

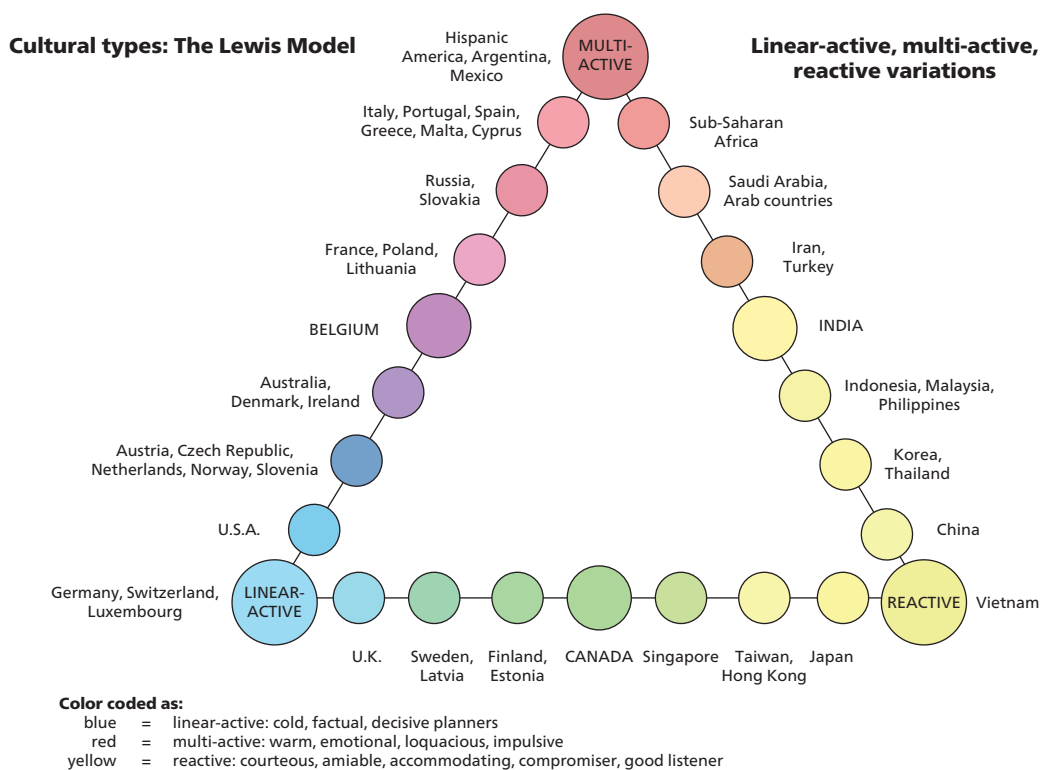


Figure 15.5 Cultural categorisation
Source: from *The Cultural Imperative: Global Trends in the 21st Century*, Nicholas Brealey (Lewis, R.D. 2007) © 2003 Richard Lewis. Reproduced by permission of Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Organisational climate

Organisational climate is another general concept and difficult to define precisely. It is more something that is felt. **Organisational climate** can be said to relate to the prevailing atmosphere surrounding the organisation, to the level of morale, and to the strength of feelings of belonging, care and goodwill among members. The climate of an organisation is often likened to our description of the weather and the way in which the climate of a geographical region results from the combination of environmental forces. Some of these forces are better understood than others. In a similar way that culture was defined simply as ‘how things are done around here’, climate can be defined as ‘how it feels to work around here’.

Both culture and climate relate to the value system of the organisation and both have an influence on the behaviour of their members. Climate will influence the attitudes that members of the organisation bring to bear on their work performance and personal relationships. The extent to which employees accept the culture of the organisation will have a significant effect on climate. Whereas

organisational culture describes what the organisation is about, organisational climate is an indication of the employees' feelings and beliefs of what the organisation is about.

According to *Tagiuri and Litwin*, climate is based on the perceptions of members towards the organisation.

Organisational climate is a relatively enduring quality of the internal environment of an organisation that (a) is experienced by its members, (b) influences their behavior, and (c) can be described in terms of the values of a particular set of characteristics (or attributes) of the organisation.³⁴

Characteristics of a healthy organisational climate

Organisational climate is characterised, therefore, by the nature of the people – organisation relationship and the superior – subordinate relationship. These relationships are determined by interactions among goals and objectives, formal structure, the process of management, styles of leadership and the behaviour of people. Although similar types of organisations will share certain common features and norms, each organisation will have its own different and distinctive features. In general terms, however, a healthy organisational climate might be expected to exhibit such characteristic features as set out in **Figure 15.6**.

A healthy organisational climate

The extent to which members of staff believe there is:

- acceptance of the psychological contract between the organisation and its members
 - managerial and leadership behaviour appropriate to the particular work situation
 - mutual trust, consideration and support among different levels of the organisation
 - easy access to senior staff with open channels of communication
 - respect for individual differences, diversity, equality and inclusion
 - attention to work environment and reduction of alienation or frustration at work
 - genuine concern for flexibility and work/life balance
 - opportunities for personal development and career progression
 - democratic functioning of the organisation and opportunities for participation
 - recognition of trade unions or staff representatives
 - open discussion of conflict with attempt to avoid confrontation
 - sense of identity with the organisation
 - feeling of being a valued and appreciated member of the organisation
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Figure 15.6 Characteristic features of a healthy organisational climate

A healthy climate will not by itself guarantee improved organisational effectiveness. However, an organisation is most unlikely to attain optimum operational performance unless the climate evokes a spirit of support and co-operation throughout the organisation, and is conducive to motivating members to work willingly and effectively. Gray maintains from his research to have found a clear correlation between successful workplace outcomes and a range of climate characteristics and that a climate conducive to successful outcomes also tends to be conducive to individual happiness. The climate of an organisation has a significant impact on the quality and quantity of work that gets done and on the well-being of employees.³⁵

Six dimensions of climate

Atkinson and Frechette of Forum Corporation maintain there is a direct correlation between organisational climate and financial results. A healthy climate increases employee motivation, catalysing more effective performance. Research by Forum identifies six dimensions that influence the work environment and employee motivation.

- **Clarity** – people's degree of understanding of the organisation's goals and policies, as well as the requirement of their job.
- **Commitment** – the expression of continuing dedication to a common purpose and to achieving goals.
- **Standards** – the emphasis management places on high performance standards and the amount of pressure it exerts on teams to improve performance.
- **Responsibility** – the degree to which people feel personally responsible for their work.
- **Recognition** – the feeling that people are recognized and rewarded for doing good work, and that they receive accurate performance feedback.
- **Teamwork** – the feeling of belonging to an organisation characterised by cohesion, mutual support, trust and pride.

A corporate imperative now is to cultivate a positive organisational climate in a negative economic one. Successful leaders take pains to ignite a chain reaction that improves climate, increases motivation, and enhances performance. Strong leaders have the motivation and influence skills to develop the workforce in these six measurable dimensions.³⁶



How would YOU explain the organisational climate of (i) your university; and (ii) your faculty or department? What specific examples can you provide?