traditions, expecting only on-field success in return.

EASY EXAMPLES

IMPORTANT POINT

Sub-cultures and sport

In sporting organizational cultures there is the additional hurdle of translating and adopting a culture directly from traditional business theory. It is dangerously simplistic to assume that a sporting organization should adopt the methods and practices of a traditional business without addressing the cultural variables. While business methods can be transferred to accommodate the organizational strategies of a sporting club, a direct transfer fails to confront the issue of what it is that makes the culture of a sporting organization differ from that of a traditional business enterprise.

Ideal business culture tends to reflect a willingness by an organization's employees to embrace a standard of performance that promotes quality in the production of goods and services, in the attempt to generate a financial profit. This cultural ideology, while cognizant of business necessities, is unable to cater for the more diverse structures that exist in a sporting organization. In any business, fiscal realities must be acknowledged, but in a sporting business, additional behavioural variables require recognition and respect. While different businesses have different cultures, they are less variable than the cultural differences between individual sports. It cannot be assumed, for example, that a single unified culture exists for all sports.

Fighting during a sporting context is an example of the variability of sporting culture. While in just about every ball game it is illegal to punch people, it is acceptable behaviour in some cases. The situation could not be clearer in terms of official rules and regulations. An overt punch in soccer is an immediate red-card, sending-off offence. In contrast, a punch in rugby-union will only get the player a warning, and the opposition a penalty in their favour. In soccer, punching is unacceptable. In rugby, it is merely discouraged. The identical behaviours have quite different cultural meanings. Furthermore, in ice-hockey, fighting is virtually considered an inherent and accepted part of the game, and charging the pitcher, although illegal, is considered to be almost within the batter's moral right should they be struck by a wayward pitch in baseball. Consider the ramifications of a punch thrown at the Wimbledon Tennis Championships or on the eighteenth green of Augusta. Sport managers must be aware of the cultural nuances of their respective sports and the influence they have upon players, employees, members, fans and the general public.

IDEAL BUSINESS CULTURE VERY SIMILAR FOR BUSINESSES BUT

THERE IS NOT A SINGLE UNIFORM CULTURE FOR ALL SPORTS?

APRIL OR NOT?

EXAMPLES FIGHTING

SOCCER AFL ICE HOCKEY LEAGUE ICE HOCKEY

A RIDICULOUS VERSION TENNIS

DIFFICULT TO WORK WITH THIS IN SPORT



DIFF BELIEFS
ABOUT
HOW THE
GAME SHOULD
BE PLAYED
→
ATHLETES →
SPECTATORS →

Culture is not a simple matter within a single sport either. Professional players, for example, have a different cultural attitude from some amateurs and spectators. This variability of attitudes is symptomatic of a wider, more troublesome area: the clash of cultures within sports. This is illustrated best at an international level, where players from different countries have been brought up with profoundly different ideologies of the game, and how it should be played. Soccer – the 'world game' – is indicative of this culture clash, in addition to the immense cultural significance inherent in the game. Like all living cultures, sport is incessantly changing, dynamic in nature and subject to constant reinterpretation by its participants and viewers. The only apparent consistency in sporting culture is the pursuit of competition, the love of winning, and the ability to summon strong emotional responses in both victory and defeat.

GREAT POINT HERE "THE ONLY CONSISTENCY"

Clearly, there is a need to study organizational cultures, accounting for the effect of the sport itself. For example, in the same way that we might expect that accounting firms might share some cultural traits, so might we predict that judo clubs do also. Similarly, the tradition and discipline central to a judo club might be expected to encourage cultural characteristics different to the youthful and eclectic philosophy found in a BMX club. Furthermore, these cultural characteristics might seep into the executive officers and employees of the clubs. Since so many sporting organizations covet tradition and the accomplishments of the past, they also tend to be resistant to change. However, before any change can occur, an organization's culture needs to be accurately diagnosed.

Case 9.2 From the superficial to the deep

Saskatchewan is a province in Canada. Its official sport is curling, but like many Western societies, it is supportive of an eclectic variety of sports, including gymnastics. Conversely, the largest city in the US state of California is Los Angeles, which hosts several prominent professional sport clubs, including the National Basketball Association team, the Los Angeles Lakers. In this case study, some of the organizational culture differences between the Gymnastics Saskatchewan (GS) and the Los Angeles Lakers (LA Lakers) are considered. Specifically, readers are invited to visit the respective websites of the two organizations as we imagine what deeper values and cultural characteristics might reside behind the public profiles that are displayed on the internet.

Gymnastics Saskatchewan
<http://www.gymsask.com/mission.html>

Los Angeles Lakers
<http://www.nba.com/lakers/>

NOTES AS EXAMPLES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES.

"CONCRETE SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION OF DEEPER CULTURAL ASSUMPTIONS & BELIEFS"

BEGIN
W/ THE
THE OBVIOUS

Organizational culture analysis can begin with the obvious. For example, what is the first impression given by each internet site? While sites change in content and composition over time, it is likely that the GS site will remain relatively simple with the intention of providing some basic information. Although a modestly sized sport organization, GS still presents a professional image, through the use of a logo and appropriately coloured web pages. The photos in the 'About Us' section reveal the chief 'business' of the organization in the form of gymnasts performing and practising. The content of the site further reinforces a strong orientation toward athletic development and participation. This is clearly articulated in the 'Mission' page in a brief set of strategic statements. The values listed include the following:

- Respect: We respect each other as individuals, our organization and its properties.
- Quality: We strive to achieve personal bests in everything that we do.
- Discipline/Ethical: We behave according to high moral standards in accordance with the organization's rules of conduct and ethics.
- Commitment: We are committed to the goals of the organization.
- Teamwork: We work together to achieve the goals of the organization.
- Honesty: We are truthful with ourselves and others in everything we do.
- Fairness/Impartial: We do not show favour in making judgments and we put all individuals on an equal footing.

LA LAKERS
A LITTLE
DIFF.

Contrast the GS website to that of the LA Lakers. Neither a governing body nor a non-profit entity, the LA Lakers site is demonstrably commercial in orientation. The homepage is packed with game and player information and the cursor is even automatically converted to a sponsor's logo (at the time of writing this was the McDonald's arches). In addition to news, schedules and player statistics, visitors can purchase a vast range of merchandise. The site is cluttered with information and permeated by the LA Lakers colours and logo.

From these websites it is already clear that the organizational cultures of GS and the LA Lakers are likely to be quite different. GS seems to value participation in their sport, while the Lakers are unashamedly concerned with on-court and financial (they go hand in hand) success to the exclusion of most else.

LEAST TO
SEE DIFF
CULTURES.

Do the above brief observations constitute an organizational culture analysis? Absolutely not. It would be dangerous to assume that we now have anything more than the most superficial understanding of the two cultures, but an exercise like this is nevertheless instructive. Organizational culture presents itself through both superficial and covert communication and both are reflective of an underlying set of values that drive the organization. Sometimes, however, the overt and covert do not match. Obvious symbols can be masks covering deeper realities. For example, we are naturally suspicious when fast food restaurants claim to be interested in promoting health. Similarly in sport, we need to be cautious before making assumptions about organizational culture from the superficial.

A START
BUT NOT A
CULTURAL
ANALYSIS.

SUPERFICIAL
ASSUMPTION

INTERESTING. PJ

Diagnosing and managing organizational culture

The central problem is that in order to grasp the concept of culture and its relationship to the individual, the group, and the organization, an in-depth approach is required. Sport organizations create intentions and atmospheres that influence behaviour, routines, practices and the very thought systems of people. These systems and processes subsequently form patterns that are acquired primarily through socialization, or learning over time from the reactions and behaviours of others. In essence, individuals within an organization are exposed to what researchers call 'culture revealing' situations, which might include the observable behaviour of other members, their organizational methods, 'artefacts' – the photos, honour boards and other memorabilia on show – and interactive communication, or the way in which individuals talk to each other. Some of these common superficial and observable representations of organizational culture are reproduced in Table 9.1. These are important to recognize because the driving values and belief systems behind them can never be seen as anything more than observable 'symptoms'.

ESSAYS ARE LIKE REPRESENTATIONS

COULD BE OTHER THINGS

Table 9.1 Observable symptoms of sport organizational culture

Symptom	Explanation
Environment	The general surroundings of an organization, like the building it is housed in and the geographical location, like the city or in a grandstand.
Artefacts	Physical objects located in the organization from its furnishings to its coffee machine.
Language	The common words and phrases used by most organizational members, including gestures and body language.
Documents	Any literature including reports, statements, promotional material, memos and emails produced for the purpose of communication.
Logos	Any symbolic visual imagery including colours and fonts that convey meaning about the organization.
Heroes	Current or former organizational members who are considered exemplars.
Stories	Narratives shared by organizational members based at least partly on true events.
Legends	An event with some historical basis but has been embellished with fictional details.
Rituals	Standardized and repeated behaviours.
Rites	Elaborate, dramatic, planned set of activities.

IMPORTANT WORD, REMEMBER IT BUTS.

Although the superficial aspects of culture can be observed, the difficulty comes in their interpretation because they are merely surface representations of deeper values. Thus, a useful cultural diagnosis will always seek to understand what drives the observable behaviour. For example, what does it mean if an employee makes a mistake and is severely reprimanded by his or her boss? What does common jargon imply? Why are certain rituals typical, like the celebration of employee's birthdays?

The question remains as to how observations made translate into deeper values. Most researchers recommend some form of classification system that describes organizational culture in the form of 'dimensions', each one a deeper, core value. These dimensions reflect on particular organizational characteristics as an aid to categorizing cultures. The summation of these characteristics is used to describe an organization's culture, which can then allow for comparisons to be undertaken between varying organizations. For example, observable evidence in the form of an end of season awards night in a sporting club might be suggestive of the nature of the organization's reward/motivation values. Enough observable evidence can lead a sport manager to make some tentative conclusions about each dimension. Table 9.2 lists some common dimensions used to describe organizational culture. They can be seen as continua, an organization's position somewhere between the two extremes.

Any analysis that captures the complexity of organizational culture may have great difficulty in separating the interwoven strands of organizational history and personal relationships. As a result, concrete conclusions may be difficult to establish. It is therefore important to take advantage of the symbolism created by myth, ritual and ceremony that is abundant in sport organizations in order to gain a complete understanding of the full range of human behaviour within a complex organization. The traditions, folklore, mythologies, dramas, and successes and traumas of the past, are the threads that weave together the fabric of organizational culture.

A psychological approach is helpful in identifying and interpreting human behaviour in organizations as cultural phenomena. Psychologists, originally stimulated by the work of Carl Jung, suggest that there are different levels of behavioural awareness, from the conscious to unconscious. Organizational psychologists have appropriated this kind of thinking and transposed it to culture. The key analogy is that an organization is like a mind.

From the psychological viewpoint, the readily apparent and observable qualities of a sporting organization are the same as the conscious part of an individual mind. These include the physical environment, the public statements of officials, the way individuals interactively communicate, the form of language used, what clothes are worn, and the memorabilia that fills the rooms and offices. Another of the most important observable qualities involves the place of sporting heroes. They are culturally rich and are highly visible indicators of the culture that is sought. Heroes give an insight into the culture of an organization, since they are selected by the rank and file as well as the power brokers. In addition, they indicate those qualities in individuals which are respected and admired by a wider audience. The hero is a powerful figure in a sporting organization, and may be simultaneously an

THIS IS WHAT WE ARE AFTER.
 WHAT DRIVES THIS BEHAVIOUR?
 WHAT ARE THE DEEPER VALUES?
 HOW DO YOU DO THIS?
 MAKE THE TRANSLATION

OBSERVABLE CONSCIOUS
 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT
 PUBLIC STATEMENTS
 LANGUAGES COMMUNICATION
 CLOTHING
 MEMORABILIA
 HOW WE VIEW HEROES
 TRADITIONS

GREAT CONCEPT

HEROES ARE EMBODIMENTS
 EXEMPLIFY THE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE
 AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL.

Table 9.2 Cultural dimensions

Dimension	Authors	Characteristics
Stability/changeability	Cooke & Szumal, 1993; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983	Disposition toward change: Degree to which organization encourages alternative 'ways of doing things' or existing ways.
Cooperation/conflict	Denison & Mishra, 1995; Hofstede, 2001; Schein, 1997	Disposition toward problem resolution: Degree to which organization encourages cooperation or conflict.
Goal focus/orientation	Sashkin, 1996; Van der Post & de Coning, 1997	Clarity and nature of objectives and performance expectations.
Reward/motivation	Bettinger, 1989; Robbins, 1990	Nature of reward orientation of organizational members: Degree to which organization encourages seniority or performance.
Control/authority	Sashkin, 1996; Schein, 1997	Nature and degree of responsibility, freedom and independence of organizational members.
Time/planning	Hofstede, Neuljen, Ohayv & Sanders, 1990; Van der Post & de Coning, 1997	Disposition toward long-term planning: Degree to which organization encourages short-term or long-term thinking.

Reproduced from: Smith, A. & Shilbury, D. (2004). Mapping Cultural Dimensions in Australian Sporting Organizations, *Sport Management Review*, 7(2): 133-165.

employee and ex-player. The hero may also be charismatic, entrepreneurial, or just plain administrative, which often characterizes business enterprises. By understanding the orientation of hero figures, both past and present, it is possible to map the trends in cultural change. Heroes can be both reactionary and progressive. Heroes that reinforce the dominant culture will not change the values and attitudes that the culture emphasizes. On the other hand, a hero that transcends and transforms the dominant culture will be a catalyst for change in the behaviours and values of a club. Often a hero is the most powerful medium for change management to be successful.

Tradition is another window into the culture of an organization. Like heroes, traditions are readily observable through memorabilia, but it is important to note that the underlying values and assumptions that give meaning to heroes and tradition reside in the deeper levels of a culture. Tradition may on one hand be preserved by the present cultural identity, while on the other hand the sporting organization may have developed a contemporary cultural personality. Thus, it is useful to acknowledge the importance of tradition

Common
Dimension
used to
describe
Sporting
Organization
Culture

and history to a sporting organization because it may be a cultural linchpin, or a stepping stone from which their cultural character has launched itself.

In order to bypass the obstacles (in the form of stereotypical views and superficial signs) that can block an assessment of culture, it is essential to analyse and explore natural, observable outcroppings of culture; places where the cultural understandings can be exposed. By analysing these sites, it is possible to gain a practical insight into the underlying culture of the organization. Thus, this level deals with organizational rites because, firstly, their performance is readily apparent, and secondly, in performing these rites, employees generally use other cultural forms of expression, such as certain customary language or jargon, gestures, and artefacts. These rites, which are shared understandings, are additionally conveyed through myths, sagas, legends, or other stories associated with the occasion, and in practical terms may take the form of barbecues or presentations. In order to actively assess this level of culture, not only must observational techniques be employed, but meanings must be attached to them. This requires more than a superficial level of analysis.

There are also 'unconscious' parts of organizations as well. In effect, it is the unconscious that controls the individual. This incorporates the beliefs, habits, values, behaviours and attitudes prevalent in a sporting organization. An accurate assessment of this level of culture is difficult and fraught with danger. For example, how employees say they behave and what they state they believe, has to be compared to their actual behaviour.

As a cautionary note, it is relevant to be aware of the fact that there are different interpretations possible of the same evidence. For example, one way of looking at culture is to focus attention on consistency and congruence of policies and practices within an organization as members are confronted with problems to solve. In contrast, it is also valid to consider ambiguities and inconsistencies in behaviour. These anomalies often represent the difference between espoused values and actual values. Cultural manifestations can be interpreted in multiple ways, and change over time and location. As Schein counselled, it is important to look for both patterns and exceptions.

Changing organizational culture with mapping

Cultural understanding stems from successfully translating information into meaning. Every aspect of a sporting organization is symbolically representative in some way of its culture. All information is not equal, however, yet all possible data must be analysed in order to establish the most holistic representation possible of the existing culture. In order for a culture to be created and bolstered, shared values and beliefs must in some way be reinforced and transferred to organizational members through tangible means. Case Study 9.3 describes the types of information that communicate culture,

Primary
issue with
this kind
of thinking
& research.

GREAT
POINTS

and is a useful tool for mapping a sporting club's organizational culture, in this case illustrating the features of the Ferrari Formula One Team. A cultural map summarizes the predominant features of a sporting organization's culture, and provides a means in which raw data can be interpreted into measurable criteria. It works by providing sets of categories in which information can be collected and summarized with the intention of identifying the main themes that continually emerge. Some researchers believe that this approach can also be used in a more statistical form, the numbers attached to responses from questions derived from the dimensions and answered by organizational members (e.g. Howard, 1998).

CULTURAL
MAP
DEFINITION

MAJOR
THEMES

Case 9.3 A Cultural map of Ferrari Formula One

Ferrari Formula One motor racing team has enjoyed remarkable success, including six constructor's and five consecutive driver's championships up to and including season 2004. The team may well be a contender for the greatest ever sporting team. Led by Ferrari President and CEO Luca di Montezemolo, Team Manager Jean Todt, chief driver, Michael Schumacher, and design and engineering managers, Ross Brawn and Rory Byrne, the team brought about a massive cultural change beginning in the mid-1990s after a prolonged period of poor performance.

While a genuinely insightful cultural diagnosis requires long-term access to an organization, the following hypothetical map for the Ferrari Formula One Team creates an initial picture of the organization's culture. Keep in mind that in a thorough map, each of the variables under the heading 'Evidence Suggests' would include detailed data. Collectively, the information in the map paints a picture of the organization's cultural characteristics. The kinds of cultural traits that are suggested in this brief summary map might be considered against those that might be imagined for the Japan Sumo Association described in Case 9.1.

Cultural Dimensions and Variables		Evidence Suggests
Dimension 1: Change		
1	Preparedness to change	High
2	History of change	Low
3	Method of change	Rapid
4	Types of change	Transformational
5	CEO attitude to change	Strong focus
6	Staff attitude to change	Generally positive
7	Board attitude to change	n/a

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<i>Cultural Dimensions and Variables</i>		<i>Evidence Suggests</i>
8	Process of change	Strategic re-focus followed by structural change
9	Supporter/member reaction to change	Very positive
10	Organization's financial position	Excellent
11	Organizational budget	Largest in class (US\$300m)
12	Human resources	Yes – department
13	Staff age	Youthful, but experienced
14	Staff turnover	Medium (high pressure)
Dimension 2: Competitors		
1	Organizational perception of competition	Respectful
2	Organizational competitors readily identified	Yes
Dimension 3: Customers		
1	Organizational supporters/members considered customers?	Yes
2	Principal revenue sources	Indirectly from fans
3	Supporter base location	Global, mainly Europe
4	Organizational focus	Commercial
Dimension 4: Decisions		
1	Decision-making process	Fast and de-centralized
2	Involvement of Board members in operations	No
3	Organizational perception of Board involvement	n/a
4	Involvement of controlling body	Subservient to strict rules of the FIA
5	Staff background as competitors	Some, but mainly professionally-trained
6	Board background as competitors	No
7	Professional Board members	Yes
Dimension 5: Goals		
1	Service focus	Yes
2	Goal focus – financial? Memberships? On field success? Participation?	Winning

Dimension 6: Heroes

1	On-field heroes	Yes (Schumacher)
2	Off-field heroes	Yes (Todt)
3	Heroes' traits	Dynamic, successful
4	Organizational recognition of past heroes	Strong
5	Organizational use of heroes for promotion	Moderate
6	Public perception of heroes as role models	Strong

Dimension 7: History and Tradition

1	Internal formal recognition of history and tradition	Very strong, particularly of Enzo Ferrari
2	Maintenance of sport/athlete archives	Yes
3	Perception of sport/club success	High
4	Financial impact of success on organization	Vast impact
5	Age of organization	Moderate (approaching a century)
6	Organizational attachment to traditions	Flexible

Dimension 8: Risk

1	Organizational approach to risk	High risk
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Dimension 9: Rituals

1	Organizational celebration of success	Regular and strong
2	Office atmosphere after victory/defeat	Subdued, but not depressed

Dimension 10: Symbols

1	Positioning of memorabilia	Prominent
2	Organizational value attached to memorabilia	High
3	Staff wearing uniforms	Yes
4	Staff dress requirement	Yes
5	Staff appearance	Immaculate

Dimension 11: Values

1	Employees work in excess of 40 hours per week	Far in excess
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<i>Cultural Dimensions and Variables</i>		<i>Evidence Suggests</i>
2	Employee motivations	Money is relevant, but staff are motivated by passion for the sport and company
3	Organizational gender bias	Strong toward males
4	Organizational use of performance reviews	Strong
5	Employees provided with specific job descriptions	Yes
6	Average current employment length	Uncertain, but due to the stress and travel, relatively short for junior and middle-level positions
7	Employee sporting participation background	Yes, in some form of motor sport
8	Specific employee performance measures in place	Yes, thorough measures in all facets of performance
9	Office atmosphere	Reported to be strong morale, and strong pressure for work ethic
10	Employee duties	Fixed
11	Employee supervision	Line reporting
12	Organizational use of volunteers	No
13	Organizational recognition of volunteers	n/a
14	Employees working outside business hours	Constantly
15	Employee handbook provided	Yes, induction system
16	Females hold senior management positions	No
17	Employee association with the organization	Strong
Dimension 12: Size		
1	Number of staff	800+
2	Number of members	Fan groups estimated in the millions globally

Dimensions adapted from: Smith, A. & Shilbury, D. (2004). Mapping Cultural Dimensions in Australian Sporting Organizations, *Sport Management Review*, 7(2): 133-165.

While the range and diversity of information available for cultural analysis is profound, many cultural studies ignore all but the most apparent and accessible data. A holistic cultural analysis will utilize every available piece of information, with the more obvious elements becoming vehicles for the transmission of less tangible, more subjective facets of culture. However, the culture of any one sporting organization cannot be classified into one of just a few categories, even though there are many models (e.g. Goffee & Jones, 1996) which offer four quadrants or divisions. There are as many organizational cultures as there are sporting organizations, and they cannot be generically categorized into one of a fixed number of groups. Sporting clubs are immersed in tradition, history, values, and myths, and these should figure prominently in any diagnosis. From an accurate diagnosis change is possible.

The main lesson for cultural change is that it cannot be tackled without a clear prior understanding of an organization's chief cultural traits and how they are manifested. Once an accurate diagnosis has been undertaken, through some form of formal or informal cultural map, elements of culture can be managed. Since a sport manager cannot literally change peoples' minds, they instead have to change peoples' actions. To some extent this can be imposed or encouraged, but it is a slow process. For example, new rituals can be introduced to replace older, less desirable ones, like a club dinner instead of a drinking binge. Entrenched values and beliefs can be extremely difficult to change, and even with the right introduction of new symbols, language, heroes, stories, employees etcetera, genuine cultural change in an organization can take a generation of members to take hold.

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Summary

In the world of sport management, organizational culture has gained prominence as a concept useful in assessing and managing performance. Sport organizational culture can be defined as the collection of fundamental values and attitudes that are common to members of a sport organization, and which subsequently set the behavioural standards or norms for all members. The difficulty is, however, that the deep values common to organizational members are not easy to access. As a way of getting around this inaccessibility problem, sport managers can use cultural dimensions which suggest some of the possible values that are present. A step further, cultural maps show the variables and observable manifestations of culture that need to be investigated. These maps use the tip of the cultural iceberg (the accessible aspects of culture like symbols and artefacts) to estimate the iceberg's underwater composition (the deep values and beliefs of organizational members). Once a thorough diagnosis has been completed, sport managers can work toward adapting and replacing undesirable cultural characteristics.

Review questions

1. What is the difference between organizational culture and national culture?
2. Why is organization culture important to sport managers?
3. Explain how organizational culture can be manifested at different levels.
4. Describe the difference between superficial elements of culture and deeper elements of culture.
5. What is a cultural dimension?
6. How can organizational culture be measured in a sport organization?
7. How does measuring organizational culture help in changing it?
8. Select a sport organization you belong to or have belonged to. Create a list of attributes or values that you believe embodies its organizational culture. Which are the characteristics that distinguish it from other similar sport organizations?
9. Select a sport organization you belong to or have belonged to. Describe 10 artefacts that are on show in its premises and explain how each illuminates organizational culture.
10. With a colleague or group, select a website of a sport organization no one has heard of before. Based on what is on the website, create a list of organizational cultural characteristics, in order from the superficial to the deep.

Further reading

- Colyer, S. (2000). Organizational culture in selected Western Australian sport organizations. *Journal of Sport Management*, 14, 321–341.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Schein, E. (1997). *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (3rd edn). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Van der Post, W. & de Coning, T. (1997). An instrument to measure organizational culture. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 28(4), 147–169.

Relevant websites

The following websites are useful starting points for further information on sport organizational culture:

- 'Measures of Organizational Culture' at <http://www.uwec.edu/Sampsow/Measures/Culture.htm>
- 'Organizational Culture Links' at <http://www.new-paradigm.co.uk/Culture.htm>
- 'Organizational Culture & Leadership – Edgar Schein' at <http://www.tnellen.com/ted/tc/schein.html>