



Celebrating 50 *years*

Changing The World —
One Organization at a Time®



50 *years*

Culture: Then & Now

Robert A. Cooke Ph.D., Human Synergistics International
April 2021 – 50th Anniversary



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synergistics
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Changing the World –
One Organization at a Time®

Our Agenda

Theme:

The history of organizational culture and its evolution as a major force for improving organizational adaptability and sustainability as well as member satisfaction and well-being.

Starting with a Preface on *Why a Survey on Organizational Culture?*

And then Focusing on shifts in *research on* and *perceptions about* culture over the years

(“Then” versus “Now”):

The notoriety of “Organizational Culture”: from “What’s that?” to “Mainstream”

Measuring Organizational Culture: from “Single Method” to “Multi-Methods”

Impact of Culture: from “Does it really matter” to “Everything is due to culture”

Can culture be changed?: from “No, it’s difficult” to “Yes, it’s difficult”

Why a Survey on Organizational Culture?



J. Clayton Lafferty's *Life Styles Inventory*TM

Relationship of LSI Styles to
Outcomes of Importance

Outcomes	Personal Orientation Self Description ^a		
	Constructive	Passive/ Defensive	Aggressive/ Defensive
Salary ^a	0	--	+
Organizational Level ^a	+	--	+
Managerial Effectiveness ^b	++	0	0
Quality of Interpersonal Relations ^b	+	++	--
Interest in Self-Improvement ^b	++	+	--
Psychological/Physiological Health ^a	++	-	--
Problem-Solving Effectiveness ^c	+	-	-

Table from *Life Styles Inventory*TM Leader's Guide, Appendix D. Copyright © Human Synergistics International.

Note. Results based on 500 to 1,000 focal individuals. Plusses and minuses denote statistically significant positive and negative relationships, respectively. Single plusses and minuses indicate $p < .05$; double plusses and minuses $p < .01$.

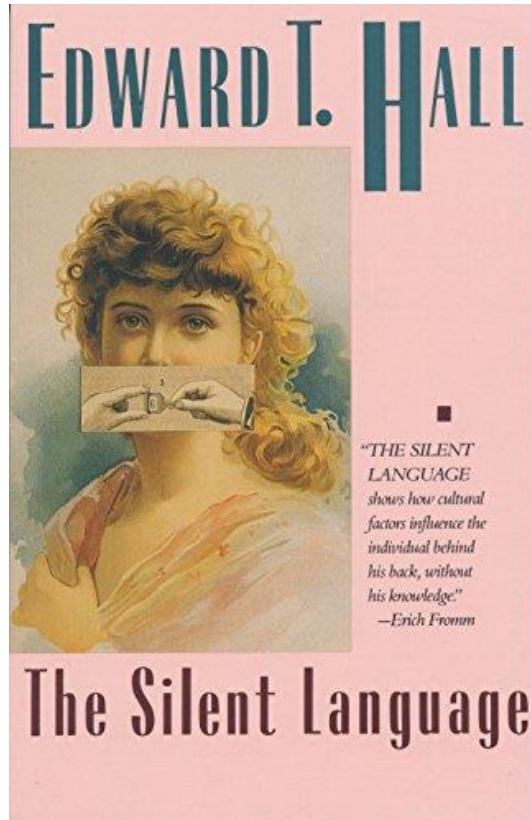
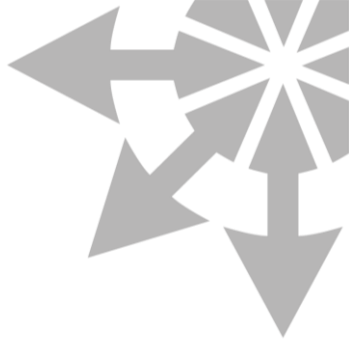
Organizational Culture?

Edward T. Hall Iceberg Model of Culture

“Like the invisible jet streams in the skies that determine the course of a storm, these hidden currents shape our lives; yet their influence is only beginning to be identified.”



Culture and Organizations



- Most cultures and the institutions they engender are the result of having to evolve highly specialized solutions to rather specific problems.
- However, it is not man who is crazy so much as his institutions and those culture patterns that determine his behavior.

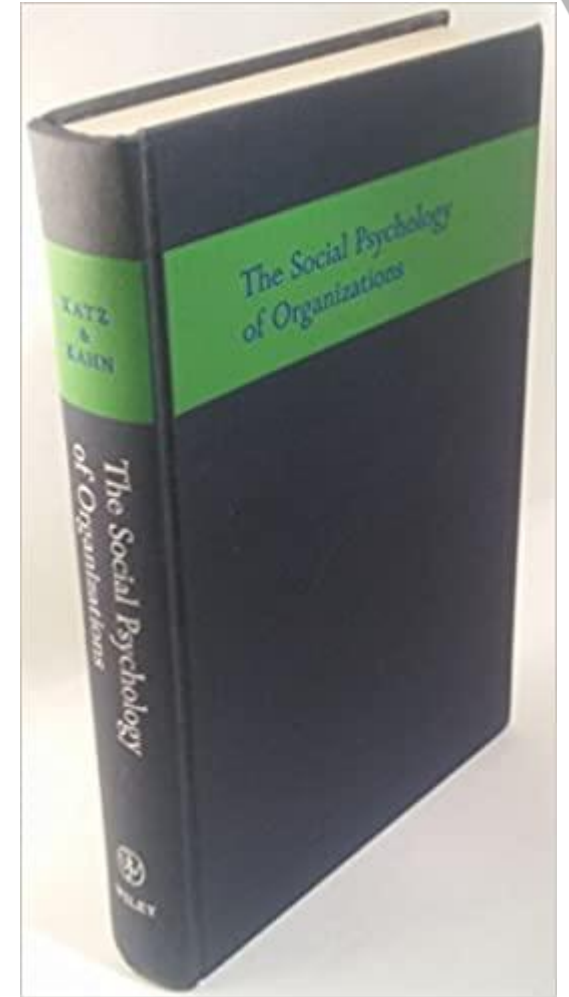
From: Edward T. Hall (1959-1976), *Beyond Culture*.

Org Culture Then: “What’s That?”

Every **organization** develops its own culture or climate.... The climate or **culture** of the system reflects both the **norms and values** of the formal system and their interpretation in the informal system.

Just as a society has a cultural heritage, so social organizations possess patterns of collective feeling and beliefs passed along to new members.

Daniel Katz and Robert L. Kahn
(1966: pages 65 to 66 of 498)
(1978: page 50 to 51 of 838)



Org Culture Then: “What’s That?”

Do you mean organization climate?

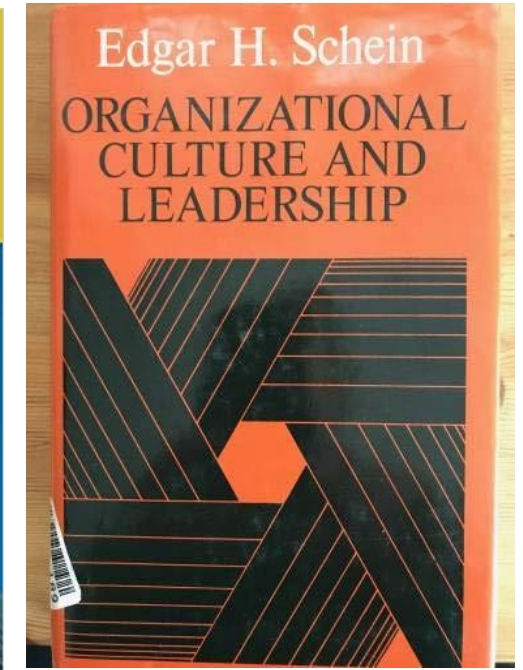
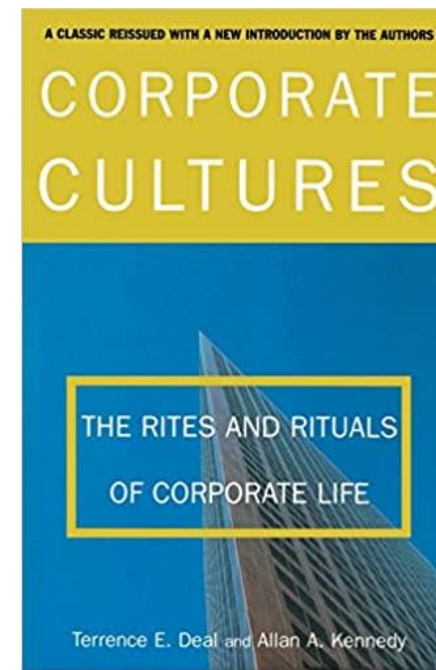
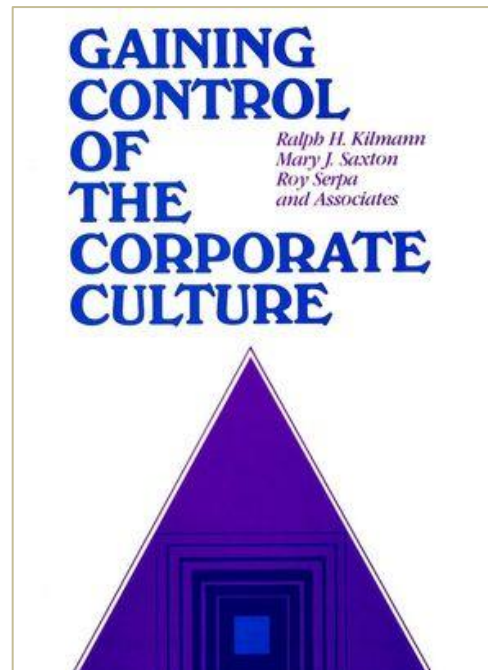
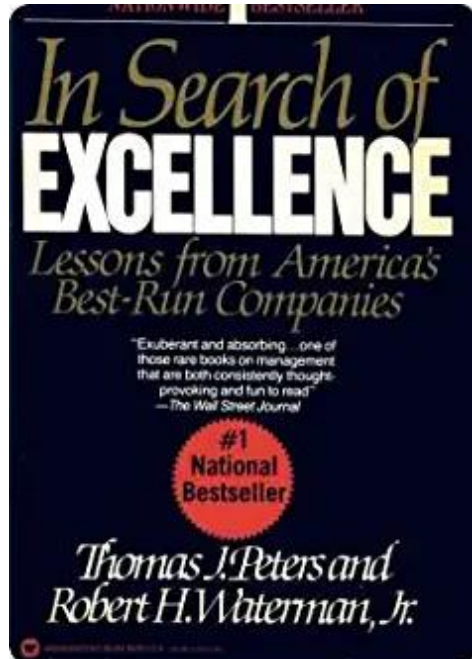
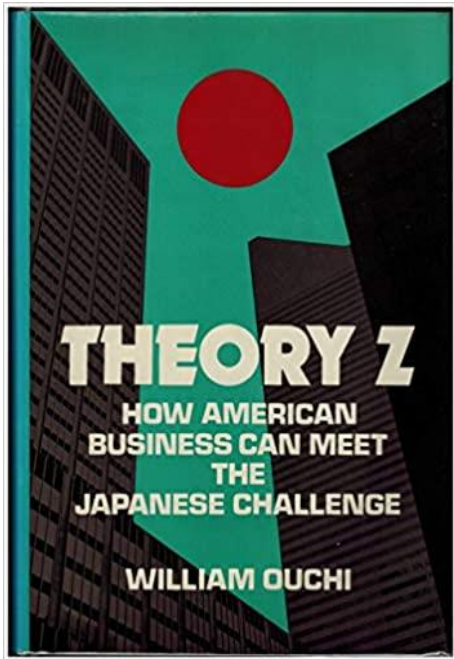
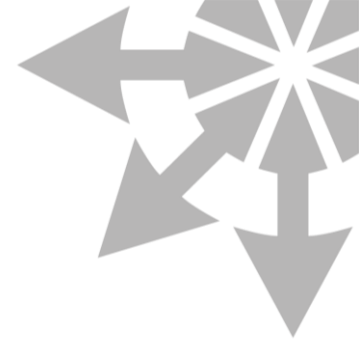
NO

Do organizations really have cultures?

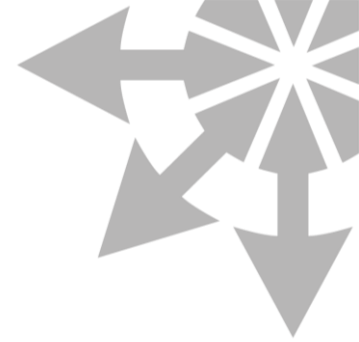
YES

Wouldn't that be the same as the country's culture?

YES and NO



Org Culture Now: Mainstream



In Search Engines:

Organizational Culture: 8,560,000

Organisational Culture: 2,030,000

Corporate Culture: 11,100,000

In Periodicals:

A mention in just about every issue

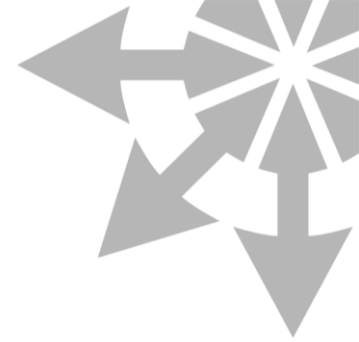
In Management and Organizational Behavior Textbooks:

A chapter in every edition

On Corporate Web Sites:

A great culture advertised by almost every organization

Measurement Then: Single Method



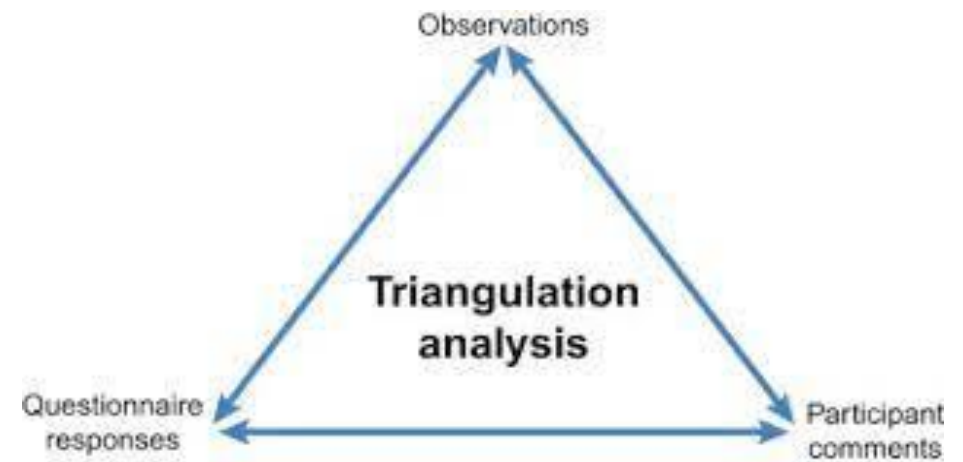
Culture had been studied and assessed almost exclusively qualitatively.

Daniel Katz and Robert Kahn (The University of Michigan Survey Research Center)...

Stated that “In spite of the obvious differences between the cultures of organizations..., it is not easy to specify the dimensions of such differences. Observation has been more revealing ...than the typical survey. What is needed...is sustained observation and systematic interviewing.” (1979, pp. 50-51)

Donald T. Campbell (Northwestern University)...

Created and encouraged “triangulation” and the multi-method multi-trait approach to improve validity in the social sciences (1959, 1966)



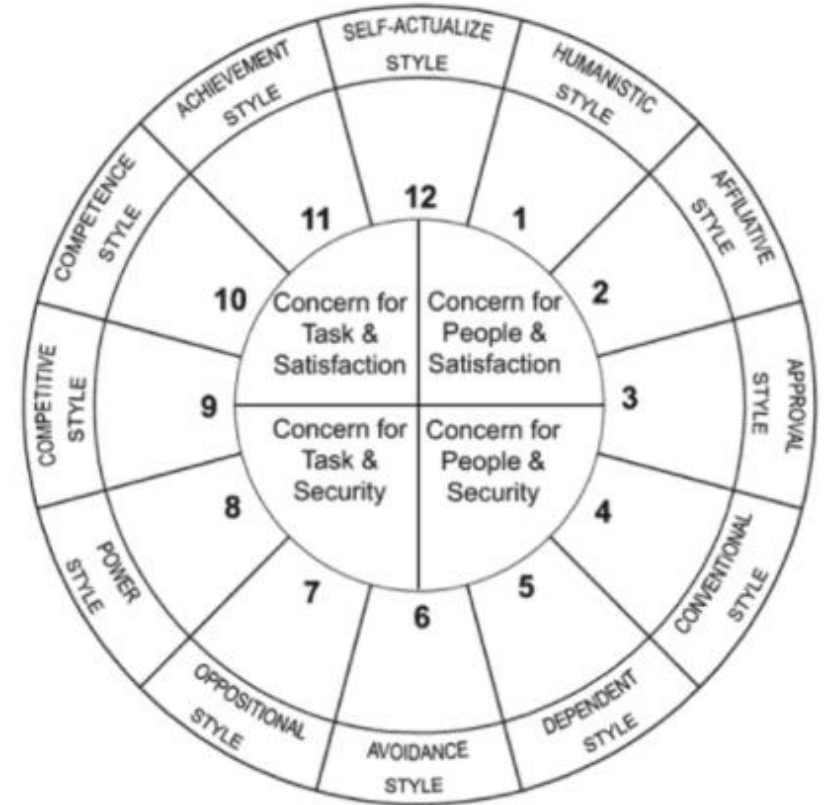
Measure Culture via Norms

Norms were already being measured (reliably) with surveys by social psychologists

Norms were easier to measure than values (espoused versus enacted) or assumptions

Norms were the aspect of culture most closely connected to behavior and performance (and poor or superior performance)

The LSI Profile, based on qualitative research, provided an excellent conceptual framework for a survey measuring cultural norms



Life Styles Inventory Self-Development Guide. Plymouth MI: Human Synergistics. Copyright © 1980.

Measurement Now: Multiple Methods



Surveys should be used along with qualitative methods (interviews, focal groups, observation, artifacts) to...

Identify the need for additional survey items to supplement the culture inventory

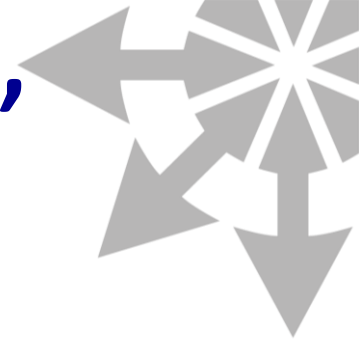
Identify historical factors leading to cultural norms

Generate stories/examples confirming the strength or weakness of specific norms

Illustrate how norms are “played out” in group settings

Propose positive and negative outcomes of Constructive and Defensive norms

Impact Then: “Does Culture Really Matter?”

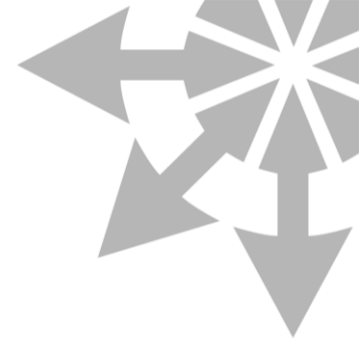


Potential clients questioned whether culture had an impact on performance.

Over the years, we addressed this question with:

- cross-sectional research relating culture styles to outcomes
- the Ideal version of the *Organizational Culture Inventory*®
- longitudinal case studies showing changes in culture and performance
- analyses showing that culture is related to performance across industries

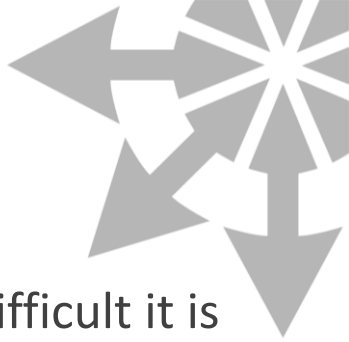
Impact Now: Everything is due to Culture



Culture leads to great performance—innovation, quality, profits
(Misattribution of success to culture)

Culture explains every breakdown, bad decision, transgression, or problem
(Imputation of failure to culture)

Changing Culture (Then): NO



Culture itself is the greatest barrier to culture change; the more Defensive the culture, the more difficult it is to initiate and implement change

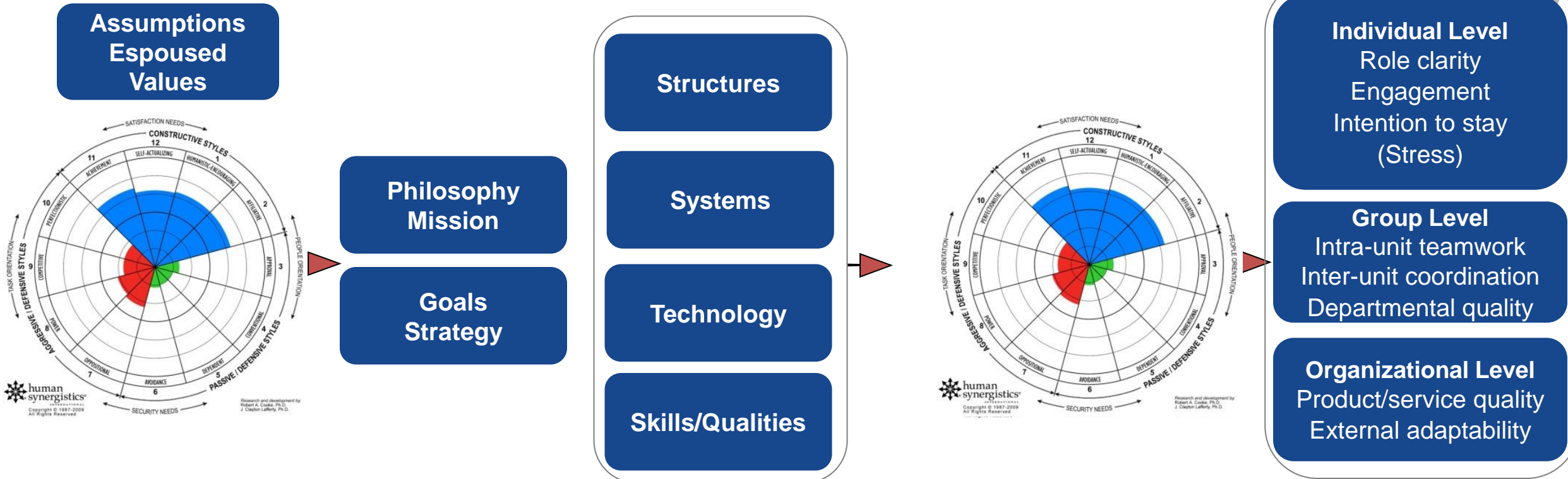
Members lack a common language to specify the type of culture that would be ideal and lead to greater effectiveness

Members don't really "see" norms or recognize the climatic factors and (subconscious) assumptions driving them

Leaders don't understand the impact of culture on their behavior or the impact of their behavior on that of others

Members at the top of the organization view the culture more favorably than those at lower levels (particularly in Defensive organizations) and do not see the need for change

Changing Culture (Now): YES



Focus	Ideal Culture	Causal Factors	Current Culture	Outcomes
Instrument	OCI-Ideal	OEI	OCI	OEI
Measuring	Values and Beliefs	Levers for Change	Norms and Expectations	Effectiveness

Thank You...

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For your 50 years of interest, support, and collaboration.