

**ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE UNDER  
THE SANCTUARY MODEL: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY**

By

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PREVIEW

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**Abstract**

This study described the organizational culture of an agency that uses the sanctuary model. The culture was described through a four-variable survey tool which reviewed employee perceptions of involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission. The Organizational Culture Survey was distributed to 196 employees. Results of 42 respondents were analyzed to describe the organization's culture and to review this organization's culture compared to a database of other organizations who had used the Organizational Culture Survey to describe their culture. The results of the study concluded that the organization performed slightly above average. Performance levels were validated by ranking above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in each cultural trait area and conclusions were made for areas of improvement for the organization.

PREVIEW

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PREVIEW

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

For the last several hundred years, health service organizations have been viewed as machines with interchangeable parts. These mechanistic type models of organization lacked feeling/emotions and exemplified authority and power as centralized, bureaucratic, and hierarchical (Bloom & Farragher, 2011). Not until the 1940s, when general systems theory emerged, was it realized that a mechanistic perspective of organizational function was oversimplified. General systems theory, defined as “a set of interrelated elements that respond predictably and interact with each other consistently over time” (Bloom & Farragher, 2011, p. 10), recognized organizations as having many interrelated components and thus identified organizations as living.

With the exploration of this new concept of systems as living, a better understanding of the many interconnected components of health systems began to become transparent. One such understanding was that of the operating system, known as organizational culture that binds the many interconnected components of health service organizations (Bloom & Farragher, 2011; Marcoulides & Heck, 1993).

Culture can present itself tangibly in an organization as visible symbols, slogans, languages, behaviors, histories and stories, dress codes, and rituals and ceremonies (Mobley, Wang, & Fang, 2005). Though when a group of individuals develop common traditions, rites, and history, more intangible signs of culture emerge such that the work group begins to work in an almost habitual or taken-for-granted way to achieving unitary objectives, core values, beliefs, and assumptions (Bloom & Farragher, 2011; Mobley et al., 2005). Organizational culture is therefore defined as a set of values, beliefs, common understanding, thinking, and norms for behavior that are shared by all members (Marcoulides & Heck, 1993; Mobley et al., 2005). These traits of organizational culture provide the foundation or underlying assumptions, strategies, goals, and direction of the organization thus often being referred to as the operating system of the organization (Bloom & Farragher, 2011). Because organizational culture has been identified as the operating system which guides the functioning and establishes the identity of an organization, organizational models have emerged to help structure the more unconscious/habitual elements of organizational culture (Bloom & Farragher, 2011).

One such recognized organizational model which provides a framework designed to help foster the culture of an organization is the sanctuary model. What began as a therapeutic milieu to treat traumatized clientele, expanded into an organizational change model designed to guide the development of structures, processes, and behaviors of the staff, clients, and community (Bloom &

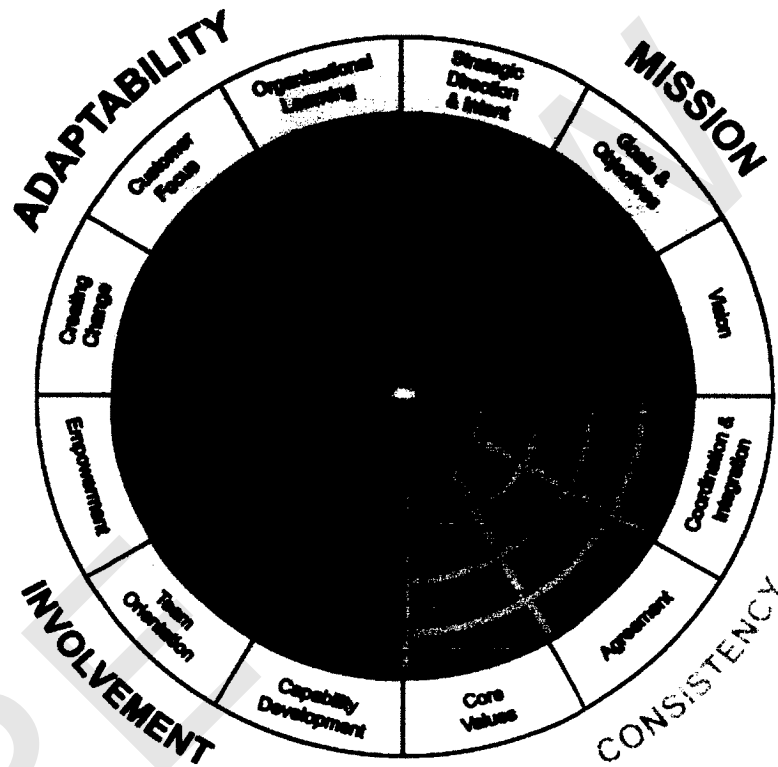
Farragher, 2011). It does this by presenting basic principles, known as the seven commitments; creating a shared language, known as the SELF framework; and by providing concrete tools for intervention including community meetings, red flag reviews, self-care planning, safety plans, team meetings, and so on. As an integrated theory system, the sanctuary model represents a “theory-based, trauma-informed, evidence-supported, whole culture approach that has a clear and structured methodology for creating or changing an organizational culture” (“Sanctuary Model,” 2012a).

#### **Statement of Purpose**

This study aimed to measure the levels of adaptability, mission, involvement, and consistency of a multi-disciplinary organization that utilizes the sanctuary model as a system of organizational change.

#### **Conceptual Framework**

This study used a conceptual framework developed by Denison, Janovics, Young, and Cho (2006) called the organizational culture model (OCM) (see Figure 1). The OCM focuses on four main traits of organizational culture including involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission (Denison et al., 2006). These traits were chosen as the basis for the model, by the model’s developers, based on literature showing similarities between the traits and their relationship to organizational effectiveness (Denison, 1990; Denison & Mishra, 1995; Gordon & DiTomaso, 1992; Kotter & Heskett, 1992; Sorenson, 2002). The traits are similar in that they are all based on functionalist and phenomenological



*Figure 1.* The Denison Model Circumplex.

*Note.* Permission to use this diagram can be found in Appendix A.

perspectives of organizations, with the functionalist perspective referring to the innate beliefs and patterns of behavior of an organization and the phenomenological perspective referring to the secondary phenomenon resulting from the organization's beliefs and patterns (Denison & Mishra, 1995).

The four traits interrelate according to the sets of tensions or contradictions that are often associated with many contemporary models of leadership and organizational effectiveness, such as the trade-off between stability and flexibility of an organization and the trade-off between an internal and external focus (Denison et al., 2006). For example, when considering the trade-off between internal and external focus, mission and adaptability describe the traits that determine the ability of an organization to externally adapt; while involvement and consistency describe the traits that determine the ability of an organization to internally integrate policies/procedures/values. On the other hand, when considering the trade-off between stability and flexibility, consistency and mission are traits that describe the capacity for an organization to remain stable and predictable; while adaptability and involvement are the traits that describe the capacity of an organization to change. From these similarities and relationships, four hypotheses were created and found to be true throughout the literature (Denison et al., 2006).

Hypothesis 1: Effective organizations tend to be those that “build their organization around teams, empower and engage staff, and develop human capability at all levels” (Denison et al., 2006, p. 6).



**Hypothesis 2: Effective organizations are “consistent, well integrated and are based on consensual governance” (Denison et al., 2006, p. 6).**

**Hypothesis 3: The better able an organization is “to create change, the greater the ability to survive and grow” (Denison et al., 2006, p. 7).**

**Hypothesis 4: Successful organizations are those that have “defined goals and objectives and have an expressed vision for the future” (Denison et al., 2006, p. 8).**

**Based on these hypotheses and conceptual framework, Denison et al. (2006) presents the four main traits of the OCM: involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission. Involvement is an important trait of organizational culture because it describes the commitment that organizational members have to their work. It fosters the level to which employees feel they have input into decisions affecting their work and determines the level to which employees feel their work is connected to the goals of the organization (Denison et al., 2006).**

**Consistency is additionally an important trait of organizational culture because it is a source of stability for the organization. For example, organizations that are well coordinated and integrated tend to have highly committed employees, tendency to promote from within, and a clear set of do’s and don’ts. These characteristics cause an organization to form a distinct method/way of doing business; thereby creating core values for the organization (Denison et al., 2006).**

Adaptability allows the organization to translate the demands of the environment into action. Organizations that have the capacity to receive, interpret, and translate the demands of the environment improve the organization's chances of survival because of their ability to continuously change and improve the organization's ability to serve their clientele. Therefore, adaptability is an integral part of an organization's culture since it allows for learning and change within the organization (Denison et al., 2006).

The organizational culture trait of mission is additionally important because it provides a purpose and meaning to the work that an organization does. Mission shapes the behavior of the organization by providing a clear direction and provides goals that determine how employees work day to day. An organizational culture that internalizes the mission of the organization is also advantageous since research has shown that being able to identify with an organization's mission contributes to the commitment employees feel to the organization (Denison et al., 2006).

Denison et al. (2006) created a tool to measure the four traits of involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission within health care organizations. The tool measures characteristics of involvement through feelings of authority, initiative, and ability to manage work; team orientation; and capability development, which is measured by the amount an organization invests in enhancing employee skills. Consistency is measured by the core values or the level to which employees feel they share a set of values; agreement, or the level to

which employees feel they can reach agreement on issues that arise, and coordination and integration; meaning that all departments are able to work together to achieve a common goal. Adaptability is measured in terms of the organization's ability to create change, the organization's ability to understand and react to their customers, and the organization's ability to interpret its environment and change accordingly. Lastly, mission is measured by the extent to which an organization's purpose is clear to employees, also referred to as strategic direction and intent; the level to which the goals and objectives can be linked to the company's mission, vision, and strategy; and possession of a clear vision of the desired future of the organization. Ultimately, the survey tool can be used to assess the four hypotheses of the OCM framework. The survey tool was used to review the adaptability, consistency, involvement, and mission of the organizational culture at the agency where this study was being performed.

### **Significance and Justification**

Administration at this multi-disciplinary organization began implementation of the sanctuary model in 2008. Administration has since commenced in teaching the training modules to its employees. The modules help to provide employees with the tools to help themselves as well as their clients to heal from traumatic experiences. The sanctuary model, along with administration, claim that the model produces a culture that can effectively provide a cohesive context in which healing from traumatic experiences can be addressed; though, no measures of organizational culture have been reviewed at

this organization to conclude if the organizational culture is effective (“Sanctuary Model,” 2012b). As commonly known, organizational culture evolves through the development of common traditions, rites, and history of the employees; therefore, it is significant to describe the culture from an employee viewpoint due to the fact that organizational culture evolves from the employees. Therefore, this descriptive study described the effectiveness of the culture of a specific organization utilizing the sanctuary model through the perspective of the employees. On a larger scale, organizational culture is an important attribute to review due to its influential nature on quality care of care outcomes and organizational performance outcomes. Therefore this study contributed to the field of organizational culture by providing an outline for companies to review their organizational culture.

### **Assumptions**

For purposes of this study, it was assumed that participants will answer honestly on the survey questions presented. It was additionally assumed that humans interact with their environment and that this interaction makes a difference in employees’ perceptions of organizational culture.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions for this study were as follow: At a multidisciplinary organization which services children and where the sanctuary model has been adopted:

1. What is the level of adaptability of the organization?

2. What is the level of involvement of the organization?
3. What is the level of consistency of the organization?
4. What is the level of understanding of the mission of the organization?
5. Is the organization internally or externally focused?
6. Is the organization flexible or stable?
7. How does the organizational culture of a sanctuary-based organization compare to the database of organizations using other models of operations?

#### **Definition of Terms**

The terms in the research were defined theoretically and operationally.

1. *Adaptability*--is theoretically defined as translating the demands of the business environment into action ("Denison Organizational," 2011); and operationally defined as the manifestation of creating change, customer focus, and organizational learning as represented in questions 31 through 45 on the Organizational Culture Survey.

2. *Consistency*--is theoretically defined as the values and systems that are the basis of a strong culture ("Denison Organizational," 2011), thereby translating to the ability to maintain a standard resulting in harmony between parts. Operationally defined as the manifestation of core values, agreement, and coordination and integration as represented in questions 16 through 30 on the Organizational Culture Survey.

3. *Involvement*--is theoretically defined as building human capability; ownership and responsibility refers to the feeling that one is part of something

larger (“Denison Organizational,” 2011). Operationally defined as the manifestation of empowerment, team orientation, and capability development as represented in questions 1 through 15 on the Organizational Culture Survey.

4. *Mission*--is theoretically defined as a meaningful long-term direction for the organization (“Denison Organizational,” 2011); therefore, consists of guiding principles designed to meet defined goals. Operationally defined as the manifestation of strategic direction and intent, goals and objectives, and vision as represented in questions 46 through 60 on the Organizational Culture Survey.

5. *Multi-disciplinary organization*--refers to an organization that incorporates a variety of disciplines (i.e., occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, special education, etc.). Operationally defined as the organization at which the research was conducted.

6. *Sanctuary model*--is theoretically defined as a trauma informed template for system change based on seven dominant characteristics, all of which serve to heal individuals from trauma while creating a safe environment for clients, families, staff, and administrators (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2008). Operationally defined as an organizational change model implemented at the business at which this research took place.

### **Variables**

Variables to be described include the four main traits of the circumplex: involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission.

### **Limitations**

A limitation of survey design applies to this study; participants' responses are bound by the survey structure and content. Another limitation originates from the fact that the study was conducted in one multi-disciplinary organization based in Western New York (WNY). Survey data was not available prior to the implementation of the sanctuary model at the organization where the study was conducted. Therefore, conclusions cannot be made about how the culture may have changed. The culture can be described only at this point in time. Additionally, it is unknown whether the Denison database of companies to which the data collected in this study are compared is limited to health care organizations only.

### **Summary**

Chapter I introduced the problem and purpose of the research. The conceptual framework OCM was summarized. The significance and justification was described along with the research questions, definition of terms, and variables and limitations associated with the study. Chapter II will present a review of the literature.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

As described previously, the aim of this study is to describe the organizational culture of an agency that uses the sanctuary model as an organizational change model. This chapter, therefore, presents the literature applicable to the context of study: the sanctuary model, organizational culture, and the model in which the survey tool is created from, the Denison model. The chapter is presented in the following order: organizational culture, effects of the sanctuary model, the Denison model, the sanctuary model history, and the operating systems of the sanctuary model. Many online databases, journals, and books were used to complete this literature review.

#### Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is the term used to describe underlying values, beliefs, and principles of an organization (Bloom & Farragher, 2011; Clark, 2002; Denison, 1990). Organizational culture determines how people enter the organization, survive within it, and learn to work within it (Bloom & Farragher, 2011). Because of its shared nature, culture can have a dramatic effect on an