3

Organizational culture

Chapter objectives

This chapter considers the increasing importance of organizational culture to tourism and hospitality organizations. The objectives of this chapter are:

- To assess debates about the manageability of culture.
- To consider the various aspects of organizational culture.
- To recognize the role of organizational culture in a broader HRM strategy.

Introduction

We recognized in the previous chapter the importance of national culture and particularly the manner in which it is likely to have an impact on workplace behaviour. The same is also true within organizations. All organizations will have a culture which will have an impact on the way employees behave within the organization. As we have already recognized in Chapter 1 within human resource management employees are seen as a key resource. Our core definition of HRM from Storey talked about cultural aspects of HRM, so part of the way in which employees, as a key resource, can be managed is through the use of organizational culture to generate commitment to the organization and its values. Thus, as Ogbonna (1992: 80) notes, 'the achievement of HRM objectives requires the management of the organizational value system (culture) and this requires skilful implementation'.

Often within tourism and hospitality such values will be concerned with encouraging employee buy in to the customer care and service quality initiatives, which organizations see as a form of competitive advantage in the crowded marketplace. This process of seeking buy in from employees is likely to have a significant impact on a range of human resource practices, such as recruitment and selection, training and remuneration. For example, tourism and hospitality organizations may look to recruit and select those who are considered to 'fit' in with the culture. However, whilst many organizations and managers within the tourism and hospitality industry now see the management of organizational culture as a potential source of competitive advantage, there are others who caution against the overly optimistic claims made for organizational culture. Recognizing these competing views on organizational culture this chapter will aim to offer a balanced assessment of the place of organizational culture within a broader human resource strategy. Specifically, in examining organizational culture there are three key questions that need to be addressed:

1 What is organizational culture?
2 How can we study it?
3 What role does organizational culture play in organizational success?

In search of a definition

Before we begin to move towards a definition it is important initially to recognize debates about the terminology employed to describe the manner in which

organizations attempt to use culture as a device to create integration and cohesion across the organization. Central to this debate is the key question of the manageability or otherwise of culture (Legge, 1994). Commonly in books or articles the terms organizational and corporate culture may be used interchangeably. Legge (1994) cautions against this uncritical use of the two terms. For example, she argues that 'in using the term "corporate" culture, many writers seem to be imputing a culture created by senior management for the lower orders to swallow' (p. 407). In this view 'corporate' culture is something an organization *has*. Consequently, it can clearly be managed for the benefit of the organization and its members. On the other hand, the use of the term organizational culture reflects the manner in which culture emerges from social interaction amongst organizational members; something that an organization *is*. In the latter view culture may be difficult to manipulate, change or manage. Given some of the claims that are made about the link between organizational or corporate culture and organizational success this is an important caveat from Legge and one that should be borne in mind throughout the chapter.

Notwithstanding debates about whether the preferred terminology should be organizational or corporate culture, we should attempt to define the concept. Brown (1998: 7–8) recognizes the multiplicity of definitions of organizational culture and the differing intellectual traditions that they come from. Based on these various definitions Brown (1998: 9) offers his own: 'Organizational culture refers to the pattern of beliefs, values, and learned ways of coping with experience that have developed during the course of an organization's history, and which tend to be manifested in its material arrangements and in the behaviour of its members'. For many this can be succinctly summarized as, 'The way we do things around here' (Deal and Kennedy, 1988: 4). As we noted earlier all organizations have their own unique culture and in recent years attention has focused on the manner in which organizations can potentially use culture to unlock the commitment and enthusiasm of employees. This process of unlocking commitment and enthusiasm is by no means straightforward or uncontested (Thompson and McHugh, 2001). For example, we should be aware of the notions of sub-cultures, such that all organizational members might not subscribe to the organizational vision. Recognition of the potentially contested nature of organizational culture is important because it points to the manner in which there may be a disjuncture between the rhetoric and reality of organizational culture. Brown (1998) expresses this point as the espoused culture and the culture in practice. The former may be the positive view that is presented for public consumption, whilst the latter may allow for a more

critical reading of any given organizational culture and to further appreciate this point the chapter now considers competing views of organizational culture.

Competing views on organizational culture

The discussion above points to the debate about whether culture is, in fact, manageable and to recognize some of the competing claims made about culture we should acknowledge the useful work of Ogbonna and Harris (2002). In reviewing organizational culture they attempt to categorize the range of work into three broad labels, 'the optimists', 'the pessimists' and 'the realists'.

Optimists

A key aspect of the optimists position is that culture can be used as a mechanism to facilitate organizational unity and cohesion. Thus, 'the key works of key "cultural optimists" show that this perspective not only assumes the existence of unitary cultures in organizations but it also implies that cultural control by top management is possible and desirable' (p. 35). Indeed, Ogbonna and Harris suggest that in recognizing the manageability of culture optimists, 'generally argue that those organizations that fail to control their cultures will be missing an opportunity to harness their human resources' (p. 35). The optimists view relies on a lot of assumptions, not least that the interests of senior managers are shared by others in the organizational hierarchy. This type of thinking was particularly prevalent in much of the research and writing about organizational culture in the 1970s and 1980s, most obviously exemplified by the excellence genre, or what Thompson and McHugh (2001) refer to as the 'corporate culture merchants', such as Peters and Waterman (1982). Optimists also argue that there is a potentially positive relationship between organizational culture and business performance (and see HRM in practice 3.1).

Pessimists

Ogbonna and Harris note that academics tend to predominate in this group and often approach the issue from largely theoretical perspectives. In that sense pessimists seek to develop the 'explanatory power of the culture concept rather than in

HRM in practice 3.1   Strong culture at the Regent Hotel

Kemp and Dwyer (2001) reflect an optimistic view of organizational culture in their research undertaken in the Regent Hotel, Sydney. The starting point of Kemp and Dwyer's research is that culture is viewed as an integrating, unifying phenomenon, shared by all organizational members. In this manner culture can be used to integrate and bind organizational members; it becomes a normative 'glue'. The authors believe that a 'strong' culture is an important enabling force in strategy formulation and ultimately is a major aspect of enhancing organizational performance. Drawing on interviews with 45 managers and employees of the hotel, Kemp and Dwyer recognize a variety of ways in which cultural aspects are integral to the development of HRM practices. For example, they suggest that within the hotel control is primarily through attempts to ensure that the employees offer quality service and exceed guests' expectations. Thus, 'Behavioural control is exerted through hotel training. Staff are taught how to enjoy their job and that they should greet guests at all times with a smile. In the attitude workshop staff are told that "smiles are what count". These smiles need to be as crisp as their daily dry-cleaned uniforms' (p. 87). Even before the extensive attitudinal and behavioural training though control is exerted through recruiting the 'right' kind of people, who identify with the corporate objectives. It is also suggested that control is not too tight, but rather the Regent Way corporate culture encourages the 'right' kind of behaviour. If employees exhibit the right kind of behaviour this is recognized in formal celebrations of cultural values, often in the form of ceremonies which celebrate an aspect of the organizational culture. To illustrate this point Kemp and Dwyer recognize how the Regent Hotel rewards staff who exceed expectations in some way with a formal presentation in front of their peers, arguing that, 'These ceremonies are extremely motivating and serve to ensure a repeat of the superior performance by the staff member' (p. 84).

Culture, it is suggested, permeates every aspect of operations at the Regent Hotel, shaping the employees' responses to guests and also management's responses to their most important asset, their human resources. According to Kemp and Dwyer, the Regent Hotel exemplifies a strong culture in which top management set the game plan and then individuals throughout the organizational hierarchy have responsibility for operationalizing the plan. The cultural approach of the Regent Hotel has resulted in breaking down the barriers between the thinker and doers. It is suggested that staff at the Hotel share a strong awareness of the corporate mission and philosophy. They all know that the 'Regent Way' encourages 'Regent People' to be innovative and creative.

HRM in practice 3.2   Culture as an Orwellian mechanism

One of the more pejorative critiques of 'corporate culturism' is that offered by Wilmott (1993). Wilmott talks about the Orwellian nature of corporate culture, with its nascent totalitarianism and 1984-style doublethink which attempts to create 'governance of the employee's soul'. He suggests that corporate culture is largely interested in creating a mono-culture where alternative views or competing cultures are not tolerated. By excluding those considered as inappropriate in the recruitment and selection process and eliminating any alternative values by training, corporate culture aims to strengthen core organizational values. Any attempt to challenge the prevailing culture is considered a 'crime against the culture'. Consequently corporate culture is '*a totalitarian remedy for the resolution of indeterminacy and ambiguity: thought control through uniform definition of meaning* ... In Orwell's Oceania, "freedom is slavery" and "ignorance is strength". In the world of corporate culture, "slavery is freedom" and "strength is ignorance"' (p. 527, emphasis in original).

identifying its practical utility for managers of organizations' (p. 36). Thus, and arguably in response to the excellence genre, much of the research and theorizing from the 1980s onwards has frequently questioned the extent to which organizations can manage culture successfully. The main thrust of the pessimists critique is that such a complex issue as culture has been overly simplified by the optimists; 'it is argued that that culture is located at the deepest level of human consciousness, of which neither researchers nor managers have sufficient knowledge to influence' (p. 36). A second strand to the critique is the unitary assumptions that underpin the optimists position on culture. Pessimists would point to the potential for conflict and contradiction in organizations which may be at odds with what the leaders and managers in an organization think (see HRM in practice 3.2).

Realists

The last category suggested by Ogbonna and Harris are the realists. Increasingly many researchers and writers are seeking a middle-way between the optimists and the pessimists and this has led to the emergence of a realist research agenda. Realists recognize that potentially culture can be changed. Equally, though, they eschew the

idea that this process will always be controlled by top management. Consequently, 'realists are neither in support nor against the management of organizational culture. Rather, they advocate fuller explorations of the application of the concept, in order to develop greater understanding of the dynamics of cultural change' (p. 37). For example, Ogbonna and Harris note how culture change is more likely to occur during the formation of the organization, periods of crisis or during leadership turnover. In sum, the realist position, which is advocated by Ogbonna and Harris, is one which aims to merge theoretical rigour with contributions to the practicality of how organizational culture may be usefully used within a specific organizational context.

Review and reflect

Using an organization with which you are familiar consider the extent to which you would adopt either the optimistic, pessimistic or the realistic perspective to describe its culture.

How can we study organizational culture?

Brown (1998) suggests that a number of different aspects or elements of culture have been identified and all of these various aspects are useful in attempts to study organizational culture:

- material objects;
- corporate architecture and corporate identity;
- symbols;
- language;
- metaphors;
- stories;
- myths;
- heroes;
- ceremonies, rites and rituals;
- norms of behaviour;
- values, beliefs and attitudes;
- basic assumptions;
- ethical codes;
- history.

As Brown recognizes there may be a degree of overlap between the above elements, a point we return to below. Another key theme running through these various aspects of an organization's culture is the extent to which they may be manifest or visible. Schein (1985), for example, offers a well-known model which describes three levels of cultural phenomenon in organizations: visible manifestations, values and the deepest level of basic underlying assumptions. The first level consists of artefacts and creations that construct the physical and social environment of the organization. This level is the most superficial manifestation of culture and includes things like corporate logos, dress codes and written and spoken language used in the organization. The second level is concerned with values, beliefs and attitudes, which become prominent in the manner in which individual organizational members justify their actions and behaviour. As Lashley and Lee-Ross (2003: 154) note 'The extent to which members hold these core values and norms as unquestionable determines whether the organizational culture is "strong" or "weak"'. The last level is the most fundamental and relates to basic and tacit assumptions which impact on how organizational members perceive, think and feel. Schein (1985: 18) suggests that 'Basic assumptions … have become so taken for granted that one finds little variation within a cultural unit. In fact, if a basic assumption is strongly held in a group, members would find behaviour based on any other premise inconceivable'. To further consider the manifest and not so manifest levels of culture the chapter now returns to some of Brown's elements of culture.

Material objects, corporate architecture and corporate identity and symbols

These aspects of an organization's culture provide a visible and manifest way in which it can be assessed. For example, mission statements are an obvious manifestation of material objects within organizations. Sufi and Lyons (2003) note how mission statements are now considered an important part of any company's strategic planning processes. The same authors note how mission statements can act as an important tool for tourism and hospitality organizations to communicate to organizational members and those outside the organization, such as customers and suppliers. A good mission statement should have some of the following components (Sufi and Lyons, 2003: 258): concern for the customer, purpose, identity/image, differentiation

factors, corporate values, products, markets, concern for survival, growth, profitability, company philosophy and employee and social concern.

Beyond mission statements service organizations are also increasingly aware of how they portray their corporate image, both in terms of attempts to offer aesthetically pleasing 'hardware' and 'software' (Nickson et al., 2001). Aesthetics are a sensory experience through which objects appeal in a distinctive way. This appeal does not necessarily have to be beautiful but rather and more simply expressive. Materializing the concept of a company requires the transformation of an abstractly defined identity into the adoption of a style; in practice, the production of an aesthetic experience. Aesthetics have always been important to companies. Companies past and present use aesthetics to express corporate identity. These expressive forms are most obvious in the 'hardware' of organizations, such as marketing material (internal and external), product design and the physical environment of workspaces/offices (Witz et al., 2003). Three points are worth noting with regard to the expression of corporate identity.

Firstly, as symbols and artefacts, these aesthetics are intended to influence the perception of people as either customers or clients: organizations 'use these symbols in a vivid, dramatic and exciting way, because they know that symbols have power to affect the way people feel'. Secondly, they are intended to add value to the company. 'Generally speaking, when companies use identity expressed through design, they use it as a commercial tool; their purpose is to make greater profit out of what they do in the short term'. Thirdly, in highly competitive markets with little to differentiate most goods and services, aesthetics contribute to organizational distinctiveness: 'intangible, emotional. The name and visual style of an organization are sometimes the most important factors in making it appear unique' (Olins, 1991: 53, 71 & 75). Here we could think of McDonald's Golden Arch, for example (and see also Bryman, 2004 for a more general discussion of theming in other tourism and hospitality settings).

With regard to 'software' service organizations are becoming increasingly concerned to regulate the appearance of their staff, through the use of uniforms, dress codes and appearance standards. Rafaeli (1993), for example, considers how the dress and behaviour of customer contact employees' shapes customer perceptions of service quality. As she suggests:

… the thrust of organizational management of employees' dress is that the appearance of employees communicates something about the organization.

The assumption is that what employees wear while at work, and how they appear when interacting with customers, can influence customers' feelings about the organization and the service that it provides (p. 182).

Disney, for example, has a 36 page cast members' appearance guide detailing length and style of hair and the colour and quantity of cosmetics (Henkoff, 1994; and see also Bryman, 2004). Some of the implications arising from how organizations are increasingly seeking competitive advantage via employees appearance or their 'aesthetic labour' (Nickson et al., 2001) are further considered in Chapter 5.

Language and metaphors

Bryman (2004) recognizes that increasingly service organizations aim to create performativity in the service encounter through the use of performative labour. Such labour is described as 'the rendering of work by managements and employees alike as akin to a theatrical performance in which the workplace is construed as similar to a stage' (p. 103). The use of a dramaturgical or theatrical metaphor is one that has often been used with regard to the manner in which service employees perform emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983). As Burns (1997: 240) notes the emotional demands made of front-line tourism and hospitality employees is that they should 'constantly be in a positive, joyful and even playful mood'. Brown (1998) recognizes how language and metaphors aim to construct a common understanding in organizations so that abstractions such as 'good service', 'high quality' and 'excellence' are made meaningful. HRM in practice 3.3 and 3.4 offer examples of how two organizations respectively use language and metaphor, explicitly drawing on notions of performativity, to create the right type of behaviour in their front-line employees.

Review and reflect

To what extent should tourism and hospitality organizations be able to use aesthetic and emotional labour to exert control over the manner in which employees behave? What are the likely challenges of using these types of cultural controls?

HRM in practice 3.3   The use of language in Disney

Everyday terms	Disney speak
HR department	Casting office
HR manager	Casting rep
Theme park visitor customer	Guest
Employee	Cast member
Front-line employee	Host or hostess
Public areas	Onstage
Restricted areas	Backstage
Theme park ride or show	Attraction
Hiring for a job	Casting
Job	Role
Foreman	Lead
Uniform	Costume
Job interview	Audition
Accident	Incident
Queue/line	Pre-entertainment area
Attraction designer	Imaginer
Talking robot	Audio-animatronic figure

Derived from Bryman (2004) IRS (2003).

Stories, myths, heroes and history

Deal and Kennedy (1999) note how stories are an important part of an organization's culture due to their ability to transmit cultural values. Corporate stories will often focus on exemplifying core values in the organization, often with recourse to the achievements and daring do of cultural heroes, such as the founder of an organization. In an earlier work Deal and Kennedy (1988) suggested that these heroes personify the organizational values and epitomize the strength of the organization. In becoming a 'John Wayne in pinstripes' heroic figures in organizations' become role models for employees to follow. For example, Herb Kelleher co-founder and long-time chief executive officer (CEO) of Southwest Airlines is well known for his attempts to generate a sense of fun in the workplace. Known as the

HRM in practice 3.4   Warm fuzzies and cold pricklies: the use of metaphor in Pizza Hut

Bate (1995: 44–45) notes that during the 1980s and early 1990s Pizza Hut's employee induction programme made use of a booklet called *Feelings*. The booklet attempted to set out what employees should feel and particularly how they should display warm feelings, or what were termed 'warm fuzzies', during their work. Negative feelings were characterized as 'cold pricklies'. These two feelings were anthropomorphized into two cartoon characters: a malevolent, spiky haired, spiky-bearded dwarf (cold prickly) and an appealing, round-eyed cuddly powder puff creature (warm fuzzy). Warm fuzzies were shown helping old ladies and giving out 'positive strokes' to everybody. In contrast, cold pricklies were seen getting wet and angry under black storm clouds and showing hostility to customers. The coldest of cold pricklies was the Big Fat Zero, who kept customers waiting, refused to smile and ignored people altogether. Warm fuzzies were represented in the booklet booting out cold pricklies and smiling no matter how hectic things became. In attempting to create the right kind of emotional labour the company aimed to ensure Pizza Hut employees saw themselves as warm fuzzies and act accordingly by demonstrating the right kind of positive feelings towards customers, even when they did not necessarily feel like doing so.

'High Priest of Ha-Ha' Kelleher was integral in creating a corporate culture premised on fun. He believed in encouraging Southwest's flight attendants to joke and kid with passengers. Sunoo (1995) suggests that this strategy to hire the best people, treat them with respect, and give them the freedom to make decisions and to have fun just being themselves has created some of the most loyal employees in the airline industry. Indeed, Bearden (2001) notes that in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 each of Southwest's 32 000 employees agreed to give back some of their pay to ensure company stability in a turbulent business environment (and see also HRM in practice 3.5).

Norms of behaviour, values, beliefs and attitudes, and basic assumptions

Our earlier discussion of aspects such as performative labour and the mechanisms utilized by tourism and hospitality organizations to engender the right kind of emotional labour points to the manner in which they strive to achieve appropriate

HRM in practice 3.5   Stories and myths from some of the great hospitality entrepreneurs

Nickson (1997) argues for the importance of appreciating the need for an understanding of history in reviewing the auto/biographies of Charles Forte, Conrad Hilton, Kemmons Wilson (the founder of Holiday Inn) and Bill Marriott (senior). Nickson notes the manner in which the stories and myths surrounding these famous hospitality entrepreneurs play an integral part in creating a corporate aura and values. For example, the three American 'giants' are suggested to exemplify the American Dream, which sees America as a land of opportunity, where individuals by hard work and self-improvement can achieve great success. A key element of this is respect for 'rugged individualism' (Guest, 1990: 390) and a willingness of individuals to grasp their opportunities by pushing back the frontiers, both literally and metaphorically. In a literal sense, Hilton was brought up in the 'half civilized country' of New Mexico, where his father nearly became a victim of his own pioneering spirit as he was only one of two men to survive an attack by Apache Indians, an attack that left five others dead. The young Bill Marriott also demonstrates his frontier spirit on a camping trip in killing a deadly snake – naturally 'the biggest rattler anyone could remember' (O'Brien, 1977: 52–53) and two menacing brown bears. In a metaphorical sense some of this frontier spirit is evidenced in the notion of the self-reliant small businessman who sets up their own business and makes it successful. A common theme which in the accounts is the humble beginnings of the subjects' organizations. Hilton, for example, famously described his first hotel, the Mobley, purchased in Cisco, Texas in 1919 as 'a cross between a flop house and a gold mine' (Hilton, 1957: 109). Bill Marriott's early business career began with an 'A and W' root beer franchise which he acquired in 1927 and Charles Forte's move into business came with the opening of a milk bar in 1934. From such beginnings the nascent organizations quickly flourished and many of the operating procedures and management styles described in those early years can to some extent still be observed in the contemporary hospitality industry. For example, Hilton is credited with being the 'founder' of internationalization in the hotel sector and many aspects of the present Marriott philosophy, such as empowerment, can be seen to trace their history to Bill Marriott senior's way of doing business.

behaviour. Many tourism and hospitality organizations may well recognize that attempting to connect with their employees to generate a more fundamental level of engagement in the appropriate values, beliefs and attitudes or even basic assumptions in the organizations, may be doomed to failure. In this sense the ability of

tourism and hospitality organizations to achieve cultural change at the deepest levels of basic assumptions may well be impossible. Of course, employers will use a variety of mechanisms to create the right kind of behaviour. Some of these may be cultural mechanisms as described above; others may simply be about the use of other means of control. For example, whilst some might claim that the 'strong' culture at McDonald's is largely created by the prevailing organizational culture, more critical authors would point to aspects such as deskilling and the use of non-human technology (Ritzer, 2004). Even cultural mechanisms may be underpinned by more rigid control mechanisms. Ogbonna and Wilkinson (1990) report the example of one supermarket that as part of a culture change programme encouraged employees to smile more when engaging with customers. However, the company went one step further in introducing 'smile supervisors' who were tasked to assess whether employee smiles were genuine. If smiles were felt not to be genuine employees were reprimanded by the smile supervisors. Needless to say this approach created a good deal of employee resentment. In reality, most organizations will simply settle for the right kind of outward behaviour being manifested by their employees, without recourse to smile supervisors, even if such a performance is simply a manifestation of resigned behavioural compliance.

Clearly, then, there are a number of functions that organizational culture will play. In this normative view of corporate culture, it attempts to foster social cohesion, so that it becomes the 'cement' or 'glue' that binds an organization together so it may offer co-ordination and control, reduction of uncertainty, a means to motivate staff and ultimately competitive advantage. Throughout this chapter though we have alluded to some of the potential difficulties in sustaining this normative view of culture. Beyond this point there is also a need to recognize the debate about whether there really is any evidence to support a relationship between organizational culture and performance, particularly whether culture can enhance the effectiveness of an organization's performance. Alvesson (2002: 53–54) suggests that there are four views on the relationship between organizational culture and performance:

1 *The so-called strong culture thesis*. In this view employees are assumed to be inculcated into a strong organizational culture and resultantly demonstrate a high level of commitment to the organization and its values. Within the strong culture thesis it is assumed that the strength of the culture will be directly correlated with the level of profits in a company.

HRM in practice 3.6   A failure to adapt?

The failure of a culture to adapt may arguably partially explain the inability of Forte to resist the hostile takeover mounted by the Granada organization. Nickson (1997) notes the important role played by Lord Forte, the founder of the company, and how his influence was pervasive on the culture. In time, Lord Forte was succeeded by his son, Rocco Forte, though many foresaw the difficulties of succeeding Lord Forte. Lashley and Lee-Ross (2003) note how the strong power/role culture created in the Forte group was anachronistic and uncompetitive and left the company vulnerable to the takeover. Several pieces written during the height of the take-over battle seemed to question the extent to which Rocco Forte could carry on his father's legacy, especially if the previously strong culture was creating rigidity and group think in the organization.

2 *A reverse relationship between culture and performance*. In this view it is suggested that high-performance leads to the creation of a strong corporate culture. Organizational success creates common orientations, beliefs and values and an acceptance of the 'way of doing things'.
3 *A contingent view of culture*. In particular circumstances or conditions a particular type of culture is appropriate or even necessary and is likely to contribute to efficiency.
4 *The need for adaptive cultures*. Cultures that are able to respond to changing circumstances or a change in the business environment are the key to good performance (and see HRM in practice 3.6).

Ultimately in considering the relationship between culture and performance Alvesson (2002: 54) notes that, 'the relatively few systematic studies on the culture-performance link lead us to conclude that none of these four ideas have received much empirical support'. For example, much of the earlier work on culture, as exemplified by Peters and Waterman (1982), was often underpinned by support for the strong culture thesis. Thompson and McHugh (2001), amongst others, question the evidence offered by Peters and Waterman and others supporting the strong culture-enhanced performance thesis. As they suggest, 'The tenuous link between cultures, excellence and performance turned out to be highly fragile' (2001: 199). Generally, then, the case for whether a 'strong' organizational or corporate culture is integral to the success of an organization remains unclear. More broadly, whilst

it might seem intuitively true that, for example, adaptive cultures are self-evidently superior, again the evidence seems sparse, as far as Alvesson is concerned.

Organizational culture and HRM: a reprise

Throughout this chapter, we have considered the relationship between cultural mechanisms and HRM strategies. Equally, we have also recognized debates about the manageability of culture or whether organizational culture can be causally related to enhanced effectiveness or performance in organizations. Ultimately, as we have already recognized there are no easy answers to these issues and there is a need to recognize the many competing claims or views about the nature of organizational culture. That said, Ogbonna and Harris' espousal of the realist position is one that attempts to reconcile some of these debates. If we accept the realist position then there may be instances were culture may be managed or changed in support of organizational aims. As a corollary attempts to manage culture in support of organizational aims will mean the adoption of certain HRM practices. Specifically, we recognized that attempts to sustain a degree of cohesion through cultural mechanisms is likely to mean that organizations will look to recruit those individuals who are deemed to 'fit' in with the prevailing culture. Once recruited employees will then undergo an intense period of induction and socialization to be fully inculcated into the organizational culture. This process of inculcation is further reinforced through training and development activities, which as we noted within hospitality and tourism, will often be directed towards enhancing quality service. Lastly, organizations may chose to reward those who are seen to have internalized the values of the organization through enhanced financial rewards, such as those described in Kemp and Dwyer's case study of the Regent Hotel.

Review and reflect

What are some of the likely challenges facing tourism and hospitality organizations who are seeking to use organizational culture as a unifying device as part of their broader HRM strategy?

That said, there is a need to consider some of the potential contradictions and dilemmas in managing culture. Some of the contradictions and dilemmas may well be posed by the sectoral context in which an organization operates. For example, with regard to tourism and hospitality, Ogbonna and Harris (2002: 39–40) note how:

> … the tensions between the key employment features of the industry – such as labour flexibility, low pay, poor terms and conditions, casualization and feminization – and the traditional 'high commitment' objectives of culture management programmes make this an important industry for the study of organizational culture.

Recognizing this point they go on to recognize some of the limitations in the extent and manner of cultural intervention in the case study companies reported in their study. For example, Ogbonna and Harris remain sceptical of the ability of tourism and hospitality organizations to achieve cultural change at the deepest levels of basic assumptions across the organizational hierarchy. The ability to achieve deeper levels of cultural transformation may be problematic due to working conditions and terms of employment, such as unsocial working hours and low pay. Equally, the managers interviewed in Ogbonna and Harris' case study organizations recognized the difficulties of gaining significant commitment from peripheral workers (and see also Figure 3.1).

Ideal HRM goals	Contradictions and dilemmas
Tight 'fit' between organization and individual	Labour shortages, competition for labour, ad-hoc recruitment and selection
Quality and service	Difficult customers
High trust and commitment	Surveillance, tight control, low pay
Strong internal labour market	High labour turnover, high percentage of part-time employees

Adapted from Ogbonna (1992).

Figure 3.1 HRM and culture: contradictions and dilemmas

Ultimately, in considering the implications for practitioners Ogbonna and Harris suggest that their findings point to how culture can best be managed. Crucial to this point is the need to recognize that a differentiated approach is likely to work best, reflecting the core and peripheral workforce in the tourism and hospitality industry. In that sense core staff, who are long serving and exposed to extensive and intensive culture programmes, may well be inculcated to a large degree into the organization's culture. However, for peripheral workers, 'practitioners may well focus their attention on ensuring behavioural compliance and appropriate emotional displays' (p. 50). Clearly then this points to the need for organizations to consider differentiated, complex and sensitive change programmes as these are more likely to be successful in gaining buy in to the culture from organizational members.

Conclusion

Alvesson (2002) suggests that too much organizational culture thinking has been grounded in assumptions about the potentially positive consequences of culture, a trend which arguably emerged with the panacean nature of the excellence genre, which captured the managerial imagination when it first emerged in the early 1980s. Over time more reflective and critical accounts have sought to temper some of this initial enthusiasm for the role that culture can play within the organization. Ogbonna and Harris' characterization of 'optimists', 'pessimists' and 'realists' neatly captures the evolving nature of the debate about organizational culture and its ability to enhance commitment amongst organizational members. In adopting a realist position Ogbonna and Harris attempt to recognize that culture can be managed, though the extent to which this process may be successful remains contingent. The nature of the industry, organization, occupation, employment status within the organization and many other things beside are all likely to impact on the extent to which organizational members ultimately immerse themselves in the basic assumptions of the organization, or simply manifest resigned behavioural compliance.

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There are a number of useful weblinks and case studies which can be found at http://www.new-paradigm.co.uk/Culture.htm

Southwest Airlines has a unique culture which stresses the fun nature of the business and details can be found at http://www.southwest.com/about_swa/

Edward de Bono and Robert Heller are well know management gurus and they have some interesting thoughts on organizational culture which can be found at http://www.thinkingmanagers.com/business-management/corporate-culture.php