

Organizational Culture at Camps: Understanding, Assessing, Developing, and Changing

Randall Grayson, Ph.D.

Contents at a glance

What is “culture?”

- The scope of culture
- Why care so much about camp culture?
- How is it related to structures, processes, policies, and outcomes?

Assessing culture

- Why should you assess it?
- How does one assess it?

Understanding culture in depth

- How is culture created?
- Three fundamental levels of culture
- Culture strength
- Taxonomies of culture
- Enculturation
- The tail that wags the dog

Changing culture

- Overview
- General principles of culture change
- Model of culture change
- Succession

Final Thoughts

Appendices

- Cited references and resources
- Stories about the power and scope of culture
- Issues with evidence camps often rely upon
- Examining camp symbols for insight and utility
- Bases of power
- Exceptional camps: A simple model
- An enculturation story from *Camping Magazine*
- Glossary
- The “Do-it-yourself camp culture assessment/improvement” kit
- Message from Bob Ditter on Camp Culture

Praise for Culture Book

Bob Ditter, LCSW, Camp Consultant

“This is a great and important book for the camp industry. Any camp professional truly interested in delivering what they say they deliver -- quality experiences for children -- or making changes in their camp that increasingly make them "better" needs to read this book. People tell me I've changed the industry over the past 20 years. True or not, this book is the next level.

You can publicly say I said so.”

Please see Ditter's full message, which appears at the end of this book.

Linda Erceg, Ph.N. Executive Director, Association of Camp Nurses

“How did you manage to develop such a succinct yet thorough writing style?!? I want lessons. Amen. I found it quite excellent and intellectually stimulating -- for the Villages, ACN, ACA, etc. I feel very honored to have read your work and quite glad that I know you.”

Norman Friedman, Dean of Gene Ezersky Camp Safety College

“I am very pleased with what you have accomplished. The book is excellent. The content is quite valuable to camp owners/directors who wish to get an understanding of what they experience. I enjoyed it thoroughly.”

Tracy Hans, M.S., Bonnie Brae Center

“Dr. Grayson's engaging reading is broken down into short, digestible sections, replete with examples. It offers tremendous insight into the dynamic culture of camps: how to understand, create, and maintain the delicate balance that is so important to achieving valued program outcomes. Furthermore, this learning (on cultural congruence) can be applied to almost all organizational and community frameworks. I was surprised to discover the degree to which program outcomes are intricately linked to organizational culture. Dr. Grayson's book helped to broaden my definition of culture and my understanding of what influences it. This will now inform my suggestions for program improvement within my agency.”

Jeff Jacobs, Director of Camp Henry and author of “Growing your camp culture”

“This book will be a great resource for those interested in truly understanding and enhancing their camp culture. It would make a great addition to any Camping Professional's collection.”

James Neill, MA, University of New Hampshire

“Great - really enjoyed reading this material. I was stimulated by the material, had practical strategies to improve camp practices, etc. Highly readable . . . I found it clear, succinct, interesting, practical and inspiring . . . Stories - great material for an appendix and brought the concepts life, with recognizable examples.”

Gwynn Powell, Ph.D., Professor at University of Georgia

“Great concept. Thought provoking. Good exposure to a variety of resources. Good concrete examples at the end . . . You have MUCH to offer and you're a true gift to the profession!”

Joel Meier, Ph.D. Chair of the Department of Recreation and Park Administration, Indiana University; author of “Camp Counseling: Leadership and Programming for the Organized Camp”

“Dr. Randall Grayson's new book brings a refreshing new perspective to the world of organized camping. This resource has been needed in the field for a long time. The title really says it all – Organizational Culture at Camps: Understanding, Assessing, Developing, and Changing. Once I started reading the book, I couldn't put it down. Every camp administrator should become intimately familiar with the information herein. This valuable resource not only helps you understand more about your camp's underlying culture, but also provides easy to follow directions for determining what changes are needed, as well as how to bring about those desired changes.”

Table of Contents

Preface	6
Introduction	7
What is culture?	10
The scope of culture	10
Why care so much about camp culture?	10
How is it related to structures, processes, policies, and outcomes?	11
Assessing culture	12
Why should you assess it?	12
How does one assess it?	13
General assessment principles	14
Seven methods of analyzing culture	14
Self analysis	14
Survey	14
Consultant review	15
Interview	15
Focus groups	16
Journaling by fresh eyes	16
Visiting other camps	16
Understanding culture in depth	17
Overview	17
How is culture created?	17
Three fundamental levels of culture - framework	18
Observable world (Artifacts) – Level One	18
Espoused Values – Level Two	19
More examples for insight	20
Deep Assumptions -- Level Three	21
Explanation	21
Example domains of deep assumptions	21
Summing up	26
Culture strength	27
Three dimensions of culture strength	27
Fragmentation – across the three levels of culture	27
Integration – between hierarchical levels	27
Differentiation – within a hierarchical level	28
Increasing culture strength	28
Fragmentation – across the three levels of culture	28
Integration – between hierarchical levels	29
Differentiation – within a hierarchical level	29

Taxonomies of culture	30
Organizational culture profile.....	30
Organizational culture inventory.....	31
GLOBE organizational culture.....	32
Benchmarking organizational emotional intelligence.....	32
Organizational culture assessment.....	32
Hodgepodge.....	33
Enculturation	34
What is the scope of the task?.....	34
Staff member – camp fit.....	34
Deep assumptions about staff.....	35
Interview process.....	36
Pre-camp materials.....	36
Orientation.....	36
During the summer.....	37
Rest of the year.....	37
Extending the utility of enculturation.....	38
Lessons from character education.....	38
Using new staff to shift the culture.....	38
Critical caveat.....	39
The tail that wags the dog	40
Financial resources.....	40
Abilities of leadership.....	40
Quality and quantity of staff.....	40
The power of holding a niche and historical “success”.....	41
The nature of the surrounding culture.....	41
Changing culture	42
Don't read this.....	42
Overview.....	42
General principles of culture change.....	42
Starting out.....	42
Doing the work of change.....	43
Model of culture change	44
Reasons to change.....	45
Economic.....	45
Political.....	45
Legal.....	45
Moral.....	45
Internal.....	46
Rational.....	46
Decisions, decisions – where to go from here?.....	46
Defenses to change.....	47
Denial.....	47
Accept it.....	47
Anger.....	47
Scapegoating, dodging, passing the buck.....	47
Maneuvering and bargaining.....	48
Want to change, but fear it.....	48
Fear of temporary incompetence.....	48
Fear of punishment.....	48
Fear of loss of personal identity.....	49
Fear of loss of group membership.....	49
Anxiety because the way to change is unknown.....	49
Surrendering the comfortable.....	49

Structures to reduce fear	50
Compelling positive vision	50
Training	50
Address perceived deviance.....	51
Assess/change structures and systems	51
Identify best practices to cope with feeling of not knowing how to change	51
Loss of identity	51
Surrender the comfortable	52
Succession	53
Continuation succession	53
Hybrid succession.....	53
Outside succession	53
Final thoughts.....	55
Framework.....	55
Broad applicability	55
Building community.....	55
Media influence.....	55
Peer groups and influence	55
Character education.....	55
Why the effect of camp may wear off.....	55
Journey, not a destination.....	56
Conclusion.....	56

Appendices

○ Cited references and resources	57
○ Stories about the power and scope of culture	59
○ Stories about camp culture	
○ Stories about culture in non-camp organizations	
○ Stories of social culture now and in history	
○ Issues with evidence camps often rely upon	64
○ Is it all good?	
○ Why satisfaction surveys don't tell you what you need to know	
○ Looking carefully at return rates	
○ The sins of memory	
○ Bias, socially desirable responding, dissonance, and selection threats	
○ Examining camp symbols for insight and utility	70
○ Bases of power	74
○ Exceptional camps: A simple model	75
○ An enculturation story from <i>Camping Magazine</i>	76
○ Glossary	79
○ The “Do-it-yourself camp culture assessment/improvement” kit	80
○ Message from Bob Ditter on Camp Culture	86

Preface

Thousands of scholarly and philosophical pages have been written about culture – a very incomplete *summary* (Ashkanasy et al., 2000) is over 600 pages! This book takes into account what is known about culture, what I believe to be correct when there are competing ideas, and my own experience based on a doctorate in research psychology and over a decade of experience at different camps for the whole summer. Few direct references are made because (a) much of the culture literature is quite confusing and obtuse, (b) most books take a somewhat myopic view and don't provide the big picture in a coherent way, and (c) applying much of the information to camps is quite difficult.

My mission has been to address all of that, because the topic is so important. This culture resource is direct, concrete, provides the big picture, is applied to the camping industry by someone who knows it well, and is short – considerably less than 629 pages. *In fact, if the culture change section is skipped, a decent understanding of culture and this entire book can be gained in about 30 pages.* That is an incredibly brief digest of something as broad and useful as culture.

A special note about the appendices is necessary. They are all helpful, but not explicitly necessary to understand the general nature of culture. Elements were placed in the appendix so that ancillary information wouldn't get in the way of people making it through the main points. The stories about culture will likely enrich your understanding, and many people tell me it helped them to read that section first, but it isn't necessary. The part "issues with evidence camps use" is important in the sense that it demonstrates that success is something very few camps can be assured of, given what they use for evidence. Assuming success, good performance, and an adequate or strong culture is dangerous, and the reasons for this are addressed there. The remaining appendices will aid and enrich your understanding of culture, but they might bog you down if they are examined before the general nature of culture is well understood.

A view from the mountain tops and foothills is the scope of this book. Including very specific details about how to improve the elements of culture, say being a learning organization in particular, would cloud the necessary knowledge presented herein. Also, a full treatise would be well over two thousand pages. Teaching you how to fish and providing fish are both valuable. Some of the "in-the-trenches" culture specifics are covered in other resources. For example, if creating a learning culture is of interest, read "The learning camp" resource. For even more detail, the "Knowledge management," "Benchmarking," and "The art and science of mistakes" are useful and available.

After you've read this book, check off the boxes on the "Contents at a glance" page. I think you'll be surprised at how much you've learned and how useful the information is. To be sure, in order to turn the information into knowledge, you'll have to spend some time applying this book to your camp.

Creating a high-performing culture in line with valued outcomes is very hard, but exceptional camps settle for nothing less. By reading, understanding, and applying this information, I know you want to create an even better camp. Let's go.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the following people for their feedback on earlier drafts. Their willingness to read over 50,000 words with a keen eye toward improving this book for the benefit of others is a remarkable contribution. Comments from you will be incorporated into a future version – please send me your thoughts.

Bob Ditter, LCSW
Bari Dworken, Ed.D.
Linda Erceg, Ph.N.
Gary Forster
Tracy Hans, MA
Don Hudson

Jeff Jacobs
Joel Meier, Ph.D.
James Neill, MA
Gwynn Powell, Ph.D.
Jenn Selke, Ph.D.

Introduction

The light

Imagine: At camp “Inyourdreams” . . . There is no “us” versus “them” between counselors and supervisors, and yet appropriate boundaries are respected. Supervision has turned into training and support instead of catching counselors. When things go wrong, another counselor is just as likely to gently correct as is a supervisor. Staff personnel policies are signed, but never openly addressed or “trained.” Punishments and consequences are essentially unheard of, because such external controls are both unnecessary and not the way this camp handles discipline. The staff manual is only 22 pages and filled with very few logistical, policy, or explanatory pieces. It doesn’t need those things, because they are alive in the people, who readily transmit them to others. Cliques or subgroups amongst the staff are virtually nonexistent. The staff have very different personalities, but like the famed Sterling Engine (can run on different fuels without adjustment), they are all readily accommodated and work well within the camp environment. When curfew time rolls around, the staff hold themselves accountable and no checking is necessary. *The effort demonstrated by staff is consistent and strong.* The summer hump or X week lag doesn’t exist. Reports are completed well and on time. The general staff had to read and understand over 70 pages of material and do about 10 hours of homework before coming to camp; amazingly, they all did it. Smoking and alcohol are non-issues. Over a ten-week period, the average number of suggestions is around 400, or 8 per staff member. About 10% of those suggestions get fully implemented, but all are gratefully acknowledged. Equipment is well kept by the staff and supplies are used judiciously. This camp enjoys an overall staff return rate of 65%. Eighty percent of new staff are referred by alumni. The eligible camper return rate fluctuates between 65 and 70%. The camp is routinely full by January and most campers come from referrals. If you were to ask any of the staff what the outcomes of the camp experience were (for themselves and the campers) or what their role in achieving them was, they would readily be able to tell you. This camp conducted a rigorous, scientific evaluation of its outcomes for campers and staff, and adapted its practices to achieve even greater heights. When a new director took over from outside the camp, numerous improvements were made, but they happened smoothly as the new director was comfortably brought into the fold.

The dark side

Meanwhile at camp “Goodintentions” with hard-working directors who really care . . . The counselors are drinking on camp property, and not drinking responsibly, which has caused its share of significant problems! Instead of handling behavior problems using methods that promote social skills and character development, some counselors are using punishment. There’s graffiti on the walls again too. A counselor was fired for smoking pot. Another two were fired because the camp found out that one went to her boyfriend’s cabin, spending the night, and they had sex only yards away from the campers. The administration gives speeches about problems that are occurring with violations of policy or values, but they don’t seem to have much effect in the long run unless consequences are imposed and enforced. The administration and counselors seem to cast a wary eye on each other. Archery and soccer aren’t being taught with both fun and skill development in mind, despite a couple of chats. At all-camp picnics, the counselors are grouping together instead of interacting with the campers again, and they need to be gently reminded to break up. They groan and complain under their breath. When the kids leave between sessions, the cabins are a mess, and people have to stay back to clean them up. The directors get an angry phone call from a parent who says her boy is having trouble sleeping, because the counselors are telling ghost stories. The director sighs; he knows he said something about that during orientation. The counselor lounge is a mess again. The chef and nature person have come to complain about the amount of food being wasted. The curfew was an honor system, but now it has to be a sign-in procedure with a nightly on-duty administrative person. There is a no-candy policy, but some counselors have been letting it slide to be cool. Quite a few things slip with counselors in the name of being “cool” with the campers or with each other. At the all-camp capture the flag game, some of the counselors got a little too competitive, and a camper broke his arm running for the prison when the counselors dove to grab him and fell on him by accident. On the last night, some counselors trapped campers in bed using several rolls of toilet paper. As much as this camp tried, rules and good supervision were still quite necessary to keep things going as much as possible like they were supposed to.

What’s the key difference?

I know what you’re thinking – it’s about the staff they hired. You’d only be partly right though. Both of these camps did a decent job of hiring staff for their love of children, good past job references, ability to have fun, their camp skills, nice character references indicating social skills and leadership, and an hour-plus interview. Both camps have directors with over 20 years of experience. Both are long-time ACA accredited camps in good standing.

Amazingly, camp “Inyourdreams” really exists. There are several like it that I’ve personally witnessed, sometimes over the course of an entire summer. What this camp has is a strong, positive culture. I chose an extreme comparison to make the point about the power of culture. The benefits of such an animal *go far beyond* these few examples and are described more thoroughly in the “Why care so much about camp culture?”, “Why should you assess it?”, and “Stories” sections.

Although camp “Goodintentions” still exists as well, most camps can’t claim quite that many problems – at least in any given summer. While some troublesome issues are perennial, others pop up every summer. What this camp has is a weak culture that isn’t in line with valued outcomes.

How did these camps get that way? Camp “Inyourdreams” inherently understands the power of camp culture, they check on themselves constantly, and they focus an enormous amount of time and effort making sure all the pieces are in place to create a strong culture. Camp “Goodintentions” hasn’t harnessed the power of culture and all the tools therein to create a strong, positive, uniform experience.

Camp “Inyourdreams” has a clear vision, mission, and set of values it espouses to everyone. Tirelessly, the camp administration tries to insure that the values they preach are represented in every aspect of camp life. New staff are brought into the camp in a selection and assimilation process that is uncommon. The camp has examined its philosophy in a deep and broad manner. Far from finding perfection and freezing it there, the staff seek improvement in a dedicated and systematic way inside and outside of their camp.

These elements (and much more) are covered in this book on camp culture, or closely related resources that are readily available. The portion on being purposeful about values the camp holds dear and making sure they happen in reality is discussed in the “Fundamental levels of culture” and “Culture strength” sections, the “Stories” appendix, and the “Do-it-yourself camp culture assessment” kit appendix. The method of bringing in new staff is described in the “Enculturation” section. Making sure new leadership people are successful is covered in the “Succession” section. The careful examination of philosophy is addressed in the “Deep assumptions” section. The focus on learning is tangentially discussed throughout this book, but is more specifically addressed in the separate “Learning camp” resource.

Four brief examples

People have found it valuable to gain a brief introduction in the beginning to *one* area covered in this book by way of example. The area is the three fundamental levels of culture. Think of “espoused values” as principles the camp would like to see in as many places as possible, like teamwork. “Deep assumptions” are the real drivers of behavior, which can be the same as the declared principles, or something quite different. Finally, things in the observable world – objects, behaviors, and feelings, are called “artifacts.” Think of each of these examples as taking place at different camps.

Espoused Value	Deep Assumption	Observable world (Artifacts)
Counselors are our most valuable asset	Campers and money come before counselors	Meeting with the director is rarely possible. There is no staff development plan. Each unit of 21 counselors has only one direct supervisor. Staff are paid less than financially possible and prudent given overall goals.
Catch staff being good	Ditto	After a supervisor has spent time with a group, s/he offers specific praise. Written notes of appreciation are frequently found in staff mail boxes. Counselors write “gotcha” notes to each other.
Inclusive community	Somewhat fractured community is okay	International staff are informally separated from American staff. Support staff rarely interact with the whole staff. Long-time staff separate themselves from the fresh recruits.
Customer service	Ditto	Calls are returned quickly. Each camper has an individual development plan. Outcomes are assessed beyond return rates and satisfaction surveys. Food is excellent. Activities are very good.

Onward

A very general introduction to the nature and importance of culture is covered on the next page. Twelve good reasons to assess one's culture and some methods for doing it follow. The main explanation of culture ensues in the "Understanding culture in depth" section. Within it, you will learn how culture is created, examine the three fundamental levels of culture in detail, appreciate the nature and importance of a strong culture, understand how to bring in new staff so as to maximally enhance the camp, and be exposed to the external elements that mold the camp culture.

For those interested in culture change, a summary of the best practices as well as a simple model are presented. As noted in the preface, the extensive appendices are intended to aid and enhance your understanding of culture. Some people find it useful to examine the "Stories" appendix, which holds more examples like the above, before diving into the book. While that can be useful for some, it may also prematurely limit your understanding of the breadth and nature of culture.

Again, creating a high-performing culture in line with valued outcomes is very hard, but exceptional camps settle for nothing less. By reading, understanding, and applying this information, I know you want to create an even better camp. Let's go.

What is culture?

The scope of culture

Inherently, you know what culture is. It is similar to how you know what water, work, family, friends, and the country where you live are like – you experience them all the time. Culture is also in our very vocabulary. We use words like counterculture, enculturate, acculturation, culture shock, uncultured, toxic culture, subculture, pop culture, and cultured. Culture is implied when we refer to people like Generation X, Baby Boomers, Hispanics, Japanese, Hippies, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, or the French. Lifestyle is also a cultural referent. Getting even more narrow, people will refer to subgroups as distinct cultures like the class of 76, New Yorkers, the Essex girls, work teams, departments, your profession, your hobbies, and family. It even gets down to the level of the dyad when people refer to the culture of a friendship, a romantic relationship, or between twins. Whenever a group has enough common experience, culture begins to form.

Culture is *everywhere* and influences *everything*! But, despite its breadth, culture can be grasped and managed, as you'll appreciate as you read through this book. The breadth of culture is impressive though. Whether or not you grew up in Israel, rural China, the Amazon basin, New York City, Provo Utah, or Small Town Nebraska would have a lot to do with your world view, your religious beliefs, ideas about sex, thoughts on children, what is right and wrong, and who you are. It is no understatement to say that cultural influence is profound and that it touches every single area of our lives. Growing up in the 2000s, 1980s, 1960s, 1930s, or 1800s would have a huge influence on your values, behavior, and thoughts. Growing up Black, Asian, White, or Hispanic would also color your world view.

It isn't going too far to say that culture influences all of your behavior and thinking. Broadly speaking, this encompasses: beliefs, attitudes, values, assumptions, norms, subjective perception, customs, behaviors, mindset, rituals, artifacts, traditions, patterns, traits, climate, and all other products of human work and thought. Though we go through life as individual actors, we are embedded in several nested groups with cultural assumptions that shape who we are, what we think, and what we do. A given individual is definitely unique, and perhaps even a rebel, but there is still far, far more shared than not. Indeed, even rebels usually fit the culture of rebels for their time.

For a more detailed understanding of the specifics of culture, please see "Understanding culture in depth."

Why care so much about camp culture?

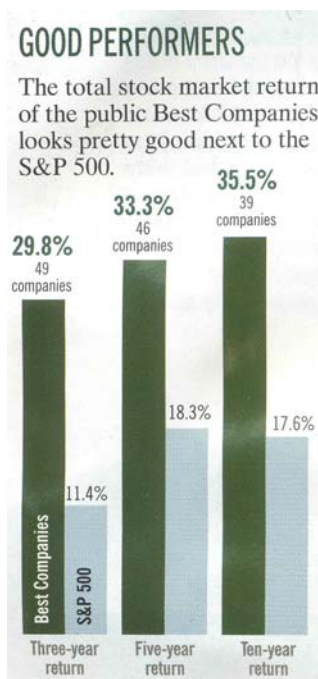
If culture guides the thinking and behavior of people, it is *wise to create and foster a culture at camp that best facilitates the outcomes you care about*. Cultural assumptions develop over time and are inextricably intertwined with mission, strategy, and systems. There is nothing culture doesn't touch and color. Culture covers all aspects of reality and human functioning.

If culture is both ubiquitous and powerful, *a conscious view of it is essential*, but to a large degree, culture is invisible. It is an often unconscious set of forces that determines both our individual and collective behavior, ways of perceiving, thought patterns, and values. It is the shared, taken-for-granted assumptions that a group has learned throughout its history. Because culture is so broad and natural, much of it escapes careful, thorough evaluation.

Certainly, many aspects of your camp culture are perfectly obvious to you. But how do you know which ones are known and unknown? Perhaps R.D. Laing said it best in a piece from his book called *Knots*: "The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice. And because we fail to notice that we fail to notice there is little we can do to change until we notice how failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds."

Beyond those rational points, take the evidence of how a purposeful, insightful culture performs against those who are more average. The graph on the left summarizes a study (Fortune, 2000) of companies with excellent corporate culture versus the S&P 500. The difference is striking. It is even more impressive when you realize that the S&P 500 includes (a) companies that met the bar to be put in that category in the first place, and (b) many companies that didn't earn the 100 best measured on the culture dimension alone, but that are likely pretty decent in general.

If that isn't enough, take one more example. Dr. Kotter and Dr. Heskett from the Harvard Business School did a landmark study (1992) of culture and performance. They found that businesses with a strong culture in line with valued outcomes outperformed those with average or poor cultures by a huge margin. Over an eleven year period, the former increased revenues by 682% versus 166% for the latter. The stock values were a 901% gain versus a 74% gain respectively. Net incomes improved by 756% versus 1%.



How is it related to structures, processes, policies, and outcomes?

NOTE: If these terms make perfect sense to you, skip ahead. If not, understanding them in the light of culture is necessary as they are referred to frequently throughout the book.

First, let me be clear what I mean by each of these terms. A policy is a rule around something like curfew, smoking, clothing, appearance, candy, mail, non-competitive activities, television, what is rewarded and punished, etc. Structures include things like the camper-to-counselor ratio, staff quality, number of administration, age range, gender, population of the children, physical layout of the camp, what activities are offered, session length, hierarchy, etc. Processes involve how things are actually carried out. They are the elements (activities) that lead to a given outcome. The process for ensuring a midnight curfew might involve a sign-in sheet, a patrol, and consequences for not abiding by the policy. Outcomes are what participants actually walk away with – e.g., social skills, physical skills, etc.

Culture influences policies, structures, and processes. What is an appropriate bedtime for staff (policy) varies depending on the culture of the camp. Sometimes it is as early as 10:30pm and sometimes it is as late as 1:00am. Culture also influences the process for enforcing the policy. One camp had a sign-in system where being one minute late resulted in a set consequence – no discussion. Another just left it up to the staff to monitor themselves. A third only addressed the issue for staff who had demonstrated an unwillingness to make the curfew. In all of these cases, the culture of the person(s) making the policy and the nature of the broader culture of the camp resulted in different policies and means (processes) for enforcing them.

Structures – usually the hard statistics and things you can physically point to – are also culturally influenced. Financial, logistical, and even political realities certainly come into play, but beyond that, the reason for having two four-week sessions versus one eight-week session is largely a cultural one. People believe that having certain structures in place is a good thing and the right way to go. Whether or not a camp is co-ed or single gender, centralized or decentralized, offers riflery or not, or has a 1:3 or 1:8 counselor-to-camper ratio is culturally influenced.

It is also important to distinguish the influence of culture on outcomes. Outcomes are factors like improved self-esteem, higher emotional intelligence, improved grades, increased group-leadership abilities, more environmentally friendly behaviors, physical fitness, and fun. What are good and worthy outcomes is culturally influenced. For example, one camp used all paper products during meals because it didn't value environmental attitudes as an outcome. Other camps take great pains to be environmentally friendly. Some camps believe that certain outcomes can only be achieved in a single-gender environment. The difference is a cultural one.

As just alluded to, how to go about achieving outcomes is culturally influenced. For example, most camps claim to improve self-esteem, but how camps go about it can vary widely. Some camps focus on praising all effort regardless of actual outcome, as well as on writing poems, papers, and plays about how special each child is. Other camps focus on personal mastery of specific skills and goal accomplishments. Whether or not cultural assumptions about the means (processes) for achieving a given outcome are correct (works) is a question for evaluation (see those resources). In other words, cultural assumptions about the right way to do things may be on track, but convictions, personal insight, and history are not good indicators of whether outcomes of value will be achieved. For example, corporal punishment used to be perfectly acceptable and was thought to be a good practice. Also, in that time, eating many fruits, vegetables, maintaining a low-fat diet, not smoking, and regular exercise were not considered vital to a healthy lifestyle.

A proven recipe (structures, processes, and policies), of which there is more than one, for each outcome must be in place. Combine the recipe with a culture that is strong (see culture strength section), and you'll have a camp that achieves its outcomes. This topic is further addressed in the "Espoused values" and "Deep assumptions" sections. Also, see "Is it all good?", the "Satisfaction surveys," and "A simple model" appendices for more rationale.

For the curious, mission is the layman's version of outcomes, with the values, processes, structures, activities, and sometimes policies thrown in to indicate how you're going to get there. Vision is the abstracted outcomes on a rocket booster on the way to nirvana.

Assessing culture

Why should you assess it?

Some of this has been touched upon, but I will now expand upon those ideas as well as add to them. The following 10 reasons to assess culture should give you a sense of the benefits. Note that these points assume the cultural analysis has been done well – see the next section. A superficial understanding of culture can be far more dangerous than no understanding of it at all, because decisions on whether to act and how would be based on incomplete information.

Also, take a look at the “Stories” appendix to see how culture influences camps and people.

1. Culture is ubiquitous

Culture cannot be separated from anything the camp or people do. It is inextricable. Culture influences strategy, mission, how things are done, what is valuable and what isn't, etc. It influences structures, processes, policies, and outcomes.

2. See more



Take the analogy of an iceberg. The part you can see clearly is just the tip. Culture is deep, extensive, and stable. The part of culture people notice is like the tip. Culture is almost always partially invisible. Evidence from culture studies in very large as well as small organizations reveals that culture is more unseen than seen – just like an iceberg.

Let's look at it another way. Employing the culture lens is like looking at the same scene, but using the infrared light spectrum. What you're looking at hasn't changed, but what you can see has shifted dramatically. You see more and you understand more. The strange becomes familiar and the familiar strange.

One last analogy here. “The Magic Eye” was a series of books and calendars in the mid-90's that showcased images that looked like colorful patterns of dots. Alone, these images (camps) could be viewed as pretty, interesting, and complete. However, when you understand the way to look at them differently, a whole new picture becomes visible that was there all the time. It just takes trained knowledge to see it.

3. See more *clearly*

The world is clearer. Why things happen will come into sharper relief. Anomalies and conflicts can be explained better, especially the recurring ones. When people resist things, the reasons will become even more clear and you'll come to see that resistance as normal and logical. You'll also view it within a larger system than just the individual or small group.

4. Change

Take a map through the mine field

If you want to make a significant change of some sort, don't move without a cultural analysis. It's like navigating a mine field with parts of your map missing and without the mine detector. With the right tools, you can anticipate consequences and make a choice about their desirability. You'll be able to answer the question: “If a new way of working is to be created, how would the old ways hinder it?” If you don't manage your culture, it will manage you.

The only constant is change

Culture at most camps is more fluid than in other organizations of similar size, partly because a large number of new staff join every year. By understanding and assessing your culture, its evolution and maintenance can be consciously shaped in a purposeful, directed manner. Whether massive or minor change is on the plate, cultural insight is vital to managing either.

Facilitate change

Frequently, for change to occur on a significant level, the organization as a whole must become unstuck from the normal way things have always been done. It must unfreeze the inertia. A cultural analysis can sometimes be the impetus that facilitates the mindset and behaviors of change.

5. Show me the money

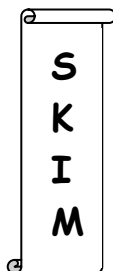
Refer to the last two paragraphs in the “Why care so much about camp culture?” section above. The influence of culture on performance is impressive. Those studies focus on money, but the ability of camps with a strong culture in line with valued outcomes to enrich lives and change the world follows naturally.

Also consider that management by rules, regulations, and precedent is essentially obsolete in highly-effective organizations. In its place has arisen culture, which provides people with the beliefs and values upon which to act. This effective shift yields measurable gains.

6. Those who don't understand history are doomed to repeat it
Camps experience "success" with their methods and cultures. The ways things have been working have, by and large, been good. Over time, these ideas become cemented and looking for significant and accurate evaluation (see evaluation resources) and, if necessary, change isn't seriously considered. Also, the way things have been is a source of pride and validates the past. Camps cherish their history and feel they understand it completely. These filters make it hard for leaders to look at alternatives or consider thorough evaluations – see the "Is it all good?" and "Why satisfaction surveys don't tell you what you need to know" appendices. How cultural assumptions were created and evolved is critical information.
7. Fun
Learning to see the world through culturally more sophisticated lenses is fun. Once the framework of culture is understood, the world will look a little bit different. When you hear news stories, watch media, or witness an interaction between people, the clear culture framework and its implications will sometimes come to mind. That new perspective will tickle your fancy more than once!
8. Be better at incorporating new staff
The industry average is roughly 40-50% new staff every summer. When one looks at transmitting norms and values through the cultural lens, hiring appropriate staff who do well in the summer and are more likely to return becomes much easier (see the enculturation section). Even if only 10% of the staff is new, their ability to be successful will be enhanced due to the improved ability to select and assimilate them.
Installing new leadership (from within your camp or outside of it) at any level can be a tricky operation. Understanding succession management through the cultural framework will enable you to be more successful. In particular, when a camp changes hands, a new director begins, or a new executive director starts working within the culture, an insightful view of the culture and the succession process is crucial.
9. Wisdom
More often than not, people feel they have a solid handle on culture. Organizations that undergo a cultural analysis are virtually always surprised by at least some of the findings. A full understanding of one's culture is humbling. In that humility, we will find wisdom.
10. Be better at changing lives
If none of the above reasons for *carefully* and *thoroughly* assessing your culture has motivated you to do it, perhaps this one will. A cultural analysis will help your camp to change the life of everyone it touches in an even more profound way. Perhaps the knowledge and examples in the rest of this book will tip the scales in favor of doing a careful, thorough culture analysis. "The learning camp" and "From good to great" resources may also help. However, it may also require a leap of faith that the increased understanding will translate into financial gains and a boon in the ability to influence lives.

How does one assess it?

This section may be skimmed and returned to later for readers who are anxious to get a better handle on culture more quickly. Pick up again at the "Understanding culture in depth" section.



The biggest risk in assessing culture is to oversimplify it and miss several elements that really matter. A superficial understanding of culture can be far more dangerous than no understanding of it at all. Thus, seven different methods for assessing culture are described below. Ideally, all of them should be used. In good conscience, I can't recommend doing less. However, the order in which I would go about assessing culture is: self-analysis, a short survey to help direct focus groups and interviews, consultant review, interviews, focus groups, and journaling by fresh eyes. Visiting other camps should be done throughout the process.

Each assessment method has its strengths and limitations, but in concert the strengths pile up and the limitations fall away. Perhaps the two most dangerous approaches are to only use surveys or self analysis. Surveys don't tap the latent, tacit assumptions that really drive the culture, as well as many other problems. Self analysis isolated from the other methods is dangerous because there is no way for people within the culture to fully understand it using only their own lens (see point 2 above and the "Is it all good?" appendix).

Before going through each method in some detail, some general assessment principles will be delineated.

General assessment principles

When elements of the culture are revealed and categorized, refrain at first from placing a value judgment on them. They may qualify as strengths or concerns, but it is usually only with a more complete picture that the puzzle pieces (cultural elements) make sense in terms of the whole.

Doing a cultural analysis has some analogy to undergoing psychological therapy. Instead of occurring on the individual level (personal norms, values, and behaviors), the group is undergoing psychological assessment (group norms, values, and behaviors). People often have visceral reactions to the idea of “therapy,” but it is an interesting analogy.

Assessing culture requires effort. From the outset, you have to accept that there might be other methods for doing things and other ways of thinking about things. The camp needs to have a learning philosophy (see the learning camp resource), which is to say that the camp is open to and encouraging of new knowledge.

The violations of cultural norms and values bring cultural assumptions into stark relief, but despite what you may think, the violations don’t occur often enough or across a wide enough range to identify your culture.

Bring the assumptions down to the behavioral level, and bring the behaviors observed up to the assumption/value/principle level. This method is how you get to the roots of culture. As a tool, try using cultural process maps (see separate resource). What leads to valued culture elements? What are blocking or conflicting elements?

If the cultural assessment is done in regard to a specific dilemma, keep in mind that culture may have little to do with the problem at hand. The processes, policies, and structures may be the primary root causes. Once people view the culture tool as a hammer (all-in-one tool), everything starts to look like a nail. Culture influences all of these things, but not being able to afford enough staff might be more of a structural, rather than cultural, problem.

Seven methods of analyzing culture

Self analysis

Cultural assumptions are deep and often invisible, but they are rarely repressed or unavailable. For the open, reflective individual/camp, some insight is assured. However, while the insight gained is sure to be valuable, it is unlikely to be complete. The other six methods yield different kinds of information and results. With each tool (assessment method), the cultural image becomes more vast and clear than could have been imagined before its use.

Culture is so deep, pervasive, and ingrained that it is difficult to assess it from the inside. The biases of someone who lives the culture are usually difficult to overcome. For example, one could try and write about American culture, but that analysis would be limited. It is tied to your experience, attitudes, values, and language, which colors your way of viewing the world. The profession you chose also colors the way in which you see the world. Other examples include education, ethnicity, hobbies, and spiritual beliefs. We are products of our environments. If one had anything to do with creating the culture, it is likely all the more invisible. Relying on cultural self-analysis will cause problems, and not suit the goal of engaging in it in the first place. Wise people understand that they are also sometimes fools.

Despite the challenges and limitations, self assessment is definitely a worthwhile endeavor. In particular, someone in the culture can examine how the economic, technological, political, and social environments have changed and how those changes have been reflected in the culture. The elements of the culture and history, which might escape an outsider, can be brought into the light. Self-analysis is best when it is done by a few people within the culture. Knowledge of the cultural framework (next major section) is necessary for this to take place on a suitable level. See the appendix on the “Do-it-yourself camp culture assessment/improvement kit.”

Survey

Surveys are the most controversial cultural assessment method. Proponents like them because of their many benefits, and detractors debase them for their inherent problems that limit or nullify their utility. Despite the drawbacks, surveys are still worthwhile when administered in such a way as to minimize the limitations and when viewed in an overall picture with other methods. The most dangerous path is to use a survey and not view the results in light of their limitations noted below.

- Benefits
 - Taps everyone
 - Quick, efficient, and cheap
 - Provides a general framework that is useful – see the “Taxonomies” section
 - Removes *some* of the subjectivity of a person analyzing the culture through observation and interviews
 - Often taps culture on the espoused values level (see framework), which is interesting and useful
 - On an individual level, knowing the satisfaction level is important.
 - Can inform other methods, especially when viewed on a case by case basis

○ Limitations

- Satisfaction measures have many serious flaws. These flaws are a major reason why culture surveys are not quality assessment tools. The reasons are too lengthy to include in the body of this book and they have applicability to other sections, so the reasons are an appendix – “Why satisfaction surveys don’t tell you what you need to know.”
- Respondents must be motivated and informed enough to offer a valid response – difficult to achieve.
- General nature of off-the-shelf surveys may not target the unique nature of camp completely, and the focus may not be on the right elements. Organizations with 50% turnover a year, that operate for three months a year for 24 hours a day (or day camps) in a closed community are quite the anomaly. Also, there are over a dozen culture surveys, but I think only a select few are worth using (addressed under the taxonomies section).
- The results often contain only superficial elements of culture; they don’t get at the fundamental assumptions that matter. Surveys are usually on the level of artifacts and espoused values (see framework). They can answer what, and sometimes how, but not why. How people perceive the organization and how they would like it to be almost always overlooks the deeper elements of culture. Those deeper elements are the ones that must be known to act in a productive way. This point will make much more sense after reading the culture framework in the next major section.
- The depth of the responses is likely to be insufficient, because shared assumptions are difficult to tap. Culture is a group phenomenon.
- Culture is so broad that to fully tap all the characteristics the survey would be hundreds of questions long. Surveys are limited in what they can assess. They aren’t, and can’t be, broad enough.
- *Why* is it a certain way – empowered or not, for example? It is difficult to get an accurate picture from a survey. Again, surveys are usually on an espoused values level, and not the shared-assumption level. Why has to be assessed in some other way. A short answer for each culture domain is interesting, but it makes culture surveys extremely long.
- Accuracy of judges: they must be *competent/skilled/knowledgeable* enough to offer an accurate judgment, and have enough *exposure/opportunity/information* to rate the element in question. If you want to get as close as possible to the truth (and why wouldn’t you?), you need those elements. Parents, campers, and staff frequently don’t satisfy the criteria of an accurate judge. If they were accurate judges with enough information, we wouldn’t get results like those in the “Is it all good?” appendix. Steps should be taken to increase their accuracy. Incidentally, this is also particularly troublesome in staff performance evaluations. An excellent staff person at one camp could be rated as average or unacceptable at another similar camp with a different rater.

C o n s u l t a n t r e v i e w

Have a trained cultural consultant/anthropologist come and observe for at least a couple of days. This person is also usually the one who does the interviews, conducts focus groups, and provides a survey tool that is as useful as possible. This person isn’t part of the culture under consideration, so his or her perspective is fresh. The culture consultant provides the culture model, creates an appropriate setting for inquiry, and asks discerning questions so that everyone involved can help piece together the culture puzzle. The discovery is usually an iterative process where more and more pieces are uncovered and their relation to each other is slowly divulged after many wrong turns. A final report is also usually generated by this individual.

While a culture consultant is vital because of their skills, knowledge, broad experience, and fresh perspective, this person doesn’t know enough of the cultural nuances to be able to make a complete assessment. Multiple methods are essential.

Can’t afford a consultant or don’t want one? Use the “Do-it-yourself” culture assessment kit in the appendix.

I n t e r v i e w

In general, interviews have more benefits than limitations. Their primary problems are that they are time consuming, discussions are filtered through the interviewer’s biases, and a thorough job can only be done on a very small subsample of the population. The benefits of interviews are discussed below.

By taking the group element out (as with a focus group), the social pressure to say certain things and not others can be removed. A level of rapport and trust can be built up with someone outside of the culture and more honest answers and opinions can be offered.

People’s satisfaction, their expectations, and the range of their expectations can all be tapped in an interview. Those boons are the bane of surveys. Interviewers may also assess areas of concern and the intensity of the feeling around them.

Interviews should take place on an administration level, general staff level, and perhaps camper level on some domains. Campers can be interviewed to the extent of their cognitive/developmental capabilities and their ability to comment knowledgeably about the topic. Representativeness across and within levels is the goal.

The interviewer can tap into the cultural history of the organization. Some old-timers who remember what the camp was like 10, 20, 30, or even 50 years ago can be interviewed. Memory can be a fickle thing, but some useful insight into where the camp was and how it evolved into what it is today culturally is sure to be revealed. Also on a historical vein, it is possible to examine how past leaders changed elements of the culture. What was the same after their time and what was different?

A quality cultural interviewer needs to get at the deeper assumptions that are operating, understand culture acutely, and adaptively utilize that broad framework to hone in on important areas. Furthermore, the interviewer must have a theoretical understanding of and practical experience in judging responses to questions and offered information. Once the artifacts, espoused values, and deep assumptions (see culture framework section) have been tapped, it is necessary to try and understand how those developed over time and what purpose they are serving. Such a qualified person makes interviews a valuable tool.

F o c u s g r o u p s

What holds true for interviews largely holds true for focus groups. Their main drawback is that people in a group are less likely to offer comments that may hurt the camp, themselves, or their coworkers. Other social phenomena, such as social inhibition and the complex interpersonal dynamics that the focus-group leader can't really know about, further complicate the message. Anonymity can help, but it isn't enough.

On the plus side, more people can be tapped much faster. Also, focus groups offer the potential for people to encourage each other as people feed off responses and ideas.

J o u r n a l i n g b y f r e s h e y e s

Select a small (5% of *overall* staff), diverse group of new staff to be your cultural eyes. So, for a total staff of 80, 4 of the new hires would be chosen. Besides very initial impressions, new staff don't know the culture yet. Pay them 25% percent extra to give you a culture audit. Give them time. Give them knowledge of culture – this book. Give them a journal.

They give you a thorough report based on the framework of cultural elements – artifacts, espoused values, underlying assumptions, and assessments on the various categorical elements. It has the further benefit of positively influencing the culture just by taking place. People see that the camp is open, caring, learning, and values its staff, among other things. Fresh eyes are lost quickly and they are almost impossible to regain, but an analysis of the assimilation process is almost always highly informative. Plus, they're fun to read!

Although this approach is wonderful, keep in mind that you selected these staff. They have already gone through an enculturation (see that section) process that insures that their mindset is similar to yours. How you selected the subset of fresh eyes from all the new staff usually further ensures their similarity. What these fresh eyes can see is limited. However, again, this approach is very worthwhile and valuable!

V i s i t i n g o t h e r c a m p s

Just like travel to other countries can bring the familiar into stark relief, travel to other camps can serve a similar purpose. *For this to work out well, a thorough understanding of culture must be present.*

Going on a standards visit or touring the camp for a little bit will not be enough to make the experience worth while. In essence, a small-scale culture audit would be conducted. That would take clear purpose and time. It's hard to imagine it happening in less than two dedicated days.

People believe they understand much about a camp from a tour or standards visit, but the knowledge isn't enough to work with on a cultural level. On the visit, the observer can examine documents, buildings, and other physical realities. Some behavior of staff and campers might be witnessed as well. A good idea of the espoused values can be gleaned by the thorough observer of camp life and paper documentation. Some of the deeper assumptions that run through the camp will also be observed. All of that is true *for the astute and careful observer*, but what will be seen is too small a fraction of the culture to draw a firm or complete picture. It is like saying you know someone after spending the day with them. That's true to a degree, but forming any judgments of merit or worth based on so little information is bound to get you into trouble. As the breadth and nature of culture become more clear as you read on, you'll understand that brief visits, which aren't solely dedicated to understanding the culture, are of little utility.

A consultant inherently brings this perspective to bear to some degree. S/he has examined camp cultures in depth at numerous camps. That experience and lens is brought to the analysis at hand.

Understanding culture in depth

Overview

Okay, so you've got an idea about what culture is generally, why it is important to assess it, and some methods for tapping into it. Immediately following is a little knowledge about how culture is created. From there, a more specific framework for understanding culture will be described, followed by a discussion of culture strength. At that point, offering some taxonomies of culture should make more sense and be more useful. Next are some words on how to enculturate new employees so that the culture may be continued or adjusted as necessary. Understanding enculturation should shed some light on the general nature of culture as well. Finally, this section will finish with a few high-order structural elements that play a heavy hand in determining what the culture is like.

How is culture created?

Very briefly, it should be instructive to think about how culture is created before diving into the details of the framework for understanding cultures.

- Primary methods
 - What is measured, attended to, and controlled on a regular basis
 - Where emotion is placed and how much of it
 - Rewards, punishments, and allocation of scarce resources
 - What happens during critical incidents
 - Role plays, modeling, and coaching
 - How leaders hunt for staff, select them, train staff, cull for return, and excommunicate members
- Secondary methods
 - Structures, processes, policies, and outcomes
 - Rituals, rites, traditions, etc.
 - Physical space
 - Stories, legends, myths, songs
 - Formal statement of philosophy, values, mission, vision, creed

The founder(s) creates most of the above and thus sets the culture in such a way that it has a very long-term influence. As long as a radical culture change didn't take place (i.e., new owner, dramatic turnaround), much of the original culture has likely remained for decades or even more than a century. The strength of that culture is another issue entirely, which is addressed in a later section.

What shapes a culture through its evolution is "success." Success is in quotes because it should not be equated with achieving outcomes (see "Is it all good?" appendix). Instead, success refers to the culture working for people in that environment. Hitler's culture was a success, but it didn't ultimately achieve all of its intended outcomes. The American marketing/consumerism culture continues to succeed and do well even though it harms people in some ways. To use a camp example, at more than one camp I've been to, it "worked" in the culture to have staff stay out after curfew, drink on camp property, and punish children in inappropriate ways. These things worked in those cultures for many reasons, including that the staff subculture had enough trust, cohesion, and a "don't rat" philosophy for these behaviors to pass. At one camp, the administration had a shared assumption of "hear no evil, see no evil." In other words, as long as it didn't come to their attention or get out of hand, it was okay. It should also be noted that success can mean the preservation of the culture, and the long-term sustainability of it could be characterized as successful. The last portion of the "From good to great" resource has important implications here as well.

Thus, cultures can be successful on many fronts, and that success tends to create more entrenched norms and values. A camp might be quite fun and safe and succeed in staying in business even though it isn't achieving other outcomes, or achieving them to a sufficient degree. Success in terms of personal growth is an entirely different animal, because (a) the norms and values may not serve to achieve desired outcomes, and (b) success doesn't just ride on culture (e.g., structures, processes, policies, wider culture, etc.). See the "Exceptional camps: A simple model" appendix.

Sustaining a culture mainly involves making sure the primary and secondary methods stay in line with the cultural assumptions that are desired to be perpetuated. Cultures invariably evolve over time, but that evolution can be directed and controlled to a large degree with conscious and consistent effort. Of particular importance for camps (due to high turnover) is the enculturation of new members, which is covered later in this section.

Finally, the question often arises as to the time required to create culture. The answer is that a culture forms the moment a group of people get together, but it is initially quite shallow. The longer the group is together, the more intricate the norms and values become. What changes over time is that the norms and values touch more areas, more deeply. Camps tend to have long and intense days, which matures the culture quickly. As a general rule of thumb, three weeks is long enough to create a fairly deep and meaningful culture in a camp. However, an enduring, strong culture takes years to develop. The timeline will vary depending on how well the camp wields the cultural tools that forge or fracture the evolving culture.

Three fundamental levels of culture - framework

Understanding the three fundamental levels of culture is absolutely crucial. For most readers, this is likely new material. It might require a slow, careful reading a couple times for the concepts to really sink in. Know that it will be well worth your while and that this summary is far shorter and more targeted than you would find in other books or articles.

Think of “espoused values” as principles the camp would like to see in as many places as possible like teamwork, fun, innovation, and safety. “Deep assumptions” are the real drivers of behavior, which can be the same as the declared principles, or something quite different. Finally, things in the observable world – objects, behaviors, and feelings, are called “artifacts.” Two examples are below, and more can be found in the introduction or the “Stories” appendix. The glossary also provides a quick summary.



Observable World



Espoused Values



Deep Assumptions

Espoused Value	Deep Assumption	Observable world (Artifacts)
We have an open door policy	The door isn't open very much and it may close on your fingers	The measure of an open door policy is how many people walk through it. Very few people ever do, and a few regret taking the opportunity. Offered suggestions are frequently given only lip service. What the camp rewards, punishes, and pays attention to keeps people away.
Staff are appreciated	Ditto	Staff enjoy: free laundry, good working conditions, staff parties, van transportation into town, nice staff lounge, food treats, personal development, professional development, etc.

Observable world (Artifacts) – Level One

Fossils and physical remnants of cultures long past are what most people think of when they hear the word artifact. While that is accurate, it is a narrow, singular definition, according to dictionaries and cultural anthropologists. In fact, artifacts can also include things such as mental states and any behavior.

A more encompassing, useful definition is: artifacts are the objects, behaviors, and feelings in a given environment. *Think of artifacts as the observable world.* Camps, banks, movie theaters, homes, and grocery stores all have artifacts. They are what and how people do things, what they use, and how they feel about all of it. Artifacts are representations of structures, policies, activities, and procedures.

Because artifacts are so inclusive of just about everything people note and think about, that is often the level of many cultural analyses. In other words, when people think about or study culture, it is frequently on the level of objects, behaviors, and feelings. That is unfortunate, because artifacts don't tell you a lot of what you must know about culture. Most importantly, you don't know why people are behaving a certain way, why certain objects are or are not around and what they are used for, and why people feel the way they do. To get at why, the cultural anthropologist must talk to the people in the environment and find out what the espoused values and deep assumptions are.

Take the example of Camp Freedom and Camp Momentum. At the first camp, campers are free to move around the camp at will most of the day and manage their own affairs without any predetermined schedule of any kind. Staff create their own loose schedules with only basic guidelines. At Camp Momentum, a daily schedule is created and everyone knows exactly what they are supposed to be doing and when. Things happen quickly and according to a master clock. At the level of these artifacts, you know what people are doing, but you don't really know what it all means. You don't really know why they are behaving differently, although you might find that your guesses can sometimes be accurate.

Perhaps some examples would help define more clearly what artifacts are. A few objects, behaviors, and feelings (affects) are described in general terms below. Reading about the other two levels will also help enormously.

Objects, things, symbols:

clothing (uniforms, dress code), awards (paddles, patches, shields, paper), rewards (money, access to objects and places), punishments (withdrawal of objects, money, or access), specific language as symbols (jargon), journals or logs, books, fire circles, sculpture, laundry room, what buildings look like, what is and isn't in buildings, what is and isn't in the outside environment, how objects are organized and arranged, food, the style of things (e.g., buildings, dress, groomed or ungroomed natural environment, etc.), religious symbols, equipment, and everything else that can be pointed to.

Behaviors:

how people conduct meetings, what counselors are like with children, what counselors are like with each other, the activities the children engage in, how children go through their day, working hours, what people do in their time off, who is rewarded and punished for what and why, how command works, what the formal and informal hierarchy are like, how problems are handled, what kind of person is hired (e.g., age, ethnicity, gender), who is fired and for what, how people are fired, what people generally do with objects, cliques and subgroups, how children and staff are grouped, rituals, what stories are told and how, what is thrown away and recycled, degree of teamwork, what happens to relationships after the summer, what happens in a crisis, what happens to people with personal problems, how hard people work, the number of conflicts, the nature of conflicts, what happens when conflicts occur, the relationship between new staff and old-timers, how long training is and what is included, return rates, ongoing training, what happens to suggestions, where awards are placed, and every other behavior.

Affective states:

morale, enthusiasm, trust, fun, level of emotional involvement overall and in regard to specific objects and behaviors, relaxed or stressed, energized or sapped, tired or refreshed, satisfied, empowered, etc.

Artifacts are like looking into a mirror. You can't see what's behind it, but rather only what the surface reflects back to you. Often, you'll see yourself, as you interpret the artifacts according to your assumptions.

E s p o u s e d V a l u e s – L e v e l T w o

I must reiterate a crucial point. Cultural analyses frequently describe the culture on the level of artifacts. Artifacts are elemental, but they don't tell enough of the story to be useful in and of themselves. Insight into culture must also tap espoused values and deep assumptions and see how they both relate to the artifacts. When that is done, a more complete picture of the culture can be viewed.

Espoused values are the principles that the organization advocates. These values can be found in things like brochures, web sites, mission statements, "we believe that," why we do it this way, posters, orientation speeches, manuals and handbooks, principles, and other documents. A fairly thorough list of these values can usually be made quite readily, although it is rarely all in one place. A complete and organized list usually requires some interviewing of senior administration while discussing things like structures, policies, processes, and outcomes.

Some *examples* of things that end up on such lists are: integrity, teamwork, empowerment, good communication, non-hierarchical, innovative, creative, customer orientation, product quality, positive role models, multi-cultural environment, expert staff, environmentally friendly and active, non-competitive, individual attention, safe, fun, selflessness, learning organization, trust, continuous improvement, accountability, fiscal responsibility, deeply care for staff physical and emotional health, professional development and individual growth are important for all staff, build social and emotional skills, everyone should help and pitch in when there is a need, etc.

The result of paper combing, listening, and interviewing folks is a *wish list* of espoused values. Whether or not the camp got what it wished for is another question entirely. The administration should ask themselves what the relationship is between the espoused values and the visible behavior (artifacts). What would you expect to see, what do you actually see, and for how many is it true (culture strength)? Those questions bring us to the level of culture discussed shortly – deep assumptions. *An espoused value that is real in the artifacts is also a deep assumption. If it is only espoused, but not reflected in the artifacts, it is not a deep assumption.*

Espoused value = artifacts = true espoused value (deep assumption & espoused value are the same thing)

Espoused value ≠ artifacts = false espoused value (hidden deep assumption operating)

Structures, processes, and policies are put into place to help insure that espoused values are in line with artifacts. For example, to encourage recycling and environmentally friendly behavior (espoused value), a camp built a recycling shed and compost center (structures). It set up a cabin rotation schedule (process) to take care of those duties, and it bought as many items as possible from recycled material (policy).

Those actions are extremely important, but a camp may have artifacts in line with espoused values (truly also a deep assumption) and not be *generally* effective. For example, a camp may have a very fun and safe environment, but that doesn't automatically equate to a camp which improves self-esteem or emotional intelligence in the long run. The proper ingredients for each outcome must be in the mix. In other words, a proven recipe (structures, processes, and policies), of which there is more than one, for *each* outcome must be in place (see the Exceptional camps: A simple model" appendix). Combine the recipe with a culture that is strong (see culture strength section), and you'll have a camp that achieves its outcomes. Whether or not that is the case is a question for evaluation (see those resources).

It should be noted that camps can have the same espoused values, but go about achieving them in diverse ways (artifacts). Most camps claim to be environmentally friendly and active, however, one camp may foster and practice this in an urban university setting while another may do it deep in nature. The artifacts are largely different, but the espoused value is the same. Whether or not environmentally friendly outcomes really exist determines if it is just an espoused value, or if it also a deep assumption. Let's return to the example of Camp Freedom and Camp Momentum. Both espouse values of teamwork, positive role models, expert staff, individual attention, creativity, etc. Okay, so they have the same espoused values, but quite different artifacts. There must be more to the picture than a few more espoused values to explain this. There is, and the differences lie primarily in the deep assumptions, which are discussed in the next section on the third level of culture.

More examples for insight

Let me make two points about espoused values in action – one about parents' perception of camp and the other about preaching them to staff. What parents understand of camp is usually from a lovely print brochure, website, video, telephone conversation, and in-person description of the espoused values with a description of some appealing artifacts. Visiting days are frequently carefully choreographed events that are designed to show how well the espoused values and artifacts match the parents' expectations. It is fairly rare that parents see areas where the match isn't tight or where an entirely different deep assumption is operating. When parents complain, it is because they have noticed an artifact that is different from the espoused value they felt they were promised. They're calling you on the fact that it isn't a universal deep assumption.

Ironically, *sometimes* the espoused values that are pushed the most reflect the areas where the camp is particularly ineffective. The reason for the ineffectiveness is often that there is a contradictory cultural assumption hidden somewhere. For example, teamwork and empowerment can be preached, but what are the hidden messages being given and received on both ends? Is teamwork or individual effort rewarded more often? For empowerment, how many suggestions are offered, and what is the quality and quantity of special projects conducted? *The artifacts need to change and hidden deep assumptions need to be found*, instead of sounding the drum about certain espoused values.



Preaching and imploring rarely make much of an impact. Pep talks, Gipper speeches, and public admonitions happen because the culture is weak in some area. Start taking notes about when you need to address the staff (small groups or as a whole) about some problem or issue – you've found some artifacts that are telling you there are other deep assumptions operating within the camp, which weakens it. A very common example is doing things (pep talks, parties, etc.) to get staff over some hump in the summer where they start lagging. At a lot of camps, there is no lag in the first place; no such issue ever presents itself. The lag (artifact) is an indication of a problem that needs to be solved. When the culture is strong, pep talks can yield a little spin up, but if you're hunting for more than that, save your breath and look for the underlying problem in the artifacts (e.g., number of staff, quality of staff, demands on their time, difficulty of situation, etc.). See the "Staff motivation" resource. Correcting the artifacts so that they are in line with the deep assumption is *far more powerful* than anything you could ever say to the staff or an individual.

Explanation

Connection between espoused values and deep assumptions

In one sense, *deep assumptions can be thought of as the espoused values that match the artifacts*. Thus, the values that are preached are what actually happens in practice in terms of what things are around, how they are placed, how people interact with them, what people do, and how people feel. Certainly this happens along a continuum, which will be discussed in the culture strength section. But, the general idea is the match between espoused values and the artifacts.

Still in the same vein, sometimes the value that drives the artifacts is not espoused or declared, but the unstated value still determines the artifacts to a large degree. This is a case of a hidden, invisible, background, “natural,” or taken-for-granted deep assumption that drives artifacts. The artifacts are examined in as much detail as possible and matched with espoused values. The ones that don’t match up are new deep assumptions. *Uncovering these is both helpful and exciting*.

Unwrapping these deep assumptions is always a good thing, but what the deep assumption actually is can be either good or bad. People find this complex, so I’ll go over it more carefully. When an espoused value matches the artifacts, that espoused value is a deep assumption that drives behavior. It isn’t just “espoused,” it is actually held in people’s minds and hearts. Great. However, when an espoused value doesn’t match up with the artifacts well, you know that you’ve got a “new” deep assumption. When that cultural assumption creates artifacts that help the camp achieve its outcomes, then you’ve found a deep assumption that should be an espoused value. However, *you are* also going to find deep assumptions that drive behavior that are not in line with the espoused values (existing or discovered) and desired outcomes. Those are the most valuable gems, because bringing them into the light is the first step in changing them. Changing them is the true power and promise of leadership. Changing culture is addressed later in an entire section.

Introduction to deep assumption domains

Okay, now we’re going to shift gears and go over some general deep assumption domains and examples that will help tap the culture. Going over these is *another way* to discover deep assumptions besides looking for discrepancies between artifacts and espoused values, and misfit artifacts that don’t seem to match up anywhere. These deep assumptions are covered in the next section. As a primer to those domains and questions, it is helpful to very briefly reconsider the formation, continuation, and status of many deep assumptions.

Eventually, many cultural values and norms become background assumptions that are rarely if ever thought about. They are taken for granted. They become tacit assumptions about the nature of the world and how we succeed in it. It often unfolds like the following. The founder sets the general cultural principles, which are refined over time, but rarely fundamentally changed. People buy into the story of why the organization is there and their role in it. Then they form shared assumptions around those beliefs. New people join (selected for cultural synch to a large degree already) and are exposed to and come to adopt those beliefs, and eventually take them for granted. In this way the culture propagates itself. Without change pressures, the culture will become more and more entrenched. It also becomes more and more invisible. The following domains and questions should help uncover at least a few deep assumptions.

One other quick way to discover deep assumptions is to be mindful of something known as “cultural indigestion.” When deep assumptions are violated by some event or person, cultural indigestion results, which can uncover deep assumptions for the insightful. For example, if a staff member wears a thong bathing suit to the lake, it may become clear that such attire is inappropriate, even though it wasn’t really explicitly thought of before the event. Other examples might include pillow fights, use of loud music, coloring hair, saying prayers, eating habits, physical play, choice of discipline, et cetera. While useful to note, the indiscretions don’t happen often enough and across a wide enough range to reveal much of the culture. Incidents of cultural indigestion that repeat frequently end up as formal policy.

Example domains of deep assumptions

This section walks you through some parts of a cultural analysis using questions and reflection. They are elements of culture. Every domain is involved in all cultures, but whether or not specific pieces of them are done or not, why they are done, how they are done, and how often they are done is all culturally determined. In other words, there is variation between camps as to what is done and why, and that variation is culturally influenced. Please note that this is not a complete list, but rather just some food for thought. The taxonomies offered later are more fodder in our quest to make the fuzzy nature of culture more explicit.

So that it can be fully utilized, this exercise should be done by several people. It works well to have a small group of leadership and counselors sketch answers individually and then come together as a group and review them with further discussion. Of even further benefit is to have a small group of 2 or 3 people from 3 or 4 different camps get together to review cultural assumptions.

Since many of these elements can be thought of just on the artifact level, be careful to look deeper and try and unearth the deep assumption that explain why something is the way it is. Try and find the value and reason for the artifacts.

○ Reality and truth

- In Western culture, we tend to be pragmatic – we believe in that which works . . . that which has been proven in terms of goals and outcomes.
- Alternatively, sometimes moral principles, religious doctrine, or leaders are viewed as those who hold “the truth.”
- Often the leader holds the truth about what is right and wrong, good and bad. Even when another higher form of power is cited, the leader’s interpretation of it is seen as that which is right. “Because **I** know what **I**’m doing and **I**’ve learned.” “Because **I** said so.” Rarely are those words specifically used, but the intent is often cited. Truth comes from I and sometimes we. It is said that many camp directors enjoy the position because they are kings in their own little realm/world. Examine the nature of reality and truth. What is true, what is not, and how are things to be done? Are things decreed? Why? What is the nature of evidence for given ways of doing things?
- Is “fact” based on formal reasoning and careful evaluation? Are opinions ever held as truth? When people offer opinions, what gives those opinions credibility? Is the evidence based on formal reasoning and careful analysis? Would they stand up to careful scrutiny?
- Consider the following examples of how real, ACA accredited, American summer camps operating today differ in what is considered right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate. These are all different camps. Reality, virtue, and vice change as you walk into the worlds of different camps – it’s incredible to experience it all within a single summer!
 - At one camp, sex on camp property by staff is grounds for being fired. At another, the camp provides a location, clean sheets, condoms, and a scheduling system for staff.
 - At one camp, having alcohol on camp grounds is cause for dismissal. At another, a sanctioned spot is arranged on camp property.
 - At one camp, everyone must wear a uniform at all times. At another co-ed camp, clothing is completely (full nudity) optional all the time on the part of campers (9-16) and staff. This camp is not ACA accredited, but it is large, longstanding, and has name recognition for many.
 - At one camp, children must be supervised at all times. They can never be out of sight. At another, children are free to wander around camp at will and without a schedule. Meal times, cabin gatherings, and all-camp activities are the only times a head count is done.
 - At one camp, counselors live in the same buildings with children. At another, counselors live in separate structures near the children – true for all ages.
 - At one camp, rest hour was completely silent with everyone lying down. At another, everyone could be as loud as they pleased, but they had to stay in their cabins.
 - At one camp, color war is a time honored tradition, while at another, such “barbaric competition amongst children is a prime example of what’s wrong with the world.”
 - At one camp, hunting live animals and playing paintball were normal activities. At another, archery and riflery were not offered because of their violent nature and history.
 - At one camp, only male (female) counselors lived with male (female) children. At another, female counselors lived with male children – even teenagers.

○ Human nature

- Can people be changed, and if so, how quickly and under what circumstances? When is it worth it to try and change people? How much time and resources should be spent? When should losses be cut? Think about this in terms of staff and campers.
- Theories of motivation.
 - Theory X – people are lazy and work only when given incentives. Time clocks, signature sheets, drop-in visits, surveillance, etc. are useful in making sure staff perform. What are the messages behind the incentive and control systems?
 - Theory Y – people are motivated to work and only need the resources and opportunities. More delegation, teaching, and the development of incentives and controls are used with the staff and campers.

The above are two extremes, but where do you fall on the continuum overall and in specific domains? People will react to the situation as it is set up (review the basic idea of culture in the beginning). In other words, when theory X is used heavily, staff react to it, and that often reinforces the idea that such a stance is necessary. In general, Theory Y organizations are better performers. How curfew is handled is one indicator of which theory camps adhere to more.

- When problems arise, are we responsible for how we act, think, and feel, or is the primary cause some person, place, or thing? Who is in control? Who is responsible? What actions should be taken and by whom?
- What is more important than money?
- Individual or group focus
 - For the counselors, how individual or group (team) focused is your camp? If the focus varies, on what variables does the variation hinge? Why those variables? Does the structure of the day reflect that?
 - How are the incentives and controls reflected in this view? When things go well or badly, does the finger generally point to individuals or teams?
 - How should children move through the day? In groups? As individuals choosing activities? Some mix of the two? If so, what mix is appropriate?
- Activities, structures, policies, and outcomes
 - Activities
 - For the number of campers and staff, how many activities are enough? Why that number?
 - Which activities should and should not be a part of a camp experience? {archery, arts and crafts, baseball, basketball, BMX bike course, camp craft, canoeing, ceramics, climbing wall, dance, drama & theater, fencing, fishing, fitness, golf, gymnastics, horse back riding, kayaking, lacrosse, mountain biking, music, nature, newspaper, photography, radio station, riflery, rocketry, ropes course, sailing, singing, soccer, softball, street hockey, swimming, tennis, tripping, volleyball, water skiing, windsurfing, woodshop, wrestling. }
 - What is an appropriate evening program?
 - What are appropriate special activities? How often should they be run and for whom?
 - Should ages mix at activities?
 - Should genders mix at activities?
 - Do children need to leave camp in order to have fun sometimes? If so, is it tripping, special sites, amusement parks, special local events, or . . . ?
 - Can children get themselves from one activity to another, or must they be supervised during those transition points?
 - Structures
 - Is the camp centralized or decentralized?
 - Coed or single gender?
 - What is an appropriate age range to serve? How does service change as age increases?
 - What population of children should be served (special needs, at-risk, “normal,” elite, special interests, etc.)?
 - What is an appropriate session length?
 - Does it matter if the camp is urban, suburban, or rural?
 - How insular or community focused should the camp be? How often does the camp interact with the community and why?
 - What is an appropriate camper-to-counselor ratio? Why?
 - Few would admit they don’t have a quality staff, but it does rest along a continuum. If a 10 is a staff person with qualities that almost all camps would say is the best they’ve ever seen, and a 1 is a person who somehow made it through the hiring process, but whom virtually all camps would later fire, what level of staff quality is necessary and where are you now? This is not a valid measure, but it helps with the conceptual point.
 - What is an appropriate number of quality administrative staff for the number of counselors and campers? What are their primary and secondary functions?
 - Policies
 - What are appropriate bedtimes for campers and staff?
 - What is the food like (vegetarian, options, mandatory eating, sweets, who prepares, how often, etc.)?
 - Piercing, tattoos, facial hair, hair style, appropriate clothing, jewelry, etc.
 - Competitive or non-competitive? Is there an award system? What are the criteria?
 - What role should religion and spirituality play?
 - What sort of relationships are allowed between staff?
 - What is the smoking, alcohol, and other drug policy?
 - What are the criteria for sending a child home?
 - What are the criteria for firing a staff member? How does that process happen?

- Is there a curfew? Is it enforced?
- Can children who know each other be grouped together?
- What is the policy on candy?
- Are television and other electronic media (e.g., computers, music, game devices) allowed at camp?
- What is the policy on children being allowed to make phone calls? When can parents visit?
- Should there be a scholarship fund? For whom?
- Outcomes
 - What are the outcomes of value in your camp? Rank them. For a list of outcomes, see the evaluation resource. The processes are how you go about achieving them (see process modeling resource).
 - Are the staff viewed as clients as well (meaning they too have outcomes addressed like those for children)?
- How relationships are defined
 - Organizational structure: Hierarchical and formal vs. flat and matrix like
 - Who can you talk to and about what (personal life, problems, successes, other people, suggestions, etc)? What are the things that can and cannot be said and to whom? How are confidences kept? Clean communication (not talking about people behind their backs)? How are disagreements and grievances handled?
 - How often and when are evaluations conducted? What is the feeling around them? How honest can people be? Are evaluations bi-directional, one way, or 360 degree?
 - Are there policies about intimate relationships? For whom? What are the boundaries?
 - How close are people supposed to get to one another? Are contacts encouraged throughout the year?
 - Are contact lists handed out for campers and counselors to contact one another? Is this information freely available?
 - How do folks talk to people on all levels? How do meetings go? How assertive are people?
- Time
 - Is time something leisurely or hurried?
 - Should children/staff/you try and do as much as possible, or spend time doing “nothing?”
 - Should people try and do many things at once, or one thing slowly?
 - Is being a little late okay, or is punctuality important, sometimes down to the minute?
 - When things don’t happen on time, what happens?
 - What factors put pressure on time? Are those factors immutable? If so, why?
 - How much unstructured free time should children and staff be allowed in a day?
- Space
 - Generally: What is the physical layout of the camp like and why is it that way? How groomed or ungroomed is the natural environment? What do building looks like? What is and isn’t inside different buildings? What is and isn’t in the outside environment? See “symbols” appendix.
 - How are cabins/tents/shelters laid out? Groups? Different ages?
 - Are there separate counselor rooms in the cabins? Do counselors live separate from campers?
 - How much space is there between people within buildings and cabins?
 - How is the camp laid out? Where are key buildings? Where are ancillary buildings? How far apart are things? What are sole-purpose areas? What are multi-purpose areas?
 - How are offices arranged?
 - Does space reflect any kind of hierarchy or tenure?
 - Where is gear stored and why? Do campers have cubbies, trunks, or . . .?
 - For all of the above, what is being communicated? Why was the decision made to have it that way?
- Your place in camping
 - How is your camp defined relative to other camps and youth serving agencies? What are future aspirations?
 - Does your camp view itself as dominating, leading, fitting in a niche, or just largely going with the flow?

- How rewards and status are allocated
 - What kind of behavior is rewarded and what is punished? How do you know when you've been rewarded or punished? Is it overt, covert, or a mix? If people aren't going to be invited back, is that information divulged to them? Do people understand their true standing (status) and performance?
 - When people are rewarded, is it clear to everyone that they were rewarded and for what? How about with punishment?
 - Is it clear what status rests on? Think of this on a formal and informal level to fully appreciate this element.
 - Who consults whom and for what? Hierarchy? Status? Knowledge?
 - What do people do during their free time? How hard do people work? Do those elements reflect status, rewards, and punishments? What are the degrees that separate various levels of status, rewards, and punishments? Are those appropriate?
 - See following section on group boundaries – who is in and out. Who is rewarded?
 - See following section on measurement – situational problems and successes

- Measurement

Measurement provides windows to the environment. It is a way of determining what's going on. Camps develop their own ways of doing this, and if it “works,” the camp believes that their way of doing it is correct. Cultural assumptions determine in large part what kind of information is gathered and how it is interpreted. Evaluations based on formal reasoning and best practices are exceedingly rare in the camping industry.

 - Internal
 - Fun assessments, general and specific satisfaction questionnaires (campers, staff, administration, parents), letters and testimonials, exit interviews, follow-up phone calls, return rates (campers, staff, admin), walking around and observing, etc.
 - Formal evaluations assessing outcomes (see evaluation resources)
 - Knowledge management (see separate resource)
 - Financial results as evaluation
 - External
 - Benchmarking (see separate resource)
 - Conferences
 - Books
 - *Camping Magazine* and related industry publications
 - Discussion groups with directors of other camps
 - Consultants
 - Situational problems and successes
 - Blaming culture – tendency to think in terms of simple cause and effect. Stems from a basic need for control. In reality, almost any error is the result of a long chain of things that lead up to it. If the culture values mistakes (see that resource), simple cause-and-effect explanations are rarely offered. Blaming cultures are extraordinarily common, although most camps would vehemently deny that any such thing existed.
 - What happens to those who are blamed? Given less responsibility, change jobs, watched closely, dismissed, tagged for not being allowed back, education and rehabilitation, or . . . ?
 - “After action reviews” “Project postmortems” Examine the processes, structures, policies, and wider camp culture that facilitated the failure, error, or success. The goal is to build learning into the process. Individual consequences may follow, but responsibility for the end result is almost always distributed. Only if enough trust and teamwork have formed over time and if systematic reviews are successful will “postmortems” work. See “The art and science of mistakes” resource.
 - Are successes individually or collectively acknowledged? Do people cover up for each other? If the value is teamwork, how are reward and consequences usually delivered – to the team or to individuals?

- Common language and symbols
 - Most likely, your camp has words that either couldn't be found in the dictionary, or that have specialized meanings that outsiders would be unaware of or find strange. What are they and what do they convey? Make a list and define the camp meaning as well as the hidden meaning or more subtle meanings. Think about how these things originated.
 - How do people dress? What is allowed and what isn't? Is there a uniform? What does it mean? Why is it this way? Are people allowed to wear only certain things at specific times (e.g., camp shirts)?
 - See the appendix on symbols for more information.

- Group boundaries: Who is in and who is out
 - Everybody has ways of determining degrees of membership. In many ways, these lines can be blurred as people pass between subgroups without hassle, but there are almost always groups within the same hierarchical level (e.g., counselors) and between levels (e.g., counselors and administration) where people know they aren't really very welcome.
 - With varying degrees of membership comes the explicit or implicit assumption that you will be more loyal. How far does that loyalty go and what is just short of that point? What are the different subgroups in existence? How fluid are the group boundaries? What things are they not fluid about? Groups don't care about some things, but care greatly about others. What does membership in a group cost you as well as benefit you? What do those lists look like?
 - Implicitly, membership is demonstrated by things such as when you are told "secrets" and by whom. When you know the scoop about what is really going on, who is who, secret histories, etc., you know you are part of a special group. The degree of what is known, about whom, and how many people (or specific special people) is a badge of sorts.
 - Explicit signs of group membership can be shown via favored parking places, "five-year t-shirts," special badges or patches, awards, where you get to live, areas of the camp you are allowed to go where others are not, who is allowed to borrow or use what, and things people are allowed to do that aren't universally applicable. What are the explicit signatures of membership in your camp?

S u m m i n g u p

Whew! That was a long list of deep assumptions! It certainly wasn't complete, but it should get the juices flowing about the scope and nature of what is culturally determined. All of those deep assumptions vary at different summer camps. The deep assumption domains and examples will help give some direction to a cultural analysis. See the "Do-it-yourself" assessment appendix for more information.

Does it matter which of the above pieces are in place and to what degree? Yes. What facilitates the outcomes you care about determines what cultural elements, structures, processes, and policies should be in place. See the "Exceptional camps: A simple model" appendix for a more detailed explanation.

Up until this point, culture has largely been described primarily as a unified whole. In reality, culture varies in the degree to which artifacts are linked to the deeper levels, and how widespread assumptions are adopted across and within hierarchical levels. Those elements of culture strength are described next.

Culture strength

“We have a close-knit camp.” “We’re a tight camp.” “We’re a strong community.” “We have a pretty strong culture around here.” What do statements like that mean? How does one know if the culture is strong or not and in what ways? Culture strength is frequently misunderstood and often examined from a limited perspective.

When a strong culture is combined with structures, policies, and processes that are in line with outcomes (and a recipe that really works), *culture strength is fundamental to achieving valued goals* (see the “Exceptional camps: A simple model” appendix). In other words, uniformity of motion (strong culture), and intelligent motion (recipe) toward your outcomes is the formula for success.

Having a “strong culture” is very important, but it isn’t enough. The idea that strong cultures create excellent performance is absolutely wrong. The strength of the culture is not the metric by which to evaluate success, even though many organizations proudly display or discuss their cultures as if it validated their efforts. *In fact, a strong culture indicates uniformity of motion, but it doesn’t indicate in which direction.* It must be combined with intelligent motion (recipe). Extreme cases of misdirected strong cultures are rare, but mild examples of it are quite common. Nonetheless, a strong culture is certainly necessary for exceptional performance.

Perhaps because of high self-esteem and pride, virtually all organizations indicate they have a strong culture, but research indicates that roughly only one third really do. Creating and maintaining a strong culture is quite difficult, as is discussed throughout this book. A more specific discussion follows the definition of culture strength below. It is important to clarify exactly what culture strength is, and to that end, a practical typology (integration, differentiation, and fragmentation) follows.

Three dimensions of culture strength

Fragmentation – across the three levels of culture

Fragmentation refers to the degree to which the three levels of culture – artifacts, espoused values, and deep assumption – are all in line. When the artifacts match up with the espoused values and deep assumptions to a large degree, the culture is not fragmented. Like the other two dimensions of culture strength, fragmentation occurs along a continuum.

In this case, a weak culture is one that isn’t well defined. A coherent view or vision of the desired culture hasn’t been created. If it has been, it is often just in the minds of a few key people and not effectively disseminated. Sometimes just the senior administration, director, or owner have a somewhat clear picture of it, but it isn’t effectively conveyed to the rest of the staff and campers. In either case, seemingly random events and unexplained behaviors keep popping up much to the confusion of those in charge. Anomalies, conflicts, and resistance (especially recurring) can’t be explained as logical, normal, and occurring within a larger system that explains it. Control and supervision are key factors in this camp. The camp likely has some espoused values with a loose connection to behavior and other artifacts, although the administration would certainly deny that is the case. In fact, weak cultures often go unidentified by those within it.

Deep assumptions are always in place, but a fragmented culture is something like a symphony orchestra warming up – a cacophony of sounds where each has a purpose, but there is no real rhyme or reason to the whole. It takes the conductor (leadership) to wield the baton and purposefully create the deep assumptions and espoused values, and then insure that they are in line with the artifacts. When the orchestra is on the same musical piece (fragmentation and integration) and working in harmony (differentiation), the culture is strong.

A culture that is strong in the fragmentation dimension has carefully considered its norms and values and they are known to all. The deep assumptions have been implicitly and explicitly mulled over and chosen carefully. The espoused values don’t look like a kitchen sink full of words, but rather a prudent, purposeful selection has been made. *The deep assumptions and espoused values can be seen in almost all the artifacts.* Artifacts are representations of structures, policies, and processes, and those have rhyme and reason when examined in light of the espoused values and deep assumptions. One could stop any staff person, ask for key outcomes and espoused values, and receive an intelligent response. In sum, the three levels of culture are in synch and it shows in people’s behavior, physical things, and folk’s mental states.

Integration – between hierarchical levels

Integration refers to the consistency of culture (artifacts, espoused values, and deep assumptions) across hierarchical levels. Do the counselors and administration have the same norms and values? Frequently, people will cite, to some degree, an “us” versus “them” mentality. When that is the case, the culture lacks a degree of integration. It should be considered along a continuum. Placed on a scale from 1 – 10 with 10 being “we are they” and 1 being “they are the enemy,” where would a variety of people from each group place the integration of the culture? Of course, culture should be assessed according to the principles and methods delineated earlier, but a quick check-in can be insightful.

When an “us” versus “them” culture exists to any degree, you can be sure that there are deep assumptions in conflict. The groups have different ideas about what is fair, reasonable, and correct. For example, they might place the hierarchy of needs (e.g., time off, socializing ability, appropriate work effort, means of interacting with other staff and children, freedom of expression, etc.) in a different order. *A feeling of they are not us (or me) is the result of unshared norms and values.*

Integration goes beyond the counselors and administration, although that is the most common place where integration isn’t very tight. It should also be examined between the senior and junior administration, if that hierarchy exists. Also look at the integration between the director and administration, director and board, counselors and campers, alumni and the camp as a whole, etc. When there is organization-wide consensus across levels, the culture is integrated. Between levels, everyone is “on the same page.”

Differentiation – within a hierarchical level

Differentiation refers to subcultures within organizational levels or groupings. Subgroups, cliques, and crowds are perhaps more common referents. People sometimes refer to this as cohesiveness. How homogenous is the culture among all the counselors? How is it with the administration? Are there good and bad groups in terms of how well they’ve internalized and act upon the cultural norms and values? At its most extreme, differentiation would look like a substantial number of individuals or very small groups with different cultural assumptions. To put it in terms of a metaphor, there would be islands of clarity (those in line with advocated culture) in a sea of ambiguity. The opposite extreme would be the virtual nonexistence of cultural subgroups.

As with integration, differentiation occurs when there are deep assumptions in conflict between these subgroups. *People behave differently because deep down they believe different things in some areas.* Behavior (artifacts) can be controlled to a degree through rewards and punishments, but even when that “works” well, it only offers a *vener* of an undifferentiated culture. But outcomes need to rest on more than a veneer; they need solid wood. When outcomes matter, a veneer is only a fragile ledge for a precarious existence.

It may *also* be the case that the deep assumptions causing the problems are not so much held by the subgroups as held by leaders who created the structures, processes, or policies in line with their deep assumptions. In this case, the subgroups are reacting more to the resulting situation (artifacts) than from a passionately felt deep assumption. For example, staff who can work well with seven hours (artifact) of sleep may resent being forced to get eight hours. The deep assumption of being well rested is the same. Structures, processes, and policies are frequently at the root of this kind of culture differentiation. Understanding these two roots (deep assumption or artifact) of differentiation is *crucial* to creating a beneficial environment for everyone, yet they are frequently overlooked.

Although differentiation is most common in the counselor ranks, it can take place within other groups as well. Sometimes units, sides of the camp, cabins, genders, ages, and even different camps with the same owner will have different (differentiation) cultural norms and values (assumptions).

I n c r e a s i n g c u l t u r e s t r e n g t h

A strong culture is fundamental (but not everything) for an organization to be truly successful. Increasing the strength of a culture is a slow, gradual process that is always worthwhile. A few pointers down that road are offered, but first it is important to distinguish between growing the culture strength gradually and developing it through culture change.

When the culture is already fairly strong, incremental, progressive steps are taken to further solidify the three dimensions of culture strength. Those steps are addressed below, but insight should be gained throughout the book. If the camp has some areas of weakness in its culture strength dimensions, the process of culture change is probably necessary depending on the degree. Culture change is more fundamental and extensive. That process is described in detail later in this book.

The first step is to do a full culture assessment. As has been discussed earlier, without an accurate picture of where you are, why, and where you need to go, making moves of the culture kind is like walking in a mind field without a map. The culture audit will reveal whether real culture change, and the whole process that goes with it, is necessary or not.

Generally speaking, when considering increasing the strength of your culture, you may find it helpful to review the “How is culture created?” portion at the beginning of this section. The enculturation section is also extremely vital. A few pointers on making a strong culture stronger follow.

F r a g m e n t a t i o n – a c r o s s t h e t h r e e l e v e l s o f c u l t u r e

The most important place to start when making gradual increases in strengthening culture is to address fragmentation. *A strong culture is based upon the foundation of deep assumptions and espoused values that are in line with artifacts.* Without this literal foundation, other efforts will have limited success, be in vain, or do real damage.

The assessment of your culture will uncover deep assumptions that were hidden, which may work in or against your favor. Remember that hidden deep assumptions can be good or bad. Of course, those that don't contribute to a unified culture need to be addressed. Much easier said than done! You will also likely find deep assumptions that need to be brought to everyone's attention and espoused in a purposeful way.

For both hidden and unhidden deep assumptions as well as espoused values, the culture audit will reveal how well they are all in line with the organization's artifacts. Along the way you'll discover a truism: all organizations have stable artifacts that aren't in line with cultural assumptions and values. *Strengthening your culture involves the tedious and meticulous process of trying to clean up as many of these inconsistencies as possible.* The stories appendix offers some examples, and the "do-it-yourself" assessment kit offers a guide.

Remember that artifacts are representations of structures, policies, and processes. Artifacts are also inclusive of all objects, behaviors, and consistent feelings. It is often the case that hidden (or not carefully cultivated and propagated) deep assumptions, of which the leadership wasn't explicitly aware, are not in line with the artifacts. The breadth of this task can seem daunting at first, but it is always worthwhile and feasible on the level of strengthening (not changing) the culture. Once started, people often find this invigorating and enjoyable. See the "From good to great" resource.

Also, as the "Tail that wags the dog" section describes, consider that one reason for artifact—deep assumption mismatch is due to wider structural issues, and not competing deep assumptions. An example would be a deep assumption of caring for the children, but the staffing levels and quality are insufficient to do that at an acceptable level. The artifact (quality care of children) is different from the deep assumption, but it isn't because of differing deep assumptions on the part of staff. The time, money, structures, and expertise necessary aren't available. On a different level, this is similar to the sleep example under differentiation earlier. Again, this is discussed further in the "Tail that wags the dog" section.

Integration – between hierarchical levels

When there is some difficulty with integration of the cultural assumptions that are espoused, the first place to look is fragmentation. Without a unfragmented culture, efforts toward working with integration and differentiation are going to fail to some degree. After that critical element, a lack of integration is the result of deep assumptions that are in conflict. A feeling of they are not us (or me) is the result of unshared norms and values. A thorough culture audit that includes the various natural group distinctions (e.g., counselors and administration) will reveal which deep assumptions are not in synch.

When the program is not operating (if the organization has that privilege), integration is best addressed through *careful* hiring of people with the same deep assumptions. With a return rate of around 50%, camps have incredible opportunities to shift the culture (or be shifted by the incoming culture). Enculturating new members and making an effort to re-enculturate returning members is a powerful method for increasing integration. That process will be discussed shortly.

When the people are already in place, attitude change is what is required. That is a difficult and very time-consuming road to walk, but the ideas presented in the attitude portion of the "staff training best practices" resource as well as in the change model presented later offer plenty of specific techniques as well as food for thought. Also, examine the "behavior management" resource, the "bases of power" appendix, and the "believing and doubting game" resource for further insights. Of utmost importance is to use the deep assumptions that are in common (e.g., the care and growth of the campers) to address the ones that are not. Groups that find common ground on superordinate goals do well. If the division in deep assumptions is substantial, creating sufficient attitude change is a Herculean task. It is unlikely to work well. Changing the norms and values of subgroups is very hard work that inevitably distracts a camp from its mission. Forcing behavioral change through policies, rewards, consequences, and other forms of power is of limited efficacy and ultimately self-defeating. It is the mark of a weak culture. That road eventually leads you over a cliff.

Differentiation – within a hierarchical level

Although for the sake of simplicity I am discussing subgroups as permanent structures (which they sometimes are), it is also common for different subgroups to form around certain deep assumptions. For example, a given counselor could be part of one subgroup when it comes to how time off is spent, and another when it is in regard to how the children should be treated. Those two groups might have very different members. When actually addressing differentiation as an issue, it's important to keep this point in mind.

If differentiation is a significant problem, culture change on a large scale needs to take place. When it is extreme, the camp is essentially drawn and quartered by so many factions pulling in different directions. Such cases are rare, however. What is more common is that a main group such as the counselors has 2-5 distinguishable subgroups.

The process for addressing differentiation is the same as that of addressing integration. Again, it is important to note that these methods work well when it is a small problem and the different groups are not polarized. The primary cause of differentiation is fragmentation, so start there when addressing this problem.

Taxonomies of culture

This section may be skimmed and returned to later for readers who are looking to quickly get the core material. Pick up again at the “Enculturation” section.

**S
K
I
M**

The framework (artifacts, espoused values, deep assumptions) is essentially a meta-taxonomy. Everything about culture can be placed within it. Most of the examples/questions under the deep assumptions domains were more concrete representations of what culture specifically is. If this chapter were about very large corporations, ethnicities, a profession, or Generation X, the resulting list of questions for the example domains would have been quite different.

After such a large-scale treatment of culture, a more mid-range level is useful to help people frame the fuzzy concept in a different way. What these taxonomies gain in specificity, they lose in completeness. They are both interesting and useful, *but to take them without the larger framework is to misunderstand the scope, nature, and implications of culture.*

Keeping that in mind, six taxonomies are offered as food for thought. These are how different scholars and practitioners have chosen to dissect culture for particular purposes. Since we are talking about organizational culture, I’ll limit the examples to related taxonomies. Each of these is administered by surveys, which are often fraught with problems, but the taxonomies are interesting in and of themselves.

The descriptions are from the survey creators. The first three taxonomies can be found in Ashkanasy (2000). Benchmarking organizational emotional intelligence can be found at www.mhs.com. The organizational culture assessment is the work of Cameron and Quinn (1998). The final taxonomy (I call it hodgepodge) can be found at <http://w3.hcgnet.com>. The first two taxonomy survey tools are probably the best for camps, with the choice depending on the nature of the specific camp.

Organizational culture profile

Dimension	Description
Leadership	The role of leaders in directing the organization, maintaining its culture, and serving as role models.
Structure	The degree to which the organizational structure limits the actions of members, looking at the influence of policies and procedures on member behaviors and the concentration of power in the organization.
Innovation	The organization’s risk preference: the willingness of the organization to take risks and the encouragement it shows for innovation and creativity.
Job performance	The degree to which the organization emphasizes task performance -- the extent of task orientation and whether performance is rewarded.
Planning	The extent to which the organization has clear goals, has plans to meet those goals, and strives to follow those plans.
Communication	The free sharing of information among all levels within the organization where possible, the direction it takes (bottom-up, top-down), and the importance of rumor in communication.
Environment	The extent to which the organization is responsive to the needs of its clients and the extent to which it is influenced by and influences the actions of other similar organizations.
Humanistic workplace	The extent to which the organization respects and cares for individuals, represents the people end of the task vs. people dichotomy.
Development of the individual	The extent to which the organization extends sufficient effort in providing opportunities for members to develop their skills, and rewards development with career advancement and challenging work.
Socialization on entry	The time the members take to settle in, the degree to which employees feel they understand the organization, the extent of formalization, and the effectiveness of the socialization process.

O r g a n i z a t i o n a l c u l t u r e i n v e n t o r y

“The OCI assesses 12 sets of norms that describe the thinking and behavioral styles that might be implicitly or explicitly required for people to "fit in" and "meet expectations" in the organization or an organizational subunit. These behavioral norms specify the ways in which all members of the organization -- or at least those in similar positions or organizational locations -- are expected to approach their work and interact with one another.”

Each of the norms and categories falls along a continuum. In the final analysis, it is best to have the weighting in the constructive culture category.

Constructive cultures	
Achievement norms	Members are expected to set challenging but realistic goals, establish plans to reach those goals, and pursue them with enthusiasm.
Self-actualizing norms	Members are expected to enjoy their work, develop themselves, and take on new and interesting tasks.
Humanistic encouraging norms	Members are expected to be supportive, constructive, and open to influence in their dealings with one another.
Affiliative norms	Members are expected to be friendly, cooperative, and sensitive to the satisfaction of their work group.
Passive/Defensive cultures	
Approval norms	Members are expected to agree with, gain the approval of, and be liked by others.
Conventional norms	Members are expected to conform, follow the rules, and make a good impression.
Dependent norms	Members are expected to do what they are told and clear all decisions with superiors.
Avoidance norms	Members are expected to shift responsibilities to others and avoid any possibility of being blamed for a problem.
Aggressive/Defensive cultures	
Oppositional norms	Members are expected to be critical, oppose the ideas of others, and make safe (but ineffectual) decisions.
Power norms	Members are expected to take charge, control subordinates, and yield to the demands of superiors.
Competitive norms	Members are expected to operate in a “win-lose” framework, outperform others, and work against (rather than with) their peers.
Perfectionistic norms	Members are expected to appear competent, keep track of everything, and work long hours to attain narrowly-defined objectives.

The reader may be interested in the correlations that have been found between constructive cultures and structures, policies, and processes. In other words, having a constructive culture is related to the following things, whereas defensive cultures are generally negatively correlated. The positive associations with having a constructive culture are: empowered employees, flat organizations, the use of fair appraisals, control through counseling and rewards instead of punishment (reward, referent, and expert bases of power -- see appendix), challenging work, clear sense of objectives and means (process maps), job autonomy, variety of jobs, meaningful work employees *do* identify with, and team based work.

GLOBE organizational culture

GLOBE stands for Global Leadership and Organizational Behavioral Effectiveness. It examines the interrelationships of leadership, societal culture, and organizational culture. It was designed for use in international settings.

Dimension	Description
Power distance	The degree to which members of an organization accept distinctions between members on the basis of organizational position; includes such things as prerequisites, status, and decision-making power.
Uncertainty avoidance	The degree to which members of an organization actively attempt to reduce ambiguity in organizational life by relying on norms, rules, and policy.
Humane orientation	The degree to which members of an organization encourage and reward individuals for being fair and kind to the other organization members.
Assertiveness	The degree to which members of an organization are assertive, dominant, and demanding in their interactions with other organization members.
Gender egalitarianism	The degree to which men and women are treated equally in the organization in terms of tasks assigned and opportunities for training and advancement.
Future orientation	The degree to which an organization encourages and rewards long-term vs. short-term planning and projects.
Performance orientation	The degree to which an organization focuses on and rewards high-performance and efforts to improve quality.
Individualism/collectivism	The degree to which an organization focuses on individual accomplishment vs. group accomplishment.
Organizational collectivism	The degree to which organizational members take pride in being associated with the organization.

Benchmarking organizational emotional intelligence

People with each other

- Teamwork
- Coworker Relationships
- Leveraging Diversity
- Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

Environment

- Work Environment
- Diversity Climate
- Workplace Tension
- Job Satisfaction
- Organizational Climate
- Employee Empowerment

Organizational effectiveness

- Changes at Work
- Problem Solving/Decision Making
- Organizational Courage
- Organizational Learning
- Innovation
- Change Management
- Supervisory Leadership
- Senior Management Leadership

Structures

- Pay
- Benefits
- Training

Organizational culture assessment

No organization is just one of these extreme profiles. Instead, every camp has some of each of these elements, although the assessment is clearly geared toward more traditional organizations. The resulting profile describes the degree to which each of the below descriptions are true. An overall characterization of function and performance is made based on the assessment.

The Clan	A very friendly place to work where people share a lot of themselves. It is like an extended family. The leaders, or the heads of the organization, are considered to be mentors and perhaps even parent figures. The organization is held together by loyalty or tradition. Commitment is high. The organization emphasizes the long-term benefit of human resource development and attaches great importance to cohesion and morale. Success is defined in terms of sensitivity to customers and concern for people. The organization places a premium on teamwork, participation, and consensus. Focuses on internal maintenance with flexibility, concern for people, and sensitivity to customers.
Adhocracy	A dynamic, entrepreneurial, and creative place to work. People stick their necks out and take risks. The leaders are considered innovators and risk takers. The glue that holds the organization together is commitment to experimentation and innovation. The emphasis is on being leading edge. The organization's long-term emphasis is on growth and acquiring new resources. Success means gaining unique and new products or services. Being a product or service leader is important. The organization encourages individual initiative and freedom. There is a high degree of flexibility and individuality.
Hierarchy	A very formalized and structured place to work. Procedures govern what people do. The leaders pride themselves on being good coordinators and organizers who are efficiency-minded. Maintaining a smooth-running organization is most critical. Formal rules and policies hold the organization together. The long-term concern is on stability and performance with efficient, smooth operations. Success is defined in terms of dependable delivery, smooth scheduling, and low cost. The management of employees is concerned with secure employment and predictability. There is a high need for stability and control.
Market	A results-oriented organization whose major concern is with getting the job done. People are competitive and goal-oriented. The leaders are hard drivers, producers, and competitors. They are tough and demanding. The glue that holds the organization together is an emphasis on winning. Reputation and success are also common concerns. The long-term focus is on competitive actions and achievement of measurable goals and targets. Success is defined in terms of market share and penetration. Competitive pricing and market leadership are important. The organizational style is hard-driving competitiveness.

H o d g e p o d g e

Although I believe the structured and systematic frameworks of culture are more useful, some people take structures, policies, espoused values, and elements of the deep assumptions and throw them all into the stew. The result is a hodgepodge that hopes to take some kind of snapshot of a given organization. Take this overlapping medley as evidence for the breadth of culture and a brainstorm list for examining culture.

- Aggressive
- Autonomy/independence
- Centralized or decentralized
- Change orientation
- Competitive or cooperative
- Concern for employee growth and development
- Concern for image
- Conflict (tolerance of it)
- Conformity
- Consensus or edict decision making
- Decisions on formal reasoning, gut, authority, or . . .
- Ethics, values, and morality
- Empowered employees
- Expressivity of emotions is encouraged
- Family environment
- Feeling of trust
- Financial urgency
- Focus on results
- Focus on results over means
- Focus on the campers
- Focus on the parents
- Focus on tradition
- Formality of structures & rules
- Freedom from politics
- Fun
- Goal and vision clarity
- Hierarchical or flat
- Innovation/creativity
- Job security
- Leader centricity
- Learning organization
- Loyalty
- Open or secretive
- Organizational citizenship behaviors
- Organizational confidence
- Paranoia about ideas and observers
- Pressure and stress
- Pride in organization
- Respect for individual needs
- Respect for seniority/tenure
- Risk taking (how mistakes are handled)
- Sociability (friendliness)
- Speed/pace of environment
- Supportive
- Teamwork
- Value diversity
- Value of quality and excellence
- Value on pedigree or current outcomes/performance
- Work ethic

Enculturation

Enculturation is the process by which new members are brought into the culture and taught the norms and values. Some people refer to it as newcomer socialization or assimilation. The goal is to socialize new members in such a way that they know the norms and values, and hold them as dearly as their own. When it's done very well, a stronger culture is created. Return rates are higher and performance is improved. An average or poor job can reap negative dividends for years to come. *That's a short sentence, but it can be quite painful to live it out.*

This section starts with addressing the scope/nature/difficulty of the task. After that, there is a brief discussion on the importance of assessing the fit of the new staff member with your camp. Following that is an examination of how enculturation takes place via the deep assumptions about your staff as evidenced through the interview process, pre-camp materials, orientation, the summer, and the time between summers. The transfer of skills is left for the "Staff training best practices" resource. Finally, the ideas about enculturation are extended by looking at the process of character education, changing the culture through purposeful socialization, and examining a critical caveat. A *Camping Magazine* article written by Jeff Jacobs is also included in the appendix for another viewpoint on enculturating selected staff – well worth the read.

W h a t i s t h e s c o p e o f t h e t a s k ?

Enculturation can be a small or major task depending on a few factors. The most important factor is the percentage of staff that is new the following summer. The larger the number of new staff, the more difficult the task of enculturation. Most large, non-camp organizations try and keep the number to 10-20% at most. For camps, the task is much more difficult because the average return rate is about 50%. So, if the percentage of new staff is _____, the difficulty of successful enculturation is _____.

- 30% = huge
- 50% = monumental
- 70% = cataclysmic

The second most influential variable here is the strength of the existing culture. If the culture is very strong (*see that section*), enculturation is an easier task. ***The importance of a strong culture to successful enculturation simply cannot be overstated.*** However, even a very strong culture has a huge task in enculturating 50% new members!

Termites (people who quietly eat away at the culture in the background) are present in all cultures – strong and weak – to varying degrees. Dealing with them appropriately and quickly makes enculturation easier. The "staff training best practices" resource talks about this in much more detail.

The last factor might be considered an odd one, yet it isn't always present. The camp must have the deep assumption that new staff should be made at home and assimilated.

S t a f f m e m b e r – c a m p f i t

Everyone wants a staff person who is emotionally intelligent, cognitively intelligent enough, has some leadership ability, is good with children, safe, fun, and has some camp skills. After that, you need someone who is a good fit with your camp.

In general, you are seeking someone who is in synch with your vision, mission, structures, processes, and policies. You want someone who is in line with the norms and values alive at your camp. You want someone who is going to gel with how and why things are done at camp. Once you have assessed your culture carefully, the elements of organizational fit, as well as a hierarchy of them, will be crystal clear. *If you don't start with staff who are a very good fit, serious problems are likely to arise.* Trying to change the norms and values of staff who are the means of your intervention is best avoided – see the "staff training best practices" resource and the culture change model for a thorough explanation.

Some specific, example elements to consider follow. Keep in mind that for every artifact listed, there is a deep assumption operating (see the deep assumption domains and questions for more ideas). Find the deep assumption for the artifacts in order to get a handle on person-organization fit. Ask why it is that way. Artifacts are too numerous to serve as a check list for potential staff. Instead, gather the key deep assumptions and list several example artifacts under each one that are (a) typical and (b) have proven to be historically controversial or problematic. Also, examine the "Do-it-yourself" culture assessment appendix for further insight.

- What are the living conditions like (rustic to luxurious)?
- What is the food like (vegetarian, options, mandatory eating, organic, who prepares, how often, etc.)?
- Who are the children?
- What is the daily schedule like in detail? Assess why for every minutia of it. This will take a long time.
- What activities are present and not present?
- What are the special events?
- Behavior management for campers and staff
- Time off and days off // Balance of play and work. // Meeting personal needs versus camp needs
- Evaluation of staff and campers
- Religion/spirituality

- Clothing, uniform, jewelry, tattoos, piercing, facial hair, color and style of hair, etc.
- Smoking and drinking
- What is the layout of the camp like – things and people?
- How ongoing training works – level of support
- Hierarchy, status, supervision norms, etc.
- What are the outcomes for the children? What is the hierarchy of importance?
- The process for achieving outcomes often varies dramatically by camp. Are your means their means?
- What are the outcomes for the staff? Are they as important as the children's outcomes?
- Is money a primary, secondary, tertiary, or ... aim?
- Is the staff person willing and able to return for an additional summer?
- Coed or single gender?
- Centralized or decentralized?
- Age range?
- Day or resident camp?
- How long are the sessions?
- What is the ratio of counselors to campers? Supervisors to counselors?
- Competitive or non-competitive?
- Curfew? Enforced?
- Candy?

To keep the juices flowing, here are a few more things to think about. These should help you further understand what kind of person will fit well within your camp. The artifacts and deep assumptions sections are also food for thought.

- What are your rites, traditions, and rituals? How will this person fit with those?
- What stories, legends, and myths are told? How about songs?
- What is the formal and informal camp jargon/lingo?
- Describe an exceptional, average, and poor staff person. Who are the heroes?
- Is your camp a learning, innovative, empowered culture? How will this person fit with what s/he finds in this regard?

Note that during an interview, potential staff might be too interested in providing a good impression, or trying to get the job, to really think carefully about how good of a fit they are to your camp. Thus, provide some information on your web site and in the application packet. A simple “Cosmo” like survey appears in the do-it-yourself culture assessment appendix, which can serve as an initial screening tool. After the interview, give applicants time to reflect on their fit. Of course, the interviewer will also reflect.

Another point for consideration is that people don't always do the best job of placing themselves in the right culture, despite their best intentions. Done well, cultural niche picking is a fine art. In addition, occasionally, people will choose a culture somewhat different from their own norms and values in an effort to shift themselves or try it out. Sometimes such people work out, but it's quite a gamble.

When you think about the staff members who didn't work out well or even caused problems, a large reason is often the degree of shared deep assumptions. Person—camp fit is crucial. After that, again, lack of emotional intelligence, cognitive intelligence, leadership ability, skill with children, not safe or fun, and the absence of some camp skills are implicated. Sufficient staff training methods on the part of the camp may also be at fault, as might the factors listed in the “The tail that wags the dog” section. Often though, an incompatibility of key deep assumptions is one of the key roots of staff problems.

Deep assumptions about staff

The staff are involved with all sorts of artifacts at camp. Remember that each of those artifacts reflects a deep assumption on the part of some group. Ask yourself: “Where are the staff ‘deep assumptions’ we hold that are really false espoused values (they don't translate into artifacts)?” Bob Ditter calls treating staff how you want them to treat the campers “parallel process.” It also works to say that how administration personnel are treated is how the staff should be treated. Ditter's point is that a camp needs a strong culture where deep assumptions are pervasive. Where could the deep assumptions be extended into areas that aren't present in artifacts yet? Ideas beyond your own camp are usually necessary to sufficiently answer that question.

Following are a few deep assumptions camps often hold about staff (see the list under espoused values for more). Extremely brief examples of how those might translate into artifacts are offered as a mix of specific examples, questions, and domains in the following sections. Because the artifacts are legion and many are specific to a given camp, only a few are offered to translate the gist of what I'm talking about. Generating your own list is useful and necessary. Match your deep assumptions to the artifacts at every level of the enculturation process. The process modeling resource can be quite helpful here.

- Community
- Inclusive // Lack of an “us” versus “them” feeling
- Care about staff development (personal, professional, physical, camp activity areas, etc.)
- Physical and emotional safety
- Informal
- Friendly, caring, sensitive, helpful, empathetic
- Open, learning
- Communications that are open and accessible
- Innovative, creative
- Teamwork // Camaraderie
- Appreciative of staff
- Camp is both fun and hard work, but when you do it right, most of the work is fun
- Good of the group comes first, but individuals are accommodated as much as possible
- Integrity in carrying out the mission
- Staff are both knowledgeable and in need of knowledge. Everyone should always continue to learn.
- Mutual influence
- Trust
- Respect
- Fair procedures // Justice // Impartiality
- Southwest airlines: “Treat people right, have fun, encourage teamwork”

Note that while making sure that your deep assumptions about staff are just that, successful enculturation takes more. It takes a strong culture (see that section). The staff learn the norms and values from everyone. Although all the staff are watching each other intently, returning staff are especially influential because of their status and knowledge. How the children behave and what norms and values they understand is also important. Subgroups of sufficient size, number, or power play an important role in setting the norms and values as well. Artifacts as they are revealed in structures, processes, and policies play a role too. Thus, keep the whole cultural milieu in mind when thinking about how staff are enculturated.

Interview process

- What does the staff application look like? How are the deep assumptions reflected in it?
- Do the staff get different materials about the camp than the campers do?
- How are your deep assumptions reflected in every aspect of the interview process?
- How much of the web site is dedicated to children and how much to staff?
- Is the hiring process demanding? Do staff feel that they are special and chosen? Do staff feel that the camp is high quality and high status?
- What specific camp artifacts are candidates exposed to?
- Reunions. Meet with other staff. Experience and understand the culture.

Pre-camp materials

- Letters – frequency, content, style?
- E-mails – frequency, content, style?
- Web site – special section for hired staff?
- Contracts and staff policies
- Articles, manuals, pictures, videos, songs, stories, pre-camp education, etc.
- What symbols (see appendix) are staff exposed to? In particular, are there symbols of membership that are given? Is there ritual or lore surrounding the symbols and how they are bestowed?
- Phone calls from people who are returning to camp (strong culture carriers)

Orientation

Orientation is a cultural boot camp. Everything that happens prior to this point is important, but orientation is where staff really experience the culture in a more complete manner (second only to when the campers arrive). Staff understand the culture based on their experience of all the artifacts, such as what people are doing and how they are doing it. The operating deep assumptions hit staff very quickly. By the end of orientation, staff have picked up most of the norms and values. After 3 or 4 days of camp, they’ve got it down tight. After that, edits and reinforcement tend to occur. Keep in mind that from the moment your camp name has crossed their lips/minds, the enculturation process has begun.

The level of attention by staff is probably second only to that of a first date! Review the artifacts and deep assumptions sections to see what staff are implicitly and explicitly evaluating at a furious pace. Note that people are also extremely keen to find out which espoused values are just that – only espoused. Again, there’s a very high level of subconscious and conscious note taking going on! Also, a review of the “How culture is created” section and the above piece on staff—camp fit may be helpful. Process modeling orientation (see that resource) is an excellent tool. The *Camping Magazine* article provides a narrative from a different perspective – see appendix.

- How are staff greeted when they first arrive?
- How are the vision and mission conveyed? Is it done primarily at one point in time, or throughout the entire experience? In either case, what are the specific processes?
- What are staff told on the tour and how is it conducted? How are the artifacts addressed?
- Think about this triad: staff are informed of policies, structures are shown and explained, and staff are trained in processes. Espoused values and deep assumptions are experienced. It isn’t perfect, but it is useful to think about it this way.
- Are staff trained in different groups at all? For example, is any aspect of training divided by returning staff, new staff with experience, neophytes, and counselors in training? How is it managed? What steps are taken to reduce the creation of subgroups (culture strength – integration)?
- Does socialization happen more in groups or individually? How does it happen in each case?
- Examine your detailed orientation schedule. This will take a long time to do well.
- Is there a buddy system for old and new staff?
- How is the organizational history conveyed? Is it done primarily at one point in time, or throughout the entire experience? In either case, what are the specific processes?
- How do the staff experience the camp traditions, rituals, stories, legends, lore, myths, lingo, and songs?
- What symbols of membership are staff exposed to and how?
- Termites degrade the culture, but the yin to that yang are the culture boosters. They are fierce about the norms and values and try to convey them to others. Who are your culture boosters? What do they do?
- The “Fresh eyes” culture evaluation method is *extremely* valuable for this phase of enculturation.

During the summer

- Literally all artifacts play some role in enculturation. Again, review the deep assumptions (e.g., trust, caring, development) for each of the below.
- How is on-going training handled (see “Staff training best practices” resource)?
- Evaluations – one way, bi-directional, or 360 degree? Individual, team based, or both? How often do they occur? What about informal evaluations? What is the feeling about them for all concerned?
- Personal mission statements (individualized development plans formulated before the summer). Do staff revisit them with the administration? How is development fostered?
- Time and days off - how much? Is it facilitated in any way?
- How are personal staff emergencies handled?
- Inclusiveness of international and support staff, as well as old-timers and new staff
- When and how are administration and counselors separated? (different meal tables, time-off space, closed space in buildings, in the eyes of the campers, etc.)
- What are the informal (and formal if there are any) indicators of a newcomer, proviso member (conditionally accepted), confederate, and inner member? By what means are those boundaries crossed?
- Perks, benefits, and staff appreciation
- Administration and counselor interactions (frequency, content, formal -- informal, etc.)
- What happens when staff make small, medium, and big mistakes? See “The art and science of mistakes” resource.
- How is discipline handled? Is anyone fired? What are the criteria? How does it happen?
- Are suggestions offered? How? How often? What happens to them?
- Staff meetings
- Provide letters of reference
- Provide letters that help explain the camp experience to employers
- Exit interviews

Rest of the year

This period is a chance for further enculturation and continuing the deep assumptions. Remember, you are asking the campers to continue what they have learned at camp throughout the rest of the year. Likewise, to maintain true deep assumptions that are pervasive in all the artifacts, the camp should continue its staff deep assumptions throughout the year.

- Web site
- E-mail
- Letters & newsletters

- Personal phone call – birthdays, important milestones in person’s life, wish well in new endeavors, invite to a camp event, etc.
- Rituals that are held in a distributed manner
- Reunions
- Videos and photo albums
- Returning bonuses
- Staff receive letter they wrote to themselves during the summer
- Continued staff development
- See the “Organizational factors” resource for more.

After this long list, recall that the examples for orientation, pre-camp, rest of the year, etc. are just that – examples. Undergo a cultural analysis to find the deep assumptions you have, the ones you want to have, and how they can be even more present in the artifacts. The journaling by fresh eyes approach is extraordinarily valuable here! You must ask staff how they perceive the whole enculturation process. All seven methods of cultural analysis will yield insight.

E x t e n d i n g t h e u t i l i t y o f e n c u l t u r a t i o n

Lessons from character education

When you think about it, character education is social enculturation! The idea is exactly the same – transmit norms and values so that they are internalized. The resource on “character education best practices” can be viewed for further details and insight, but a few points will be abstracted for present purposes. These points overlap quite a bit, but the subtle distinctions might prove useful.

- Insuring that the deep assumptions are reflected in the artifacts is the most important and pervasive key (this includes, but goes beyond, modeling). Do as I say (espoused values) and not as I do (deep assumptions) degrades value transmission.
- Strong cultures (Fragmentation, Integration, Differentiation) are necessary. Values and norms are best transferred when they are reflected in the family, peer group, school, and community.
- When individuals are having trouble internalizing norms and values, an authoritative approach is best (an authoritarian approach is the worst). See the behavior management resource sections on the five approaches to counseling and the success counselor.
- External rewards and punishments are far less effective than internal incentives (e.g., targeting people’s personal values and goals). When a value isn’t present, work from values that are.
- Find staff who have a deep, personal conviction in line with your most valued outcomes. When the camp’s norms and values are the person’s deep convictions, appropriate behavior follows naturally. People who are held up as character ideals rarely have very high moral reasoning, but rather they hold elements of character as fundamental to their sense of self. It is important to have respected, visible members of the community as exemplars for the norms and values.
- Culture is transmitted directly and indirectly. Direct refers to things like lectures, role plays, exercises, reading, theater, watching videos, discussions, etc. Indirect refers to the real-life events and things people interact with all the time. Indirect education is the normal, everyday engagement with the artifacts. Direct does not work very well, while indirect does.
- When personal needs are not met (especially beyond a moderate level), behavior in line with cultural assumptions (morality) becomes less likely. See the attitude portion of the “staff training best practices” resource for a discussion of this point.

Using new staff to shift the culture

Culture change is addressed in detail in the next major section, but it is useful to briefly note the opportunity presented by enculturation. Camps often have a large number of new staff every summer. That influx creates some instability, and the shaking of the status quo is what is necessary to create culture change. When the goal is to keep the culture as it was, the methods of enculturation are utilized to re-stabilize the culture as quickly as possible.

When the goal is to shift the culture toward some new deep assumptions, the influx of new staff and the instability to the culture that they bring is advantageous. They make it easier to shed old deep assumptions, change artifacts, and strengthen the culture (fragmentation etc.). Furthermore, people can be brought in who are more in line with the way the culture should be. In this manner, the culture can often be shifted quite dramatically over the period of only a few summers. The culture change section details the pitfalls and landmines of which to be wary. In particular, for present purposes, the greater the cultural distinction between new staff with new norms and values and returning staff with the old norms and values, the greater the chance of a weaker, more divisive culture.

Critical caveat

Paradoxically, excellent enculturation processes can hurt your camp. It brings in people who are a good fit. These folks are then placed in a situation that encourages certain behaviors and thoughts. Via this process, the camp gets a uniformity that helps create a consistent experience for all concerned.

The downside is that innovation, creativity, and new ideas are often difficult to consider and implement. Typically, a strong culture with a solid enculturation process believes that it has great innovation and good room for new people to maneuver. Within the world view of those in the environment, that is probably the case. The point is that the world view is *purposely and often effectively limited by the strong culture* and thorough enculturation process. People at the camp can't see how they are constrained and limited, because in their minds, they aren't. The very nature of the enculturation process limits the diversity of thought, experience, and behavior the camp will experience.

I've painted the picture as an extreme, when in reality it is more a question of degree. Through a comprehensive cultural assessment, the level of encapsulation present can be discovered. The antidote is to create a learning organization. Those principles are thoroughly discussed in "The learning camp" resource.

The tail that wags the dog

Culture is inextricable from other elements that determine organizational effectiveness, but the focus of this short discussion is on certain larger structures or realities which can shape the culture to a degree beyond any individual's control. In other words, what happens on a day-to-day basis at camp can be influenced more by these conditions and realities than a strong culture in line with valued outcomes. Even a strong culture can be caught up in these larger currents -- which influence or control the direction the camp takes. The high order, interrelated nature of these elements influences the organization in countless ways!

F i n a n c i a l r e s o u r c e s

Money may not make individual people happy beyond a certain point, but on an organizational level, it enables the camp to *buy time, people, expertise, and other resources* that make creating a high-performance culture so much easier. The tighter the resources are, the more difficult it is to create a strong culture in line with outcomes. Money can definitely shape culture. *Values and assumptions become disconnected from artifacts* when money plays a more influential role in shaping structures, processes, and policies than individuals do. Very passionate people help, but they can only do so much. At its worst, it can be like trying to construct a house during a hurricane

It must also be noted that the reverse is sometimes true -- when financial resources are abundant, success on all levels becomes easier, but not guaranteed. Lots of money frequently provides enough rope for organizations to hang themselves. Slack resources makes accountability less vital, controlled, and consequential. Structures like large hierarchies, bureaucracy, autonomous units, et cetera are all easier to create and sustain. Ineffective processes and people can be carried on the forgiving financial back. This reality is extremely common in large organizations, but camps are also quite susceptible to these conditions.

A b i l i t i e s o f l e a d e r s h i p

Certainly, the leadership (especially the founders) is responsible for defining the deep assumptions and creating artifacts that are in line with them. That encompasses much, but *knowledge, wisdom, personality, and practical skill* still remain. Creating structures, policies, and processes in light of best practices to achieve valued outcomes takes both knowledge and wisdom. Most notable is an open leader who creates a learning organization (see that resource), because that is one of the surest paths to true success. Having key leadership with a high degree of emotional intelligence (see that resource) and a degree of charisma are helpful as well. As the "staff training best practices" resource carefully describes, a person must also have experience in order to be successful at things.

The reader could easily make lists for knowledge, wisdom, personality, and practical skill, but the point I'm trying to make here is that those elements are beyond culture, and yet they profoundly influence the culture.

Q u a l i t y a n d q u a n t i t y o f s t a f f

Although this point could be collapsed into the other two, the influence of the quality and quantity of staff on culture has been shown again and again to be crucial. Despite their proven effect, staff quality and quantity aren't thought about enough in a direct and causal way in many summer camps. In other words, everyone would readily acknowledge the importance of quality staff and enough staff, but few really understand the extensive influence they have on the culture and outcomes.

For example, when people lack the skills and qualities needed to perform their jobs, they tend to approach others in defensive ways, increase the security needs of those around them, and inadvertently establish norms for, and patterns of, defensive behavior. The staff need to have the skills (see staff training best practices resource) to carry out their deep assumptions/convictions (see the organizational factors resource). The cultural deep assumptions, values, and artifacts may be largely in line, but the reason they don't gel may be in part due to the quality of the staff. Remember that many policies, structures, and processes are put in place (e.g. curfew) because the staff aren't of the quality (norms and values fit) necessary for a strong culture to arise. The tail wags the dog.

The quantity of staff is another element directors often glance over, although virtually everyone would claim to have given it extremely careful consideration. The organizational factors resource discusses the importance of staff quantity. That resource also details the factors that determine the quantity of staff necessary. *It is the exceptional camp which has the staff resources necessary to fully carry out best-practice processes to achieve valued outcomes.* Even a highly unfragmented culture can suffer in differentiation, integration, and the ability to influence valued outcomes for all concerned due to an insufficient number of staff.

The power of holding a niche and historical “success”

Organizational learning (see that resource) and wisdom might sum this up, but I want to address the power of holding a niche and enjoying historical “success” a little more explicitly.

When the organization fills a niche, nationally or locally, continued viability is likely barring undue mismanagement. In this manner, cultural problems and being ineffective on many outcomes are not major issues. The campers and money will keep coming. One camp that was recognized as one of the “50 Best” in the country was doing just fine until an evaluation revealed how ill-suited the culture was to achieving their valued outcomes. The owner instituted a radical transformation and 99% of the staff, including the director, were released. See the “Is it all good?” and stories appendices for more examples. Also, see the “From good to great” resource as well – *especially the self-assessment tool*.

Staff and camper return rates that are high or satisfactory can lull a camp into believing that their culture is just fine, good, or great, when the reality is different. Satisfaction measures lull organizations into a false sense of complacency and belief in satisfaction as performance measurement. One sign of such a camp (not always present though) is *structures, processes, and policies that are in place to compensate for the lack of a strong, positive culture*. In general, lots of rules and supervision is indicative of a weak culture. The other side of this coin is that strong cultures don’t equal success. In other words, the strong culture might not be headed down the right path with a recipe that will lead to successfully imparting outcomes to campers and staff. See the appendix “Exceptional camps: A simple model” for an explanation.

The point here again is that there are meta-structures that act as the tail which wags the dog. Holding a niche or being successful doesn’t cause problems, but it can. Camps have numerous outcomes, but they only need to be successful on a select few (e.g., fun, safe, customer satisfaction) to remain in business “successfully,” as is evidenced in the “Is it all good?” appendix. A learning organization (see that resource) is the antidote to this often hidden problem.

The nature of the surrounding culture

Although we rarely think about the influence of the culture in which the camp is situated, it makes a big difference. Camps on the West coast of the United States tend to have sessions around one or two weeks long. Camps in the East and Northeast tend to have sessions that are much longer – some as long as eight weeks. Why is that the case? Because the surrounding culture determines what the camp can successfully offer. Similarly, the realities of the external culture, in part, determine the relative lack of camps in other parts of the world compared to the United States.

The culture of the campers often profoundly influences the camp as well. When campers come with more medical and behavior problems, the camp has to adjust its structures and processes to adapt. Camps tend to attract certain populations of campers, which is usually done by design to some degree. Campers may be from very wealthy families, a predominant ethnicity, a religious flavor, have certain physical conditions, be a certain age, et cetera. The slice of life brought to camp brings certain norms, values, and needs. While camps are quite aware of these demographic characteristics of their campers, taking a close look at how those attributes influence what is present, how things are done, and the priorities for outcomes from a cultural perspective is often very enlightening. What is usually discovered is the true breadth of influence the campers have in directing what happens at camp.

The larger culture influences what happens within the camp in terms of activities as well. One camp offers live-animal hunting and paintball, because that’s what its clients demanded. The camp could have resisted, but it felt it needed to remain competitive. To take another example, many camps eschew the use of technology in order to remain high touch and not high tech. These camps have found it necessary to offer internet access for their staff. While camps would often prefer that the campers receive hand-written letters, they are now printing off e-mails and handing them out at mail call.

As one last example, a camp slowly turned its focus toward fun and away from other benefits of a camp experience, because its clientele was shopping for a fun camp with all the facilities and bells and whistles. Fun isn’t necessarily in opposition to other outcomes, but it certainly can be. For example, to remain competitive, one camp altered its brochure, video, website, and recruiting session to focus almost exclusively on fun. Similarly, it altered many elements of its program that contributed to other outcomes in favor of increasing the fun outcome. The owners made the competitive changes slowly over years, so that it was almost unnoticed how far they had traveled from their vision of the purpose of a camp experience. The tail wags the dog.

Changing culture

Don't read this

If you aren't going to undergo a culture change very soon, consider not reading this entire section right now. The details will likely only interest the reader who has a personal stake in an approaching or occurring change effort. The last portion on "succession" will interest those who are hiring new senior staff, including the director and executive director.

Overview

It is rare that an organization doesn't need to change some element of its culture. Thus, this section provides information from a variety of sources (Ashkanasy, 2000) and my personal experience about how to go about the touchy business of change at camps. It begins with some general principles of culture change that many people overlook. Following that is a large section on a model of culture change.

The model will give you a visual representation of the process as well as offering a good mental image for how much of this section is structured. Before delving into the details of the model, read the notes on the overall model. Those four, short paragraphs are a necessary precursor.

After going through the four elements of the culture change process (Reasons to change, Defenses, Fears of change, Structures to reduce fear), the last portion of this section provides some insights around the transfer of key leadership positions to another person. With this overall knowledge base on changing culture, many of the pitfalls and mines can be avoided. Leaders can shepherd the camp as it makes the transition into an even stronger, more effective culture. Let's go.

General principles of culture change

Starting out

- ✓ Have a thorough understanding of culture as a concept, and carefully assess your culture. Remember to examine structures, processes, policies, artifacts, espoused values, deep assumptions, and culture strength.
- ✓ Know that a huge culture change at a camp is often unnecessary. There is probably more going right than wrong. Also, the change in the way of doing things may already be in line with your culture. In other words, the culture may support the changes you're wanting to make. Only if changes have an impact on the existing culture does the culture become an issue.
- ✓ Don't start with the idea of culture change. It isn't "the culture" that is the problem in and of itself. It has an impact, however large, on how the camp performs. The performance should be kept in mind as the end, not the culture. The reason to change the culture is to improve the way you are serving your stakeholders (e.g., children, counselors, administration, parents, etc.). Changing to change the culture is not the reason – changing to change an outcome is the reason. Think about what the new way of working should be, and then look at how culture is implicated.
- ✓ Never forget that culture is a group phenomenon. Only a group can decide to give up a group norm. Understand that culture is *so stable and difficult to change* because it represents the accumulated learning of a group – the ways of thinking, feeling, and perceiving the world that has made the group successful. Culture is based on a set of learned solutions and values that the people usually *desire and need*. Threatening that is uncomfortable and can even challenge their identity.
- ✓ Not all cultural assumptions are worthy of changing. Things are never going to be ideal. Pick elements to change based on their consequences and the degree of effort required to change them.
- ✓ Not having the time, manpower, money, or other resources to engage in and successfully see through a change prevents many change efforts from either getting started or succeeding.
- ✓ For leaders, requesting or creating change without the power or permission to do so almost always ends in a painful failure. The change must be accompanied by the mandate of those who hold the power to make decisions. Launching a change initiative without the resources and authority to do so will usually end in a degree of failure – sometimes with severe consequences. Thus, the leader needs power, a mandate, resources, credibility, clarity of vision for the change (why, what), and an ability to convey the vision with a realistic time line and action steps.
- ✓ Culture change can't be bought off the shelf. From the analysis of your culture to creating the process for change, it must be uniquely tailored to your program. From step one, everything must make sense for your program and situation. If someone is trying to sell you a culture change package without having spent time in your camp, without carefully assessing your culture, and without working from your goals, your camp will be poorly served by the "service."
- ✓ Try process modeling the change effort to get a grasp of it all. When the change is explained to people, keep everything on the level of behaviors. When more abstract terms are used, follow them up with specific examples of what that looks like in everyday behavior. Getting specific helps people understand what is going to be different. Break the culture change down into action steps with a time line.
- ✓ Periods of instability should be anticipated. It's a normal part of organizational evolution.

Doing the work of change

- ✓ Just announcing a new set of values and goals will not produce a change. Change by managerial fiat is unlikely to yield anything positive. Culture cannot be decreed. That may seem obvious, but I mention it because it is a method *frequently* tried by directors and supervisors. Change must happen on the level of structures, processes, artifacts, and policies and values.
- ✓ Use the positive elements of the culture to work with the negative ones. Culture should be used as a positive force whenever possible. Almost certainly, there are aspects of the culture that serve as strengths. Strengths are the leverage points for correcting weaknesses.
- ✓ More than likely, the idea of change is even breached because there are numerous symptoms that are problematic. It is crucial to keep in mind that the causes of the symptom(s) are usually many. A simple root cause is usually a red herring, because problematic symptoms are interrelated to so many factors. It's hard to think of problems that aren't multidimensional. Also, the problem may not be the culture at heart; it may be the quality of the staff, the number of staff, the nature of the campers served, money, etc. Culture is almost always implicated, but perhaps not primarily.
- ✓ Clean house. Know who the termites (people who quietly eat away at the culture in the background) are, and who the people are that will openly oppose the culture shift. After due diligence in changing their attitude and behavior, if they can't travel with everyone else down the path to a better existence for everyone, they must be let go. *Negative leaders and termites are deadly to change of any sort. You've got to have people's hearts in it right away.* Changing people during the summer or on the job is dangerous and usually unsuccessful. Strengthening the desire for change can come later if people are really and truly sold on the change from the get-go. Negative leaders are unlikely to change – cull them if it doesn't seem almost certain. Work with the termites, but the default stance should be to let them go if they can't truly change. Develop those who are moving in the right direction. Take great care in hiring and enculturating new staff. If at all possible, these changes should be made between summers and not during the summer.
- ✓ Temporary new staff is often key for significant cultural changes. The system is usually thrown out of balance and a few more hands can keep things on an even keel. Change takes work and there needs to be enough people to adequately cope with that work. Having experts available to train staff is also usually necessary – see the staff training best practices resource.
- ✓ Asking your staff to help conceive of how the culture change will work is a good idea, but it needs other ingredients to end up tasting good. Generally, it works well to take a core group of staff that will be distributed throughout the camp and just work with them. Educate those staff about the basic idea of culture and change. If the element(s) being modified require specific knowledge in order to make informed decisions about what is and isn't a good idea, some education is advisable. Without the knowledge necessary, you might end up getting solutions that don't make sense. Discounting them without their full understanding isn't empowering. Even worse, an errant suggestion might be passionately offered and have a small following.
- ✓ Monitoring the change from different perspectives is extremely useful. Try creating a counselor board that meets 4 – 6 times over the summer. They hear a lot of things you don't. The chair of this board sits in on the administration meetings. If you think you're hearing everything through the normal channels, you're probably wrong. This won't fix that, but it will help.
- ✓ After the new way of doing things is in place, be careful to understand that a new culture has not developed. The culture change will take time and will depend to some degree on how successful people feel the change is. If people experience failure with the new way of functioning, change is unlikely to stick.
- ✓ Special case of drastic change
 - There is almost always an incredibly strong mandate for this kind of change. The system has been shocked by some event as the reason for change – camp takeover or major overhaul.
 - Drastic change is necessary because the way things were working were grossly unsuccessful or incompatible with the cultural norms.
 - To destroy the old cultural assumptions, conversion of people is necessary. Those who can't be converted are usually let go. The human cost is usually very high. Many times, people will leave in droves when they see that a massive change is inevitable.
 - For those who stay, extraordinary efforts need to be made to enculturate them. Their behavior and motivation need to be watched and education and support should be provided as needed. If the new way of working succeeds, a new culture will grow on top of that. With continued success, the culture will start to grow strong. The whole process just repeats itself.
 - Drastic change should be done quick and clean. It is not a process that should take years.

Model of culture change

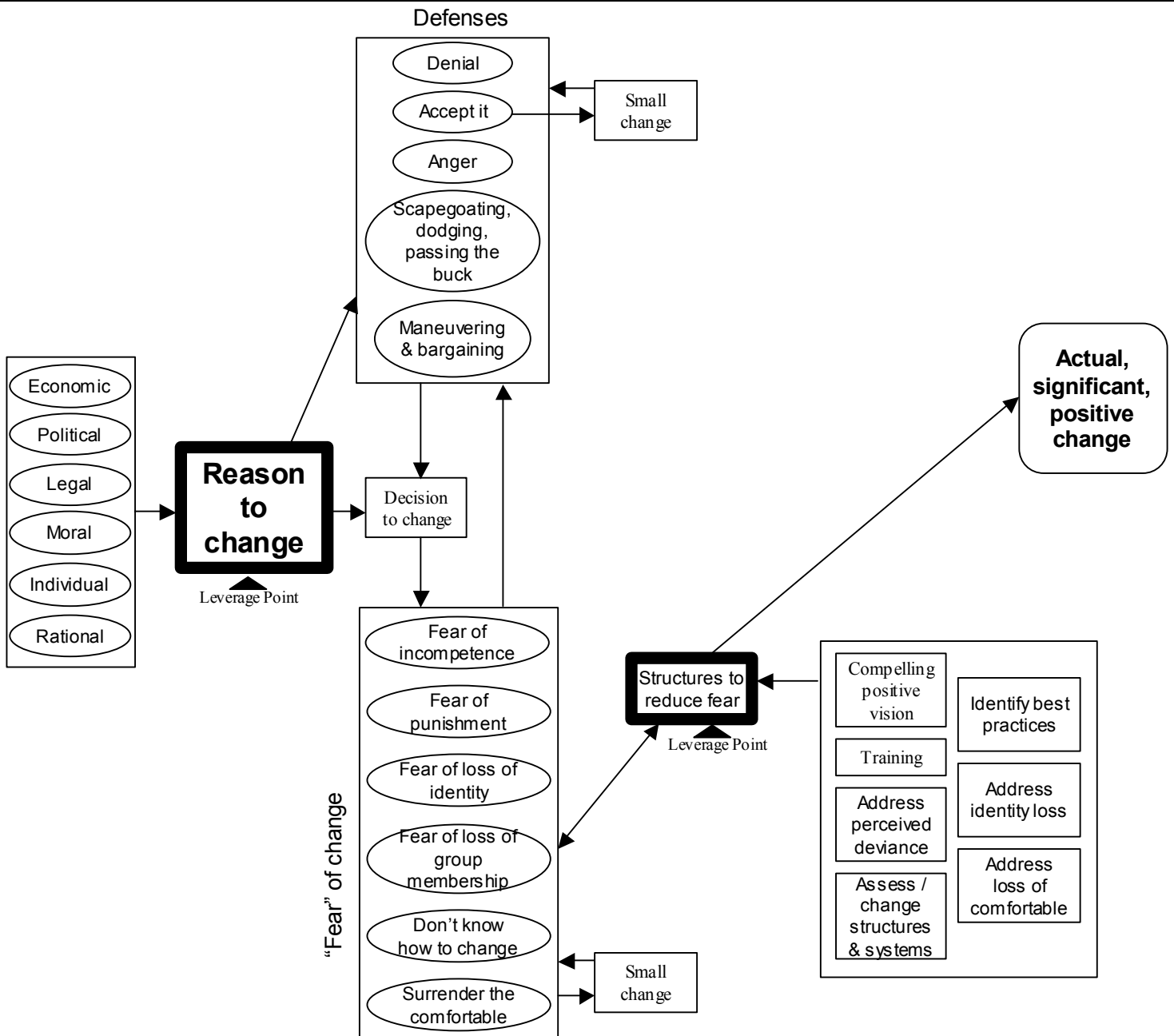
If you aren't going to use this change model very soon, consider not reading it right now. The details will likely only interest the reader who has a personal stake in an approaching or occurring change effort.

This change model is a simplistic one. A more encompassing change model that addressed the true nature of complicated change would be poster size and look like a spaghetti factory explosion. This section is not intended to be a book or treatise on change. Instead, it includes a general model that focuses on the main elements involved. On this abstracted, simplified level, a conceptual understanding of the nature of change with some specifics on how it is best accomplished can be delineated. It should prove useful. *Keep the model in front of you as you read through the sections describing it – everything will be much clearer to you!*

The model is largely linear. In reality, the reactions and processes happen in a more circular manner with some things occurring simultaneously.

All of the following **assumes that there is a real problem that should be dealt with**. There are certainly cases when people decide not to change based on reason, formal logic, and sound data (rigorous evaluation). In other words, a cost-benefit analysis was conducted with the best information available and changing was deemed to not make sense. Please keep in mind that **the following discussion is for the case when a change is the right course of action**.

A Simplified Model of Culture Change



R e a s o n s t o c h a n g e

One of Newton's Laws is inertia. Every object in a state of uniform motion tends to remain in that state of motion unless an external force is applied to it.

People don't change without reason. Even insane people almost always have reasons for change, but they aren't based on reasons most of us would find acceptable. There must be some force that throws the system out of balance for change to occur. Try saying outright to real people in front of you, "We're changing for no good reason." When the reason for change isn't sufficient in the minds of those asked to change, they'll label you a fool and won't change much. Psychologists and change agents refer to this as unfreezing or creating disequilibrium. Thus, one of the keys to gaining movement toward change is to provide a sound reason. There are six main reasons why people make changes, and they are discussed shortly. Before that, let me briefly discuss four points: another of Newton's Laws, the fact that learning something new requires unlearning something old, change by declaration, and the role of critical incidents.

Newton is credited with coming up with the idea that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. When you try to change people, they will resist, and if the mass (anxiety) you are pushing against is greater than your efforts to create movement (start change), you will ultimately lose. The harder you push people into change, the harder they are going to push back. It's more effective to reduce anxiety toward change than push harder against a force that will increase with your efforts. Change Jujutsu.

Learning something new also involves unlearning something that is there. The person or organization may have to unlearn beliefs, attitudes, values, assumptions, or the way things work. The unlearning of something that is there may or may not be very substantial. Both people and camps with a significant amount of history and experience with an issue (learned practice or belief) have likely built up a belief system so substantial that it must be dealt with first – see fears of change and structures to reduce them below.

A charismatic leader can provide the impetus to change based on his or her word. In this case, s/he has to *convincingly* make the case that the camp (person) could be doing much better, and the proposed changes are necessary to get there. Usually, evidence of one of the above forms is provided. Without data of some sort to point to, people may think the leader is crying wolf, or is wrong. Overcoming inertia by declaration is a feat few can accomplish, but it is possible. A snarky little saying goes "In God we trust; everyone else brings data."

The other point is that a critical incident could fit any category. When something serious happens, people and organizations will move – e.g., terrorism and the World Trade Center. The critical incident got our attention and action.

E c o n o m i c

These pressures might include: the return rate (campers, staff) is suffering, funding will be withdrawn unless change is made, or improvements must be made in order to remain financially viable in the future. For an individual, being fired or fined could be placed here. A merger or acquisition could also be lumped in this category. In essence, there is some monetary reason to change.

P o l i t i c a l

A board, an agency, regulating government body, the ACA, an influential individual, succession, new outside leader, or some other source of external power creates the need to change.

L e g a l

If you don't change, fines, prison time, or the threat of being forced out of business looms overhead. Lawsuits and regulations fit this threat.

M o r a l

If you don't change, you won't be achieving your goals or outcomes to the degree that would satisfy *others*. On a formal level, a camp might undergo rigorous evaluations of its outcomes (very rare). If those evaluations are negative in any way, change may ensue. On an informal level, organizations seek out information about how they are doing all the time – surveys, interviews, observation, etc. The quality and accuracy of that information varies widely, which may not reveal a "moral" threat that is actually present (see "Is it all good?" and the satisfaction survey appendices).

Amazingly, even when negative results surface, it is not infrequent for camps or people not to take any (or comprehensive) action, because either the results were not made public or psychological defenses were raised. Also, sometimes leaders decide that they can consciously live with the negative results. Again, the key distinction here is that if change is made, it is because of the influence of others who feel you (the camp) need to change.

I n t e r n a l

You need to change in order to meet some of your own goals and ideals. Making a difference in the lives of campers, staff, and yourself is so important that the decision to change occurs. Because of the problems discussed in the “Is it all good?” and satisfaction survey appendices, this force for change rarely surfaces with any degree of severity. Also, of course, drastic change isn’t always necessary.

However, more frequently, on a small scale, leaders make changes in relation to feedback from staff, campers, and parents, as well as education they receive through outside sources. These sources provide the impetus to make changes that improve the camp experience. But, unfortunately, sometimes the feedback is not systematic and valid enough to provide accurate information – see the evaluation resource and appendix on measuring satisfaction. The “From good to great” resource offers reasons to change on this level.

The most long lasting and thorough changes tend to come from this reason base. As the bases of power appendix and behavior management resources detail, change based on internal instead of external forces is most effective.

R a t i o n a l

The change that is evidently necessary may not be based strictly on a economic, political, legal, moral, or internal threat. Take for example the change of some seemingly insignificant element of the way the program works. It won’t likely make a difference economically, no one is forcing or really asking you to do it, and the benefit or cost may be so distant or so small that it doesn’t really fit those frameworks. Instead, the change makes sense (is rational) for some stakeholder (campers, staff, parents, etc.), and the change is made because it seems to be the correct action. Distilled to its ultimate essence, this category of change impetus could be placed in one of the other categories, but primarily, the idea that change is necessary is a rational one. In other words, change makes sense, but the reason isn’t chiefly to avoid some cost, or benefit from some more immediate gain.

This is a weak base from which to create large change.

D e c i s i o n s , d e c i s i o n s – w h e r e t o g o f r o m h e r e ?

All behavior occurs for a reason and all behavior is code. Whether or not people (or a camp) choose a defense or go through the process of dealing with their fears and move toward change depends on which path makes the most sense for them. In order to make the change path the right one, the fears of change must be addressed through the structures that address those fears.

There are two leverage points – the reason to change and the structures to reduce fear. Make the best case possible for the reason to change (without invoking excessive fear), and then target the blocks to change. *When the fear of change is greater than the reason to change, little positive usually occurs.*

People are often tempted to increase the reason to change, rather than reduce the barriers to change. The best, most positive case for change needs to be made, but after that, ramping up the reasons to change is probably just going to result in the person or camp ramping up their defenses. Half-hearted attempts at change may also result (see small change in model), but they don’t accomplish enough to be worthwhile.

It is possible for people to change because the consequences of not changing (reason to change) are, internally or externally, more unpleasant than the fear of change. “If you don’t change, you’re fired.” “The right answer is clear to everyone and you, so either you change with the rest of us or _____ will happen to you.” “I need you to do this or else . . .” Going this route can be shocking, overpowering, and result in a change that isn’t of the degree or quality desired. *Puncturing a defensive posture in a confrontational way rarely works, and when it does, it often produces alienation.* The steamroller approach to creating change comes at a price that is ultimately too high – see the bases of power appendix.

Therapeutic or logical attempts to target the defenses directly are rarely successful, but frequently tried. People use defenses so they won’t have to face their fears and actual change. Convincing people that they are being illogical is tempting and once in a while it works, but providing a compelling, positive reason for change and reducing the inhibitors to change is a much better strategy.

If targeting the defenses is attempted, the person or camp must engage in an open discussion based on reason with the change agent using a Socratic questioning style. Using the “Believing and doubting game” resource can be helpful. Assessing the person’s emotional intelligence and using that framework in the discussion can also be helpful. Empathy and a non-confrontational style are required. Rarely are conditions favorable for such an attempt and its failure usually leaves the target more entrenched than ever.

Defenses to change

Denial

- ✓ Recall that all of this discussion assumes that there is a real problem that should be dealt with and that a change is the right answer. Also, make sure you have the graphic model in front of you.
- ✓ “Problem, there’s no problem.” Denial is so insidious because sometimes it isn’t denial and the reason for change is inaccurate or insufficient. But, sometimes denial is occurring. What do you think happens most of the time when someone says, “You’re in denial?” The reply is usually, “No, I’m not.” The only way to tell is to use formal reasoning and rigorous analysis. That’s surprisingly rare, because after all, why shouldn’t you trust yourself? The “Believing and doubting game” resource can help here.
- ✓ “I don’t believe the data.” “It isn’t reliable – if it were assessed again, a different answer would come up.” Or, “it isn’t valid – what was supposed to be measured wasn’t actually measured.” “It’s a methods problem – the way that the measures were done or the manner in which the study was conducted is faulty.” “Science is weird.” The person or camp might also point to data that shows how well they are really doing. In this case, the data are: accurate, but not the complete picture; not based on rigorous methods that meet basic science requirements – they are at least in part inaccurate; or inaccurate for other reasons (e.g., outdated, not based on the camp in question – national data or data from another camp, etc.).
- ✓ “I don’t believe you.” “You’re untrustworthy.” “You have ulterior motives.” Discredit the source in some way and the data can be ignored. Problem solved.
- ✓ “Okay, but the problem is temporary and it will go away tomorrow (next session, next summer, . . .).”
- ✓ “Yes, but it’s really a small problem.” “It’s okay.” “It’s not that bad.”
- ✓ “They don’t really mean it; we don’t really have to change (or change for long).” “This is all going to blow over and things will return to normal.”
- ✓ Assign a greater degree of uncertainty to the reason for change than is warranted by formal logic and evaluation and you’re home free. In other words, agree with the reason for change, but cast it in an ambiguous light.
- ✓ Don’t do an evaluation so that you aren’t faced with the data – whichever way it goes. Ignorance is bliss.

Accept it

- ✓ This defense is a uniquely tricky reaction, and perhaps the most common, despite what people often think. Usually, the disconfirming data are incontrovertible – e.g., smoking is bad, seat belts are good, etc. By accepting the consequences, the anxiety and discomfort are largely relieved. An excellent and effective trick of conscience.
- ✓ The problem is true and real, but since in the person’s estimation it can’t be changed, or would require too much to change, little or nothing is done about it. The problem with this logic is that small, systematic, steady steps toward change rarely are impossible or fruitless. With effective tools like benchmarking (see that resource), larger improvements than imagined are likely possible. Also, see the “Innovation and continuous improvement” and “From good to great” resources.
- ✓ Sometimes effort at change is made, and having made that effort, one can mentally relax and know that everything worth trying (or that one is willing to try) has been done. Sometimes only a little really could be done, but more often it’s a defense to real or greater change. With this defense, folks eventually throw up their hands and just try to happily reside where they are. Change is deemed impossible or not worth it.
- ✓ Accepting it can resemble the “damn the torpedoes” mindset. With a sprinkling of denial, the individual or organization moves forward and finds the positives in what they are doing to outweigh the negatives they’ve accepted to some degree. “We may have problems, but we can live with them and we’re still doing good over here.” Again, no action is being taken on an actionable item.
- ✓ The accepting-it defense may also involve a recasting of priorities. If the reasons to change are essentially undisputed, what the organization or individual values is reformulated so that the evidence is less applicable to them. By using this form of psychological dissonance as a defense, anxiety can be relieved.
- ✓ People will stay in this low-level defensive posture until the reason to change increases in weight, or changing is made easier.

Anger

- ✓ It’s hard to hold on to anger for a long time. After a while, it will eventually shift to one of the other defenses, a combination of the fears about change, or the work of actually changing.

Scapegoating, dodging, passing the buck

- ✓ “It’s really their problem.” “The problem is very real and others should change, but it doesn’t apply to us.” “We’re doing a pretty good job all in all.” “The minor things we do are nothing compared to what they do.”
- ✓ “The fact that the 37 camps (all sound evidence to date) which have been formally evaluated for self-esteem impact have virtually no effect doesn’t reflect on our camp.” “That’s them, and we’re us.”

- ✓ Discount the reason to change. “Bend over, here it comes again.” “What, is this great idea number 37?”
- ✓ “It’s a problem, but I (we) can’t really change until they do.” Excuses put the onus of responsibility on others and little or none with oneself. This reason for not changing is more frequently used by those in the lower ranks.
- ✓ “This is going to be too hard.” Sometimes that is the case. Other times people or organizations need a more compelling reason to change combined with elements that are going to make the change easier. “It’s too hard” qualifies as a defense mechanism when the cost/benefit analysis based on formal logic and long-range goals reveals that change is truly advised. Again, rarely are small, systematic, steady steps toward change impossible or fruitless. See the “Innovation and continuous improvement” resource.
- ✓ Misused energy. People will waffle over a decision endlessly without moving forward. Thinking and rationalizations are the primary act. It’s like stepping on the gas pedal of a car that is in neutral gear.
- ✓ Self-pity. Tales of woe are told, cataloged, and often carefully presented to justify the lack of action.

M a n e u v e r i n g a n d b a r g a i n i n g

- ✓ “We’ll change, but not until we get _____, or _____ happens.” While this often seems like an excellent stance, it doesn’t actually produce any momentum or action toward the process of change. It’s a comfortable spot to be in, because “the ball is in their court.” Rarely is one rendered helpless or without recourse, so the formal logic doesn’t work in this defensive posture.
- ✓ “I don’t believe this is really in our long-term interest. Until that’s proven to my satisfaction, we’re just going to keep on doing what we’ve been doing.” If you’re going to wait around for someone to knock on your door and prove a disputed point to your satisfaction, you might be waiting a very long time. In that time, little or nothing might be done. If the reason to change is compelling, finding out if it makes long-range sense is a worthwhile endeavor.
- ✓ If the change is forced by legal, political, or other external means, the reaction might be to make just enough surface changes to get by. In this scenario, since the reason for change isn’t internalized, the defense is to satisfy others. A façade or veneer of change is put on. People often pride themselves on being clever about this. See the “Bases of power” section for further insight.

W a n t t o c h a n g e , b u t f e a r i t

At this point, the reason for change is accepted, the organization/people have left defensive postures behind, and a decision to change has truly been made. However, if actually making the change seems too hard, people just return to a defense and reside there. When the reason for change asserts itself or the relative ease of making the change becomes apparent, people then shift back toward attempted change.

The only path to real change from one (or many) of the defenses is to truly accept the decision to change and then face the related fears. For big decisions, facing the fears and the hard work of change is enormously difficult. Smaller or easier changes may hardly register as psychologically problematic.

People rarely have irrational fears – that’s psychopathology. Instead, people fear change for really good reasons. If someone or some organization can get over the defenses to change, some degree of change fear almost always occurs. Change is usually hard and anxiety provoking to a degree for anyone, so fear is a natural, normal response. The degree to which that anxiety translates into action or reverts to a defense (especially to accepting it), depends on whether the situation enables and empowers the person/organization to actually learn and change. Those situational/structural enablers are discussed after the fears.

F e a r o f t e m p o r a r y i n c o m p e t e n c e

The camp or person doesn’t want to give up the old way, because the new way has not been mastered or perfected yet. This fear can be mitigated if an interim process is possible, which deals with the anxiety in a proactive way.

F e a r o f p u n i s h m e n t

People don’t want to be *punished* for not being able to do something competently. The former point concerns situations where incompetence doesn’t come with any imposed punishment, but it may cause stress. When punishment (e.g., reprimanded, embarrassed, fined, fired, endure natural consequences of failure, etc.) is possible, people or organizations will use strategies to cope, or avoid being caught. To avoid being caught, people try and hide their incompetence. Covering up may include hiding information, not seeking new information (technically denial), or working hard (coping) to cover for the fact that the new way isn’t being used. Children experience this in activities and in the social arena, as do adults.

Fear of loss of personal identity

- ✓ In general, this fear is the result of being faced with evidence that your thoughts, behaviors, and/or knowledge were in error. It may mean accepting that the way you were doing things wasn't correct. Being wrong is no one's idea of fun, and being really wrong can be devastating. The way you do something can be a strong source of knowledge of who you are. The change may require you (or the group) to be a different person in some way, which may not be desirable.
- ✓ Potential reactions and examples
 - Through evaluation, the camp (or person) finds out it is not achieving the _____ goal. "I (!) am doing something wrong?" This is often a blow to people with a high self-esteem.
 - You're a totally non-competitive camp, and you're asked to accept that some competition might be okay.
 - "You mean all of these kids I've served didn't get as much out of the experience as I thought they did!?"
 - Move from cabin assignments for activities to a hybrid free-choice system when the former was somebody's baby.

Fear of loss of group membership

- ✓ Essentially, your peer group doesn't think that way, so if you change and they don't, you might not be a part of the group anymore, or as much a part of it. The peer group might be counselors, supervisors, other directors, family, friends, some small cell of folks you have to or want to associate with, broader culture, or . . . The solution requires the group to change how it thinks, or the individual to change how s/he interacts with the group.
- ✓ If the group doesn't really care about it, then changing doesn't matter. Groups are fine with changing many things, but they react when the element is central to the group's identity or goals. Peripheral changes are not a problem, or much of one. If they do care, you are a threat to what they believe or want to do and are marginalized to some degree. In the close quarters of camp, if the person can't be left out as part of the group, the majority may just throw up its hands after significant effort and accept the person anyway. But, because it is disturbing to groups to have people as members who have a significantly different views on matters of importance, the outsider is likely to be treated as such in some way.
- ✓ Deviating from group norms might result in harassment, punishment of some sort, being ostracized in specific instances or overall, not being privy to certain information, sabotage, pity, or some other means to communicate that "you aren't one of us" and therefore are not deserving of our full support, friendship, and effort.
- ✓ The camp probably has campers and staff who have come to expect things to be run a certain way. They are used to the culture and methods. Changing some element of it might encounter resistance. Campers or staff may not choose to come back, or they may rebel if they do return. In this case, the administration wants to maintain that group membership and changing might ostracize those people.
- ✓ People need people (see that resource), so this can be extremely powerful as a resistor to change.

Anxiety because the way to change is unknown

- ✓ This fear is that the answer isn't out there, personally known, or possible. The problems are evident. The disconfirming data have been accepted. But, the solution to the problem is unknown. Perhaps a few things have been tried, but none really worked well enough. People may reside here for a long time trying to find the means to change. "It's a real problem, but I just don't know what else to do about it."
- ✓ If the person or camp believe they don't have the answer and that it doesn't exist elsewhere (almost regardless of how hard they've searched), people will largely get rid of the anxiety by using the accepting it defense.
- ✓ This approach differs from actually making steady attempts and progress toward change. The fear referred to here is either not making any more efforts to change (give up), or making feeble (non-intelligent, systematic) efforts.
- ✓ If the change required is deemed impossible or not worth it, one of the defenses will be used, because facing the fears of change or implementing the structures to deal with them are too costly.

Surrendering the comfortable

Most people enjoy the known and predictable. Change requires giving that up to some degree, and perhaps to a large degree. The joy and comfort of the old way is perceived as being lost by the new way of doing things, and sometimes that's true. Changing the way it's always been is difficult and scary. Facing this fear is often too much for people and they resort to a defense mechanism or a change in their circumstances to cope with it.

Structures to reduce fear

Insightful, learning organizations (people) are aware that change involves some fear. That fear may engender very light or very heavy resistance, depending on factors such as consequences and attitude strength of the changed element. Learning something new also involves unlearning something that is there, which creates a degree of fear and resistance. In both cases, there is a variable amount of fear/resistance which should be addressed to increase the likelihood of change. Proactive steps (the below structures) help to increase the probability that positive change will occur and that people and the camp will benefit as a result of it.

Keep in mind that the elimination of these fears (previous section) is probably an unrealistic, and at times impossible, goal. But, they don't need to be eliminated. The change agent's goal is to have the reason for change be greater than the fears resisting it, and ease the change by addressing the below structures. Make the best case possible for the reason to change (without invoking excessive fear), and then target the blocks to change.

Generating anxiety and fear to inspire action toward change will likely result in enhanced defenses until a breaking point is reached. That breaking point usually causes a lot of unnecessary pain. It is far more efficacious to address the structures that reduce fear.

To insure success, all of these steps should be implemented, and at the same time. It's a tall order, but if the change is important, creating the environment for it to happen is crucial.

Compelling positive vision

- ✓ This point is often different from the reason to change leverage point, although they are closely related. The reason to change can be negative and/or imposed. A change needs to happen because there is a problem. That's the reason to change side of the equation. On the other side of the equation, moving toward a compelling positive future state reduces the fears of change. If you're fortunate, the reason to change is to create an even more perfect state of existence. In that case, the reason to change *is* the compelling positive vision. Otherwise, the reason to change is the problem and the compelling positive vision is where you are going to make the situation better and hopefully positive.
- ✓ Despite common misperceptions, people are not as likely to be motivated away from something bad as they are to be motivated toward something good. To that end, everyone involved must believe that they will be better off with the new way of doing things. In other words, they must have a reason to change. A compelling positive vision of how things will be better is the best tactic. Remember that force and fear will likely result in a defense tactic, including perfunctory compliance (see bases of power appendix).
- ✓ Address why the change is necessary, the present state of affairs (note the many things that are going right as well), the desired future state, and how you are going to get from here to there. In addition to ideals and general statements of attitudes and outcomes, speak of specific behaviors, policies, structures, and processes that will result in the actual change. It is crucial to get specific! Utilize the information in the "how culture is created" section and the "deep assumptions" section. The process modeling resource can also help with this task.
- ✓ It is important to talk to every person involved in the change so that their attitudes, goals, and reactions can be addressed in a manner that is more likely to yield conversion instead of just compliance. Camps have the advantage of being able to approach people on a one-by-one basis since the staff is usually small. If that is too daunting, small groups of around seven would cover 140 staff in 20 groups. When it's important, a large group meeting isn't enough. Letters, e-mails, and the like almost always fail to some degree as well, although they can complement the in-person approach.
- ✓ See the "Bases of power" section and the "5 approaches to counseling" in the behavior management resource to better understand how people are motivated and approached. Conversion is necessary or subcultures with different goals and/or means are virtually guaranteed (weak culture).

Training

- ✓ Almost always, the new way of working or thinking requires training. Staff Training Best Practices (STBP) have already been extensively described in that resource.
- ✓ In essence, people must have a mental understanding of what is required of them, how it is going to work, and why the way you are telling them is the best method. After that, they must be sufficiently convinced that the change is necessary and good (see compelling vision, the change model reasons, and the STBP resource). Finally, the behavioral training element must be in place so that people have eventually practiced the new behavior enough that they are capable of it without models and coaches.
- ✓ By hiring more people initially (or through some other method), making the task of learning and changing easier is extremely powerful. Change can throw a system out of balance, and more people of *high quality* for a short period of time can make the process much, much more smooth.

Address perceived deviance

- ✓ On a large scale, creating the positive vision and selling people on it is the step to convert the large group to the new way of doing things. In this manner, it is hoped that not going along with the proposed change will be perceived as deviant. The superordinate goal of the compelling positive vision should help bring groups together. If the vision isn't bought and internalized, there will be problems.
- ✓ Subgroups (culture strength) are almost always present in any large system. It may be the case that your camp has subgroups that aren't converted by the other means addressed here. If the majority of a tight subgroup is resistant, it will be very difficult for those who are in agreement with the change to do so since they are the minority in such a group.
- ✓ The process for attitude change is the same as for the large group, just on a smaller scale. In general, you must have either expert or referent power – see the bases of power appendix. If the other bases of power must be used, it is best to let those people go after due diligence in attitude change. Such people become either active or passive termites. See also the “5 approaches to counseling” in the behavior management resource. In some cases, more drastic steps may be necessary – see the section on general principles of culture change.
- ✓ Create support groups where people who have successfully made the change help people who are having trouble emotionally or with the new skill/behavior. This cross-categorization of group members is extremely powerful as a change tool. The supportive group must be valued, respected members of the larger group. This mixes up the in-group and out-group distinction and moves people toward a more common goal.

Assess/change structures and systems

- ✓ Remember that the culture in isolation is never the only cause of any problem. The structures and processes might be primarily or, certainly, secondarily implicated. Also, examine the artifacts, deep assumptions, and how culture is created sections to see the various elements that need to be reviewed.
- ✓ The change will require new behaviors from people. The processes involved in the new behavior need to be carefully examined – see the STBP and the process modeling resources for more information. Find out what your processes and structures are for the outcomes (for staff and campers) that matter most, and examine how they need to be adapted or changed.
- ✓ In general, what is rewarded, and what results in a consequence need to be fully examined. For example, if people are being asked to be more group focused, having an individual reward and punishment system is out of line with that stated cultural/behavior change. Evaluating and supporting the group need to be primary structures.
- ✓ Examine “the learning camp” resource and the resource on “the art and science of mistakes” for more information on how to create an environment/culture where people are encouraged to change and learn.

Identify best practices to cope with feeling of not knowing how to change

- ✓ “Benchmarking” and “Knowledge management” are separate resources that should be examined. In essence, the fear of not knowing how to change can be addressed by searching out best practices (benchmarking), as well as tapping the knowledge that is grown in your own organization (knowledge management).
- ✓ Although a separate culture change might be necessary, creating a learning culture facilitates the ability of organizations to seek out and find better ways of operating.
- ✓ It certainly takes some resources to be able to engage in benchmarking and knowledge management in terms of time, people, and money. However, if those things aren't available to create the conditions necessary for a successful change effort, the utility of doing so should be reconsidered. A mismanaged change effort may leave you in a state worse than where you started.

Loss of identity

- ✓ In order to move beyond this fear, the person or camp must come to grips with it as an issue and find ways to reorganize what is valuable, or work on recreating this value in a different way.
- ✓ Conduct a thought experiment (perhaps with the person or people effected taking part).
 - What was this person's (people's) life like before?
 - What history have they experienced?
 - What did they value?
 - What was valued about them?
 - What truths were accepted with a capital T?
 - What were their main goals?

- How radical is the change? How much of a mental and physical shift must they make? What new behaviors and skills will they have to learn?
- Who were their role models? If there are going to be new role models, who are they? Can they psychologically identify with them?
- Will they have to work with new people? How will they feel about it?
- What's the person's level of maturity/emotional intelligence?
- How much harder will the person have to work and think?
- On a continuum of being more client or more staff focused, where does this person fall?

Surrender the comfortable

- ✓ The compelling positive vision for the reason to change and the institution of the other structures mentioned above (particularly training) to reduce the fear of change are all helpful and necessary.
- ✓ Beyond those aids to change, conducting a ritual to help mentally ease the transition and to allow the person (people) to let go of the old ways can be very helpful.
- ✓ How much control does the person(s) have in defining the new system? How much control do they have in deciding how they are going to learn the new way of implementing it? Consider allowing people to customize the solution/process/way to fit them as individuals as long as their means fit the principles and achieve the desired end in a reasonable manner. Not consulting people involved in a decision is often perceived as an act of aggression. Control is a major reason why people are so happy with the way things work – they are known and predictable.
- ✓ Despite the fact that change is constant, people are rarely comfortable with it. Try using the book “Who Moved My Cheese?” to have people understand the mindset of change. It's a quick read, comes in a video format as well, and is a pretty playful story. Changing people's expectations about change is very powerful.
- ✓ Another approach is to have people understand the change model as presented here. Understanding (a) the process, (b) where they are in it, and (c) why they are in it can move people into at least adopting only the accepting-it defense. From there, it is easier to move people toward change once the other fear-reducing structures are in place.
- ✓ As an additional tool, try using the books Emotional Intelligence, The EQ Edge, or The Emotionally Intelligent Workplace. When people are thinking about emotional intelligence, it forces them to be in touch with their own emotions, which helps people separate out the logical and emotional sides of an issue.

Succession

Whenever the counselors are replaced, it is important to socialize the newcomers. The enculturation section discusses that process in detail. When the leadership (primarily, I'm talking about replacing the executive director, director, or other key leadership) is replaced, there are special cultural considerations beyond enculturation that need to be taken into account, which are addressed below. This discussion does not closely address other considerations, such as the need for coaching (scaffolding) and mentoring, the new leader's performance and potential, or the performance characteristics of the organization being entered. Those five elements are *critical* to the success of the new leader.

Succession is placed under the culture change section, because it so often involves one. *One of the keys to a successful transition is a full cultural analysis.* With that knowledge, the change can often result in a leap forward instead of just a step, or even a retreat. The inherited cultural landscape might be hilly (differentiation and integration) with hidden quagmires (termites) and hard to penetrate thickets (negative leaders). The three scenarios of succession are used as the framework for this discussion.

C o n t i n u a t i o n s u c c e s s i o n

In this scenario, the leader has usually handpicked his or her successor. The new person is almost always a part of the culture and people know him or her. The person was selected because things will continue to run as they have been. In most cases, the old leader helps the new leader and the community deal with the transition. With only minor tweaks here and there that no one is likely to get up in arms about, continuation succession usually has few problems.

Change really isn't the issue here, but it is necessary to include this model in light of the others. The primary challenge the new leader faces is building social capital or credits among his or her followers. People must feel comfortable with this "new" person at the helm. Especially in strong cultures, the new leader needs to be mindful of nostalgia, honor the person who is leaving, and be careful of polarization between those who maintain loyalty to the old leader and those who support the new one. If things keep going well and in the same direction, folks are generally pretty happy.

H y b r i d s u c c e s s i o n

In this case, the new leader is someone with intimate knowledge of the existing culture, but some changes are seen as necessary or desirable. This person has usually worked in the culture for an extended period of time. Often, it is someone who has moved up the ranks and is now taking on a position of leadership, or greater leadership. Sometimes the person has left the culture for a while, but is now returning to it. This scenario can also fit the case where an outsider buys a camp and runs it with the old leaders for a year or two.

With camps, hybrid succession is the most common. The new leader agrees with much of the vision, philosophy, policies, structures, and processes, but there are areas that will experience change. The degree of that change varies from slight (there is a definite, significant disturbance) to moderate. A severe or radical change better fits the outside, turnaround succession model, since so much is changing and the hybrid advantage (knowing and being known by the culture and people) is often lost.

In any case, it is important to be mindful of nostalgia, honor the passing person, and be careful of polarization. The new leader needs to build social credits, and the greater the change, the greater the need for them. Having a transition year where the new leader takes over with the support of the old is extremely effective. Open support of the old leader makes things easier. The new leader can take charge and make autonomous decisions with the old leader getting people on the bandwagon. Generally, *the culture change principles and model fully apply* – see that section for necessary considerations.

In particular, the hybrid leader will be most successful when there is a mandate (reason) for change and the people believe in the compelling positive vision of the future. Every person should be spoken with, as discussed in the culture change section. Those conversations must be deep, utterly honest, and truly two-way to be useful. The new leader needs to express her or his philosophy and goals. Changes that are to happen based on the cultural and business analysis must be thoroughly and openly discussed. The inherited cultural landscape is probably hilly (differentiation and integration) with hidden quagmires (termites) and hard to penetrate thickets (negative leaders). Know the intricacies and nuances – get a lay of the land (cultural analysis) – or else. Negative leaders must be addressed immediately. Termites must be dealt with very quickly.

O u t s i d e s u c c e s s i o n

As it implies, someone who is foreign to the specific culture takes on a key leadership role. This scenario is often avoided, because the potential for it going badly is so high. A study hasn't been conducted in the camping industry, but in Fortune 500 companies, 80% of outside successions fail within two years (Downey, 2001). The five principal reasons are well known and are delineated shortly.

It is important to note that the reasons for outside succession failure can be overcome when it is managed well. In addition, the outside leader often brings a more appropriate skill set to the position, because a much wider

pool than of those who have worked at the camp is being tapped. ***In this case, outside succession candidates often perform better than internal ones – sometimes dramatically.***

One of the main problems is not fully taking the culture into account. Indeed, 75% of new leaders cited culture as the primary reason for problems. *For this reason, a cultural analysis is of primary importance when a new leader succeeds.* The five reasons identified in the aforementioned study are below. They are not in any particular order, because the weighting will vary depending on the situation.

- Inappropriate person-organization fit (see the enculturation section for an explanation)
- Skills of the new leader – often not successfully matched to organizational needs
- The severity of the problems facing the new leader and the organization as a whole is frequently at issue (often a setup for failure). The organization itself sometimes doesn't know the scope and/or nature of the problem. The new leader enters the picture and is either unable (it's just not possible) or not capable of turning things around. Often, this is due to there being insufficient resources available to respond to the organization's needs.
- The organization's readiness and responsiveness to the needs of assimilating leaders isn't considered. This includes ***very clear*** role expectations, job responsibilities, and evaluation plans. To some extent, coaching and mentoring are always necessary.
- The degree to which a team is ready for the arrival of the new leader. This refers to their actual job skills, and their emotional readiness to accept and work with a new leader. The team must be competent and motivated – leadership is not a one-person show.

Keeping in mind the above, outside leaders can take three general paths in their succession

- Status quo
This is the easiest path – essentially continuation succession. The main task is to sell the people on the idea that the new person loves the culture. It's a process of building social credits. It tends to be quite rare for an outside succession though, because significant changes are certain to be desired.
- Change pieces of the culture
For an outside leader, this is by far the most common approach. The change should follow all the principles detailed in the culture change section and the hybrid succession scenario. Generally, if changes are subtle and can happen over a period of years, the change should occur (a) from social credits, and (b) by making changes that draw upon the strengths of the culture, (c) by progressively selecting new staff who are in line with the new cultural norms and values, and (d) by speaking personally with every staff member involved in the change for as long as is necessary. Also, termites and incompetent staff are often big challenges for the new leader. If the changes are more than moderate, using the hybrid model could result in open and secret combative stances that create a messy transition – sometimes with dire consequences. That brings us to the next path.
- Turnaround/Radical culture change
The sub-scenarios here are usually (a) an existing camp is struggling in the minds of participants and it brings in a new leader or owner, or (b) an existing camp that isn't struggling in the minds of participants brings in a new leader or owner. A new camp has no norms and values alive in the camp yet, so that is a completely different story. The above phrase “in the minds of participants” is key, because actual performance and people's perceptions of performance are not the same thing. Sometimes, the camp doesn't look that bad in the minds of those enmeshed in it.
The first scenario is a little bit easier, because the reason to change doesn't have to be debated. The second scenario is almost always brutal unless the culture is quite weak. In either case, *radical culture change is a repudiation of much of the norms and values.* People are going to take that personally. They literally have parts of themselves wrapped up in the camp.
There are often battles between the old and new guard, which causes a weak culture in turmoil. Creating new deep assumptions and a strong culture with either open conflict or termites is a slow, bloody process. Radical culture changes should not be undertaken lightly. It usually involves a voluntary mass exodus of campers and staff that still requires some cleanup in hiring and firing decisions.
It often takes these shocked cultures so long to recover, that a quick, clean break is the most humane and effective choice. Certainly, every returning staff member should go through an enculturation interview and process with the new norms and values in the forefront. If that is done well and new staff are subjected to the same rigor, the slow process of building a strong culture can begin without the chains of the past and on-going battles encumbering it. Move forward with frequent cultural analyses. Good luck.

Final thoughts

Framework

When the lessons of culture sink in and become a part of you, the world will look different. You'll have a framework for seeing things that really weren't quite visible, or visible in the same way. You'll see more and see more clearly. From family, to camps, to subgroups in America, to America, to comparing national cultures, you'll look at artifacts and see deep assumptions. You'll see espoused values that aren't deep assumptions as well.

The strength of a culture is something you understand, as well as how to strengthen and weaken one. When culture change is needed, you'll be able to shepherd the process through more successfully. When new staff of any level are considered or arrive, you'll be able to make the transition more easily and better for all concerned. In short, you have both the toolbox (framework) and the tools (specifics) to better harness the power of culture.

Broad applicability

Building community

Camps often tell parents and staff about their sense of community. Whenever camp folks describe the experience to others, they reference the community. What the heck is community and how does one put a finger on it and develop it purposefully? With the cultural framework, the idea of community becomes more manageable. It is the norms and values shared by a group, including a sense of belonging, collective effort, and shared influence. A tight community is a strong culture. A powerful community is one where norms and values (deep assumptions) are in line with valued outcomes. The details are beyond this general book on culture, but looking at community through the cultural lens is incredibly powerful and informative. Stay tuned for a resource on community.

Media influence

When you deconstruct media (magazines, television, etc.) from a cultural viewpoint, you can see the deep assumptions that are being *appealed* to and *imparted*. Just such systematic endeavors have been done by numerous foundations and universities and the results are stunning. Again, the cultural framework is valuable.

Peer groups and influence

A controversial book called *The Nurture Assumption* (1999) asserts that genetics explain about 50% of who you are, parents about 10% (beyond genes), and peers the other 40%. While it is neither as simple, nor the numbers quite as skewed as that, the point that peers can play a big role (and sometimes bigger role than parents) in children's lives is well taken. In essence, the book takes a cultural subgroup explanation for the power of peers. But a family that has a strong culture has children who are more resistant to peer influence – as if you needed me to tell you that! Generally, whichever group is stronger – family or peers – is where most of the norms and values will come from.

Character education

The utility of examining culture and character education in the same light was briefly discussed in this book (see last part of the enculturation section). Again, when you think about it, character education is social enculturation! The idea is exactly the same – transmit norms and values so that they are internalized.

Why the effect of camp may wear off

Studies that examine the influence of camp may find an effect from the beginning to the end of a camp experience. That's great, but we need to know more.

The norms and values operating in a camp with a reasonably strong culture are going to elicit certain behaviors. The camp environment encourages some behaviors and discourages others. It is the hope that campers take the norms and values they experience at camp back to their normal environment/culture. If that culture (family, peer group, school, community) shares those norms, it is more likely that the behaviors and attitudes will continue. For example, a Jewish camp discovered that the children it served received a small, long-term boost in their Jewish attitudes, if they came from an already strong Jewish family.

If the normal environment doesn't encourage those norms and values, the influence of the camp will likely be more limited. It is for this reason that "partnering with parents" is an idea that is often espoused. Take the example of environmental attitudes and awareness. Camps may influence those attitudes and behaviors, but when the children return home, environmental behaviors are often no better than they were before camp.

My point is not that camps can't be effective, but rather that they can be more effective if they take into consideration the difference in norms and values between the camp and normal environments. Working with parents, having booster sessions throughout the year, getting campers to return for another dose, trying to internalize the norms and values in the campers so that they will seek out groups that hold them as well, and other methods are all attempts to cope with cultural discrepancies between environments.

Journey, not a destination

Understanding culture and managing it well is a long journey that has no end. This journey starts with a climb up a fairly steep mountain in an effort to get a handle on culture in all respects, but the path gets easier after that. At no point will the culture be so strong that it doesn't need to be constantly nurtured and occasionally assessed carefully. The appendix on the "Do-it-yourself culture" assessment kit is one place to start. It is a cliché to say that harnessing culture is a "journey, and not a destination," but that makes it no less true.

Conclusion

Some people have said that culture is really just managing the norms and values. That's true in the same sense that nuclear bombs are just the splitting of a few atoms. When culture isn't managed right, it can be as explosive. First-hand, I've seen culture literally tear a camp to pieces and self-destruct. I've also seen a strong culture in line with valued outcomes perform miracles with people and physical space. Both extremes were so awesome that I'll never forget either of them. Average cultures tend to get average results in terms of outcomes. As the "Issues with evidence camps use" appendix describes, average isn't very good.

As I said in the very beginning, culture must be managed and managed well. It must be understood and nurtured. When it is, the ten benefits discussed at the start will be yours to enjoy. The story of your camp will resemble the story in the introduction. When your camp culture is managed well, you'll be able to go forth and change lives and enrich the world like never before. When that happens, I shall be paid in full for giving this book away for free. Let me know what happens . . . God speed.

Cited references and resources

Citations

Ashkanasy, N. M., Wilderom, C. P., & Peterson, M. F. (2000). Handbook of organizational culture and climate. Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Cameron, K., & Quinn, R. (1998). Diagnosing and changing organizational culture: Based on the competing values framework. Addison-Wesley Pub Co.

Downey, D. & March, T. (2001). Comfortable fit: Assimilating new leaders. Downey Associates International. http://www.downeyassociates.com/executive_talent_article_assimilating_new_leaders.htm

Harris, J. R. (1999). The nurture assumption. Touchstone Books

Kotter, J. P., & Keskett, J. L. (1992). Corporate culture and performance. The Free Press: New York, NY.

Levering, R., & Moskowitz, M. (2000). The 100 best companies to work for. Fortune, January 10, 2000.

Sellers, P. (2001). Ego: Get over yourself. Fortune, April 30, 2001. http://www.fortune.com/indexw.jhtml?channel=artcol.jhtml&doc_id=201650

General References

As I noted in the preface, I was reluctant to offer many references. For one, I'm fond of very little in existence about culture. Writings tend to be obtuse and quite incomplete. In general, examine the Ashkanasy summary of culture. In the back, you'll find copious references for the interested reader – over a thousand.

I should acknowledge two authors in particular though. Dr. Schein “developed” the general framework of culture, although I've made numerous adjustments to it. Like the famous television and book series “Connections” aptly points out, all thought is built upon past ideas. Similarly, Dr. Schein got much of his work from anthropologists. Dr. Martin is credited with coming up with the culture strength typology, although the specific writing and thoughts here are my own.

Martin, J. (1992). Cultures in organizations: Three perspectives. New York: Oxford University Press.

Schein, E. H. (1985). Organizational culture and leadership: A dynamic view. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Other Vision Realization Resources

See www.visionrealization.com for even more resources

Evaluation 101	Provides an overview of the evaluation process. This resource should be the first one viewed as the others build off of it. If you're thinking of doing an evaluation, you'll get up to speed quickly here. The slide show combined with the audio annotations offers a thorough introduction.
Process maps	Utilizing this knowledge will help you understand and communicate what your camp does in an unprecedented way. The staff and campers will benefit enormously from this knowledge. View this slide show with audio annotations and reach a new plateau of understanding and effectiveness. This is not just about “evaluation.”
Measuring outcomes	If you want to assess how well your camp is achieving its mission and outcomes, this knowledge is essential. Picking measures is hard to do, but this shows you the process and offers questions/criteria to make sure you pick a winner. Slide show with audio annotation explains and guides you through this sticky area.
Knowledge management	Knowledge management will save you time, money, be a staff perk, and help you achieve your mission much more effectively. Simple idea, difficult to implement well, profound results. More specific implementation advice and lists are provided as well as models to help organize efforts. Slide show with audio annotation. Once you engage this tool, you'll wonder how you ever did without it!
Knowledge management handout	Survey. Domains and examples for KM content. Log form. Suggestion form – general and specific. Yellow pages form. The OWL Librarian. Advanced knowledge management systems.

Benchmarking	Benchmarking is the process of identifying, understanding, and adapting outstanding practices from any organization to help your camp improve it's performance and outcomes. Follow the Fortune companies in profiting from this tool. Also includes the American Productivity and Quality Center's process classification framework in detail. Audio annotation is included.
Staff training best practices presentation	Learn how to take your camp training from good to best practice. Understand how to convey information so that it will be remembered and used. Learn how to capture the heart in addition to the mind. Understand how to make in-the-trenches training as effective as possible - includes guidelines for supervisors. Fortune 500 leadership training, Parent Effectiveness Training, and camp orientations don't achieve their objectives at an alarming rate. Learn why orientations, special trainings, and in-services fail and what to do about it.
Staff training best practices handout	This written summary complements the presentation, rather than replacing it. Both offer plenty of principles, examples, and specifics.
Organizational factors	The topics presented here are definitely considered by camps, and often agonized about at length. The goal is to hopefully offer a nugget or two of new information, or new lines of thought. Addressed are camper return rates and session length, staff return rates, appropriate staffing levels, and staff quality.
The learning camp	The book "The Fifth Discipline" made this concept popular, but a lot has happened in the decade since that research was done. There are eight pillars of a learning organization. Understand what they are and how to assess where you stand on each pillar by using an administrator and counselor survey - provided.
The art and science of mistakes	Directors, staff, and campers all make plenty of slip-ups. Learn the differences between mistakes and failure and how to find the humor and wisdom in life's disappointments. Teach children, staff, and your organization how to "fail forward." There isn't a single aspect of organizations or personal life this doesn't apply to!
Emotional intelligence	Brief information in presentation format on what Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is, why it is so important, and how to develop it. Also includes information on how to measure EQ in a valid and reliable way. Audio annotation is included.
Emotional intelligence handout	Detailed, but clear information about what Emotional Intelligence is, why it is crucial, and how to develop it. Information on applying it to interpersonal relationships is also included.
Believing and doubting game	This is a useful "game" to play when you are having almost any kind of controversial discussion, or are trying to increase creativity. Place the one-page description in front of everyone at the meeting, allow everyone to read it, and get ready to have a more open, creative, and, ultimately more productive discussion/meeting.
Behavior management	This resource is a comprehensive behavior management plan that is firmly rooted in developmental and counseling psychology. Elements of plans that work and don't, bases of power, 5 approaches to counseling, parenting styles, and a full description of a systematic plan for working with children are all included.
Character education best practices	There is a dizzying array of books, articles, and curriculums about character education. Put it all into a framework you can understand and use.
Fundamental need for people	Sure, people need people, but did you know that the evidence suggests that people are needed just like food? A short description is offered of how necessary people are to our mental and physical health. Use this to demonstrate to staff just how important friends are to children and themselves.
From good to great	Only 1 out of 130 businesses ever manages to go from good to great. By reading this resource, you'll understand the 7 key elements that enables them to make the leap. These principles were discovered via the largest single scientific research endeavor on this topic of our time. You'll also be able to assess where your specific camp is (alive, okay, good, pretty good, great), and receive the detailed knowledge of how your camp can move up a notch, or all the way to great.
Staff motivation	This resource is a thorough overview of the factors responsible for a motivated staff. Addressed are: the role of stories, speeches, and pep talks; staff quality; staff quantity; pay; camp culture; performance reviews; discipline; empowering staff; providing value to your staff; vision and mission; praise and recognition; setting expectations; and perks and benefits. Understand how to "get more from your staff without even asking."

Stories

Camp examples

All of these camps (names have been changed) are ACA accredited and in good standing. They are all financially successful as well. The pattern is to delineate a camp with problems, an exceptional camp, and then another camp with problems. Each of these three camps had both good and bad qualities, but the examples will be left stark. The espoused values largely differ for each camp set in order to provide a lot of breadth.

These are nothing close to a full cultural analysis, and bear virtually no resemblance to one. The examples are provided to offer a small sampling of what happened at real camps in very limited areas. It is hoped that the different approach used here will help people understand culture in an even more complete way. Combined with the other sections (e.g., deep assumptions, taxonomies, enculturation), these tables should flush out your cultural knowledge a little bit. *Remember that the culture strength triad needs to be assessed to get a handle on problems or successes, because it isn't black or white. Each dimension occurs along a continuum.*

After these three examples, two stories of culture change at camp are briefly described. Next comes a few stories about corporate culture, followed by a few societal examples of the power of culture.

Camp "Majestic"		
Espoused Value	Deep Assumption	Artifact(s) – Observable World
Inclusive community	Tenure and special relationships are key	Returning staff separated themselves from new staff. Returning campers could chose their bunk mates, while new campers rarely could. Special places in camp for special staff. People played favorites.
We want your suggestions	We don't really want your suggestions. We know what we're doing	Suggestions were rarely acknowledged, discussed, or implemented. By the end of the summer, the suggestion box was usually empty. Nine suggestions per staff member, per summer never happened.
Campers come first	Divided: Campers come first for administration, but counselors put themselves 1 st .	The administration worked hard to give the children a good experience. Much of the staff would stay out past curfew, often focus on each other, and work well only when supervised.
We provide individualized treatment	In activities, via quick return of parent phone calls, & a low camper:counselor ratio.	Each child did not have an individual development plan beyond the physical skills. Thorough background on children not provided to staff. No specific, dedicated time to talk about each child.
7-8 hours of sleep a night is key for staff	You must sleep less to meet your and camp's needs	Fill out reports on your free time and at night. Special camp projects require that you sacrifice your free time. Good evaluations and special privileges go to those who put in their time. There is insufficient time off to meet basic staff needs – e.g., social, relax, journal, sleep, etc.
Clean communication (don't talk behind people's back)	Unless you really have a problem with them	Tends to be a highly differentiated (culture strength) element. Some subgroups are good about it, while others are quite bad.
No drinking at camp or underage	Don't let us catch you	There are places the administration won't check, even though they realize what is going on.
The administration and counselors are an open family	Administration holds the power, control, and privilege	Administration had separate time-off spot. Sat at different tables for meals. Always stood in front of camp at meetings. Their suggestions and ideas carried greater weight. Staff did not feel free to approach supervisors with touchy or controversial comments, concerns, or suggestions.
Children receive social skills, self-esteem, and have friends for life	Same, but didn't have processes, structures, or evaluations in place.	None of the outcomes were assessed. The counselors and most of the administration were unaware of the specific outcomes, or how they were to be specifically fostered. Director didn't understand what a true assessment of outcomes looked like.
Positive behavior management	Almost anything goes	Embarrassment, punishment, bribery, and physical tasks such as pushups or wall sits were primary behavior management methods.
We're a child centered environment	Applied loosely	T-shirts frequently worn: "Firefighters: We find 'em hot and leave 'em wet" "BU Pub: Liquor in the front, poker in the rear" "Totally tasteless jokes" book in the library. Graffiti in bathroom dating over a decade: "I was **** eatin" "I felt my **** contract as he and I came together"

Camp “Viking”

Espoused Value	Deep Assumption	Artifact(s) – Observable World
Staff are appreciated	Ditto	Staff parties during the summer. Notes of encouragement and specific praise appear frequently. Training is excellent in orientation and throughout the summer. Staff are listened to. Staff are supported in their reasonable physical and emotional needs. Personal and professional development is a real priority.
Knowledge management is important	Ditto	There is dedicated, un-conflicted time for staff to both contribute to the knowledge management system and learn from it.
We make commitments with care, and then live up to them. In all things, we do what we say we are going to do.	Ditto	When counselors or administration make a commitment, every possible effort will be made to make it happen. Those who don't make it offer an apology in the true sense of the word. This is combined with the administration being open and available. “No” was heard a lot, but it was heard with an honest explanation.
We are frugal. We guard and conserve the camp's resources with at least the same vigilance that we would use to guard and conserve our own personal resources.	Ditto	Arts and crafts supplies are kept judiciously. Lights are turned off. When it is worthwhile, broken things are repaired in good time. Conscientious care of camp equipment and buildings is the norm. Food is not wasted in preparation or on the table. Frugality does not impede the mission.
We are a learning organization	Ditto	Suggestions flow freely even though there is no box. “We see a huge difference between ‘good mistakes’ (best effort, bad result) and ‘bad mistakes’ (sloppiness or lack of effort).” The former requires the camp learn, the latter requires the individual be supported and educated. We learn from conferences, other organizations, books, campers, staff, etc. We will change.
Campers need to be empowered to create their experience	Ditto	A children's board would meet occasionally. They would send the chair to make recommendations to the director. Children created individualized programs in conjunction with parental wishes, camp policy, and a counselor's guidance.
Counselors and administration should have an open, learning, symbiotic relationship	Ditto	Both groups reported the absence of an “us” and “them” feeling. Discipline was a teaching opportunity in a supportive environment. Administration could hang out with counselors in the lounge. Generally, each group was sensitive to the needs of the other.
We are a healthy community	Ditto	We're small enough that people know each other. Community improvement projects are volunteer based and always have enough campers involved. There is a high degree of trust – belongings aren't locked up. External power for control is limited as much as possible – people are carefully chosen, educated, and empowered.
We embrace ethnic diversity	Ditto	Counselors are garnered from six countries. Children from different ethnic and national cultures are present in most sessions. Diversity is celebrated beyond special events.
Returning staff are vital to our cultural health	Ditto	Returning staff are paid one-third more. Staff who can return are initially selected. Their experience is a healthy and fulfilling one. These staff play a vital role in training throughout the summer. Year-round efforts are made to communicate, educate, and support staff. Flexible employment is an option.
We promote staff passions	Ditto	Counselors wanted to start a garden, and the time and half the money was granted. Wanted to build life-sized catapult, and the materials and time were provided. Campers involved in all of it. Staff could participate in one activity a week like a camper.
We have a meaty vision staff can bite into	Ditto	Staff understand the vision and mission – just ask anyone. They understand the outcomes, how the camp plans to achieve each one of them, and their role in that plan. Staff resonate with the outcomes.

Camp “Quiet Brook”

Espoused Value	Deep Assumption	Artifact(s) – Observable World
Rules and policies must be upheld	Rules and policies must be upheld using punishment	Missing curfew reduced staff person’s next evening out by one hour. If a staff member doesn’t complete the summer, one-third of their salary is forfeited. Embarrassing rule violators is standard operating procedure.
Campers are given delicious and nutritious meals	But their nutrition isn’t a high priority	Soda and snack machines (coin operated) are placed around camp for use by anyone at any time. Campers are offered a balanced diet, but they don’t have to eat any vegetables if they don’t want to. Junk food is allowed in bunks and in care packages.
We have over 40 activities	Marketing is above the full truth: Half that many are consistently available	The other half range from offered, but very limited slots, to offered occasionally, to offered every few summers when demand is high, or when there is someone who can teach it.
We have an older, more mature staff	Marketing is more essential than honesty and truth	One-third of the staff was 16-17. Another third were 18-19 years old. By counting senior staff, the director, his wife, and not counting junior counselors, the average seemed respectable.
Awards are special and important	Children: They’re meaningless	Everyone got an award of some sort. Awards were not difficult to receive. There were no meaningful criteria by which awards were given. Awards were left behind, thrown away, and forgotten.
Environmentally friendly	Don’t damage our local environment – care for it	Paper towels in bathrooms. Paper plates and cups at all meals in the dining hall. Old-style, high-capacity toilets using lots of water. Reduce, reuse, and recycle were not apparent.
We require complete honesty and integrity in everything we do.	Everything staff and campers do, but not administration do.	Salaries are kept secret. Counselors are not allowed to sit in on administrative meetings. Counselor evaluations are not open for their review. Fired staff are given the “quick, quiet exit” treatment and the full story is never really revealed.
Staff intimate relationships are encouraged	Staff intimate relationships are encouraged	Near the end of orientation, everyone filled out the top three people they wanted to “hookup with.” A matchmaker notified people who had each other on their lists.
Encourage teamwork	Be a team, but the buck stops with individuals	Evaluations are done on an individual basis. Rewards and punishments are largely done on an individual basis. Consequences, counseling, and support are rarely team focused.
We aren’t hierarchical	The hierarchy is small – only three levels, but fairly rigid	When the chain of command is “jumped,” toes are stepped on. The “flat,” more matrix like organizational structure is not supported. Top leaders have an open door policy, but it is understood (time and norms) that it can rarely be used, and only for a narrow set of issues.
Initiation, hazing, ordeals, and “paying of dues” are not what camp is about	For the campers, yes. For the staff, there is a row to hoe before you are one of us	To be a fully accepted part of the predominant staff group at camp with social power and privilege, certain tasks must be completed, initiates must be certain places at certain time, free time during the day and night are constrained, and certain norms and values must be accepted.
We want our counselors to learn and grow	But we’re not going to go out of our way to help them	Staff didn’t have a personal mission statement or individual development plan. Development sessions with a mentor/supervisor were not held. Evaluations were summative instead of formative. There was little and insufficient coaching (scaffolding).
The senior administration is always learning	In part, but a limited scope	A camping conference and <i>Camping Magazine</i> are the main venues. Reading a few books, utilizing outside evaluation, attending a conference outside of camping, and professional development at universities or via seminars are rarely done with consistency and dedication.
We want people to go outside their comfort zones	Campers and counselors, yes. Much less so for administration	The administration are careful to expose themselves to people and ideas that confirm their beliefs and methods. <i>Serious</i> consideration of alternatives is rarely done. Doing the very hard work of change is largely avoided.

Culture is more than these examples. To understand only these stories is to have a myopic view of culture.

Culture change efforts: Camp stories

These camps are all ACA accredited with a history spanning at least three decades. The format is to list the successes in the change effort and then the challenges. Of course, there will always be some challenges, but the goal is to limit them as much as possible. Unexpected challenges will occur with significant change efforts, so starting with as clean a slate as possible is best.

Camp “Do-over”

Overview

The camp was nationally recognized in the media as being one of the best in the country. It was very unhealthy, but neither the media, owner, nor leadership recognized it. This financially successful camp received an eye-opening report about the extent of problems in its culture, policies, structures, and processes. The owner essentially removed the entire staff, including the director, and started over.

Successes

- o Recognized the negative culture
- o Recognized that many of the structures, policies, and processes were not in line with valued outcomes
- o Appropriately instituted a radical culture change by removing all the staff (except one). The culture was obliterated.
- o The power and authority to make the change and subsequent changes was present.

Challenges

- o There wasn't enough effort placed toward enculturating new staff.
- o The one returning staff person was a counselor with a long history at the camp. This person started out as a termite (despite having the espoused value of going along with the changes). Before long, the counselor turned into a negative leader. The camp should have cleaned house completely given the nature of the changes, but loyalty and guilt won out in this case. The counselor never made it out of the defensive stage.
- o The new culture was weak on all three levels.
- o The culture change wasn't carefully assessed during and after.
- o There was no detailed time line or action plan for the change.
- o Some culture management was done via managerial fiat.
- o There weren't enough staff and enough quality staff in place to see in a culture change of this magnitude.

Camp “Role Change”

Overview

The tight administrative team had a strong culture. Through an implementation and outcome evaluation, they realized that they needed to change the role of the supervisors. Previously, the group supervisors acted more like assistant directors. They handled the details of running camp and camper problems when they became severe enough, or when there was sufficient time. The change was for the group supervisors to spend much more time in an ongoing training and supportive role.

Successes

- o Recognized that the structure and processes were not in line with valued outcomes.
- o Understood that a massive culture change was not necessary
- o Worked from the cultural strengths of caring for the campers and counselors.
- o Based the need to change on data, formal reasoning, and internal reasons.
- o Hired extra staff to see through the change
- o Supervisors participated in planning the change and in further education.

Challenges

- o Did not conduct a full cultural assessment
- o Lost some of the staff hired for the new role early in the summer – inappropriate fit and skills
- o The tail wagged the dog in terms of counselors having enough skills, which strained the group supervisors
- o A termite surfaced during orientation. The termite was a long-time group supervisor who espoused going along with the change. This person shifted into being an open negative leader. The supervisor never made it out of the fear of change, and the reason to change wasn't sufficient in this person's mind. The change model wasn't fully utilized.

Corporate culture

Southwest airlines

Southwest Airlines started when no one thought it could, and because of legal battles, it almost didn't. The story is now lore or idolatry to those who know it. Southwest Airlines makes more money – by far – than any other airline, and they do it with a morale unequalled in the industry. The business practices have been benchmarked by the other airlines, but they can't institute it in their cultures. It is undisputed that Southwest is a financial success because of its culture. They combined great business practices (recipe – structures, policies, processes) with a strong, positive culture, and rocked the entire industry that people claimed was saturated. Southwest remains the most profitable airline ever . . . because of its culture.

Ford and Saturn.

Ford couldn't get quality right. They knew that it would be impossible to get a quality cultural revolution done in the entrenched culture of Ford. So, they started Saturn "a different kind of company, a different kind of car." They had to start a new company to create a culture that would work. Because Saturn did work so well, Ford itself was able to slowly follow suit.

Atari

Yes, I mean the old game company. They did incredible things and stormed the industry. So, what happened? The culture was based on loose teams working on cool things. It was a familial, networked culture that was rewarded more by doing their work than by the money they received for it. Projects were loosely group focused, informal, and everyone shared equally in the company's success. The new CEO came from a marketing culture and instituted clear lines of communication and an individualistic reward and punishment system. The competitive environment starved the group creative culture and the company faded. A similar story unfolded at Apple computer, but they learned this lesson and the new CEO John Sculley was out and the founder, Steve Jobs, was brought back. Whether or not that was too little too late remains an open question.

Cultural influence in society

From cannibalism, to omnivores (all but humans), to people who selectively eat meat, to vegetarians, to vegans, what should be eaten is culturally (often subcultures) determined. The norms and values differ, often with different groups disparaging others. An old cannibal was reportedly astounded at the number of dead during WWI. He wanted to know how we could possibly eat so much human flesh. After being told that we don't eat the dead, the cannibal looked on with real horror and called us the barbarians.

Galileo claimed that the sun was the center, but that didn't go over well with the Catholic Inquisition. He was sentenced to house arrest until his death in 1642. He paid a heavy price for causing some cultural indigestion.

In 1951, a sexual survey of over 200 societies¹ was conducted. They found several similarities, such as incest being taboo and promiscuousness not being desirable. At the time, they also found that 84% of those societies were not monogamous and had no problem having several mates.

Smoking is heavily culturally influenced. In America, the trend has shifted over time from about 65% of adults smoking in 1940 to about 22% now. In 1999, a world-wide survey revealed the cultural patterns of smoking for children 13-15 years old. The numbers varied from 10% in Sri Lanka, to 36% in Moscow, to about 13% in America.

How children are regarded has changed over time, and still varies by culture today. The notion of childhood as a sheltered time is relatively recent (labor laws, neglect, abuse, etc). Until the end of Middle Ages, children were seen as little different than little adults. This was in part due to their poor prospects for survival. In paintings, children were absent or painted as small adults or vague images. This stance changed in late 19th century, when children were seen as innocent and needing of our protection and guidance - including discipline. In the Middle Ages, discipline may have involved a stern word, a fine, and if it was serious, expulsion. By the 16th century though, corporal punishment was the norm, but in the late 1700's, it was again seen as cruel and unnecessary. Still, children were not protected too much as the fine for mutilating a child was 2 years in jail. In 1870, the first society for the protection of children was formed. The federal child abuse and neglect act was passed in 1974. To this day, some cultures kill female children because they are less desirable. Child abuse was socially discovered.

In the colonial war days, the British had people lined up shoulder-to-shoulder while facing gun fire. That method was extremely ineffective with the new warfare tactics they were facing, yet they kept that norm as people to their right and left fell. Anyone who saw the movie Gallipoli remembers that Australians were moved to *certain* death upon command – incredible norms and values.

¹ Ford, C., & Beach, F. (1951). Patterns of sexual behavior. New York: Harper and Brothers.

Is it all good?

Camps are the 4th largest, organized intervention for children in America

That's quite a statement, isn't it? I strongly believe it's true. The first is school, the second is church, the third is the Y, and the fourth is camps – serving roughly 9 million children a year. Some people are uncomfortable with the word intervention, but it simply means to intervene. Camps intend to intervene in their camper's lives by changing them in some way – social skills, self-confidence, learn a skill, or increase happiness. By the end of camp, it is hoped that the children will be different in some way. If your hope is that the children are no different after they leave, then you aren't an intervention.

So far, rigorous evaluations done well (see evaluation resources) have not generally provided evidence that camps are effective in the long run for social outcomes – see below. Before presenting that evidence, I want to make it very clear that I know camps can make a difference in people's lives. Exceptional camps do so all the time. But, I believe it takes an exceptional camp to influence several outcomes for a sizable portion of its population.

The garden path

First, you're likely doing a good job in a lot of areas – e.g., fun, safety, etc.

Second, consider, just consider, that you might not be achieving everything you're trying to and that an evaluation may offer you some surprises. Consider that for mathematics, 90% of schools judge themselves as above average, and yet in 1999, the United States was below average compared to other industrialized nations. Opinions of relative success aren't much to stand on. This result is especially interesting because schools get annual evaluative information presented to them, which they have to ignore to believe they are above average.

Camps generally think they are doing an okay job when push comes to shove. There's nothing really wrong. "Culture audits, process evaluations, and outcome evaluations would be useful and interesting, but nothing really groundbreaking would likely result." Both excellent and poor camps often hold this belief. How do you know if you have holes, where they are, and how big they are? See the evaluation resource for more on this.

The lack of thorough, rigorous evaluations can result in stagnation. It can also create group think². Competitive forces that normally operate in the marketplace don't work very well in camps. Fun and satisfaction are the two main elements customers evaluate, but since those are quite relative (see appendix on assessing satisfaction), they aren't a very good measure of outcomes. Camps that are doing poorly (see next section) in terms of the outcomes they want to achieve have been filling up for decades. The evaluation resource has more information about how to assess outcomes and why parents are often not very good at it.

If you think you're pretty good and have little room to improve (without thorough, rigorous evaluations of all your outcomes) and have no REAL problems to solve, then stop reading here. At this point in time, there is little hope for change and growth. There's no point in conducting culture or outcomes evaluations, because the results are a foregone conclusion. Do see the resource on learning camps though and the Fortune article (2001) on the dangers of ego.

²

don't evaluate the evidence and make decisions in a careful, rational way; strong cohesiveness, isolation, closed leadership style, and decision pressure; limited amount of information; illusion of invulnerability; illusion of superiority; and illusion of morality

The scientific evaluation of 41 camps

A nationally known camp in existence for over 100 years with an Eleanor Eells award had only 15% of its campers walk away with a few of the 17 essential outcomes they hoped to influence. This was true even after three years of consecutive attendance.

A meta-analysis is the cumulative examination of quantitative, scientific studies in a mathematical manner. Just such a study³ was done of 37 different (conducted by different people, at different camps) scientific evaluations of camp's ability to influence self-esteem. That was all the evidence since before 1999. In scientific parlance, know that an effect size is a universal metric for the influence of, in this case, camp on, in this case, self-esteem. The range is: .3 = small, .5 = medium, and .7 or higher = large. For example, you'd want your headache medicine to be at least .7, and the influence of commercials on your behavior to be less than .3. The overall results of this study was an effect size of .1. That number is so small it is essentially meaningless. Considering the study largely didn't examine self-esteem after camp, where self-esteem is likely to drop some (see self-esteem resource), is further evidence of that. Exceptional camps in this study had an average effect size of .2.

At a prestigious camp with a nationally known leader in operation for over 90 years, one of its most fundamental objectives was not met to a degree deemed even close to acceptable.

After examining an outcome using qualitative (camper, counselor, and parent written comments) data and quantitative data via a valid and reliable scale, the qualitative results indicated the camp was very successful. Those results also offered numerous reasons why. The quantitative measure that had been carefully developed over decades revealed little effect. Subsequent evaluations confirmed these results.

One camp that had been around for over 65 years discovered that it needed to drastically reorganize its program in order to make the impact it desired. The changes were positively viewed by funders, campers, and staff, because it was evident that they would improve the quality of the experience for everyone.

Implications for evidence camps often rely upon

Virtually all of these camps had the following evidence that they were doing well before they really took the time and effort to check in a rigorous way using formal logic. They had **good return rates**. They had books or **walls of letters** stating how much the summer had meant to campers and staff. The staff at these camps had very **warm and positive feelings about their program and impact**. They had **satisfaction and fun surveys stating that they were doing a very good and sometimes excellent job**.

Most certainly camps do make a difference in people's lives. More than likely, you're doing an excellent job on some outcomes, and could stand some improvement on others. The questions camps need to be asking using an evaluation method that is reliable and valid are:

- How many campers are impacted?
- What is the magnitude of the impact (effect size)?
- How long does that impact last?
- How many weeks/sessions/summers are necessary?
- What are the characteristics of campers who do well, stay the same, and do poorly?

The evaluation resources include more information about the questions to ask and how to ask them. Camps that don't achieve almost any of their outcomes except a degree of fun and safety remain in business for decades. They don't change because the reason to substantially change has never been convincingly offered (see evaluation resources), or because they get caught up in a defense, fear, or an inability to institute a means to change that works well (see change model). Conduct an "educational audit" of your program in addition to the financial and safety audits. With that information, you'll be able to change lives more effectively than you are now.

³ Marsh, P. E. (1999). What does camp do for kids?: A meta-analysis of the influence of the organized camping experience on the self constructs of youth. Unpublished master's thesis, Indiana University.

Why satisfaction surveys don't tell you what you need to know

Most surveys essentially ask for people's opinion about how satisfied they are about various elements of the camp. Satisfaction surveys are fuzzy for three very closely related reasons.

One, they usually aren't objective.

Two, expectations vary.

Three, the range of expectations varies, so averages are less meaningful

It is for these reasons that satisfaction measures should never (with the exception of things like fun, a self-esteem scale, and individual satisfaction to some degree) be confused with outcome measures. *Satisfaction does not mean learning, attitude change, or behavior change most of the time.* For example, college students frequently report being dissatisfied with challenging professors, but those same professors are also often the ones where the students learn the most. Let's look at another example in the opposite direction. In one study I conducted, campers who rated the camp as at least very fun and "definitely want to come back" were no more likely to change on numerous outcomes than campers who rated the camp as so-so or not very good. So, you might be a legend in the mind of your campers, staff, parents, and board, but that doesn't mean that you are actually effective at achieving your outcomes. See the "Is it all good?" appendix for several more examples of why satisfaction does not equal outcomes. The evaluation resource provides a thorough rational and explanation for what an accurate assessment really looks like.

1. Satisfaction on anything equals one's reality minus one's expectations ($S=R-E$). While knowing whether or not people are satisfied is interesting and useful (you want to know where people stand and if you met their expectations), it is almost never measured against any kind of objective standard. For return rates, satisfaction measures are vital, but to assess whether or not you are impacting campers to the degree desired, simple satisfaction measures lack validity.
2. Staff at one camp were quite satisfied with one hour off during the day and two hours off at night until they found out that another camp gave two hours during the day and three at night. The relative deprivation caused the staff to become unsatisfied. Take another example. I had the opportunity to know a child at two different camps I attended for the whole summer. When I asked David at the end of the second summer how much fun he had on a scale from 1 – 10, he said it was a 9. I then asked him to rate the previous camp again in light of the current experience, and he gave it a 5. At the end of the previous summer, he had given the first camp a 9. Expectations vary, so satisfaction changes depending on circumstance and the person. Providing a full range in the response set with appropriate anchors along the continuum can help mitigate this limitation, but it won't eliminate it.
3. Each respondent is usually operating by a slightly different standard. In other words, one person's expectation might range from 30 minutes to 2 hours off per day, while another might range from 1 hour to 5 hours. If each person is on a different scale, their expectations have different ranges, *which makes averages less meaningful.* On a case by case level, the person's satisfaction rating is interesting, keeping in mind that it isn't objective and the scale they are using might be different from your own, who is evaluating the response. Providing a full range in the response set with appropriate anchors along the continuum can help mitigate this limitation.

Often, because of the problems with satisfaction surveys noted above, it is difficult to know what important elements a specific camp needs to focus on. The survey may produce false positives, false negatives, or an accurate picture, but opinions of satisfaction won't tell you which is the case. The hope is that the average or trend will give you an answer close to the truth.

Again, it is important to note that satisfaction measures are important for things like return rates and marketing. Satisfaction can help in the prediction of return rates. But, beyond satisfaction, return rates should not be confused with achieving outcomes, as we'll see on the next page.

Looking carefully at return rates

Camps utilize return rates as one measure of how well they are achieving their outcomes. While return rates can be good measures of satisfaction, the “Is it all good?” and “Satisfaction survey” sections should give pause for thought about the validity of that kind of data for outcomes. Beyond those crucial points, there are other reasons why return rates aren’t good measures of outcomes.

Qualitative observations by parents are often suspect

For one, parents are not logical, bean counting psychometricians capable of accurately assessing all outcomes. Two, parents might send their children back to a camp for numerous reasons. Let’s look at the first point now, and cover the second next.

- o IQ is the most frequent assessment in the country, but teachers are poor predictors of it. They’ve had these children for nine months in a focused learning environment where they should have the time and expertise to judge IQ accurately. The truth is that they are not good predictors of children’s actual IQ. It is for that reason that we must assess cognitive intelligence in a valid and reliable manner.
- o Self-esteem is most accurately assessed by the person, not others. Let me offer some specific camp examples to illustrate this point. I had counselors and directors at two different summer camps try and predict children’s self-esteem levels and change. At the first camp, the counselors had over three weeks exposure to the children in a residential setting. At the second residential camp, the counselors were with the children for one week. The campers were given one of the most reliable and valid self-esteem measure available, which has been proven over decades. It turns out that at both camps, the counselors (and supervisors and director) were unable to predict the children’s rough level of self-esteem any better than you would have expected by absolute chance. Furthermore, they were unable to even grossly predict whether the children’s self-esteem went up, stayed the same, or went down any better than chance.

Assume parents are very accurate

Even if parents were accurate predictors of outcomes, the model would be complex and different for every parent and child.

- (A) return decision = .43 fun, .12 self-esteem, .27 safety, .18 liked director
- (B) return decision = .21 fun, .24 extroversion, .55 friends returning
- (C) return decision = .36 environmental attitudes, .41 social skills, .23 creativity
- (D) return decision = .36 fun, .22 liked director, .42 don’t want to pick another camp
- (E) return decision = .75 fun, .15 safe place, .10 liked feeling of camp and director

The items in the equation and their accuracy would vary widely. As a result, there is no way to use return rates as outcomes measures, except for gross assessments of things like relative fun and satisfaction. Also, see the next page on the sins of memory and the following page on socially desirable responding for further concerns about self-report, qualitative data.

What is valid and reliable data anyway?

So, after these sections and the next, you might be throwing your hands up and saying what is the best way to assess outcomes. There are good (reliable and valid) means of finding out how you are doing. They are described in detail in the evaluation resource trilogy. Briefly, let me generally define what valid and reliable mean.

Valid

- o What you are attempting to measure is what is actually being measured
- o The assessment can discriminate between groups and predict future outcomes and behaviors

Reliable

- o When the outcome is assessed again in a short period of time, stable outcomes should remain largely the same (height, locus of control), and unstable outcomes should vary (mood).
- o Independent raters should consistently come up with the same conclusion

It is very difficult to meet all the criteria (outlined in the measures resource), but it is quite possible and doable. Saying that how a person answers a few questions (or others about the child) will predict the person’s current and future psychological state and life and behavioral outcomes is *very bold*. Saying it without meeting all the criteria necessary for a good measure is putting a lot of faith in a holey bucket. *Making decisions on inaccurate information can have devastating results.*

The sins of memory

Sins of memory

The reason to understand these sins of memory is so that you can make intelligent choices in gathering and interpreting the data you need to make the critical decisions regarding your program. The worst-case scenario is to make changes (or not make changes) based on information that isn't accurate.

There are actually "Seven sins of memory"⁴. For present purposes, we'll only very briefly go through a few of them. *Certainly, they are not all occurring*, but if even one of them is present in the data you collect, the information can gum up the works. It is also likely that several of these problems are occurring in ways that are difficult to predict and account for, which is why qualitative information from parents, campers, and counselors can't be used as the only measure of your processes and/or outcomes. Qualitative data needs to be compared to data that is valid and reliable, which in some cases can be other qualitative data.

Transience

Over time, the exact nature and timing of things are often forgotten. When did Jane change exactly? How much did Jane do such and such before camp? What exactly was Jane like before camp? It may seem absurd to you that people can make such mistakes, but it is quite common. For example, thousands of married couples were separately asked if they had had sex within the last 24 hours, roughly speaking. There was only 80% agreement in the responses! Given that the time frame was very short, the event should have been more memorable than when you last opened the refrigerator, and that these people knew each other very well, one would have expected near-perfect agreement.

Absent-mindedness

People don't pay as close attention to things as we might expect. Psychologists often refer to this phenomenon as the "unbearable automaticity of being" or "unintentional blindness." Think about the director whose job it is to monitor all the camp operations. It's an impossible job and much is missed. In contrast, parents are usually present for a very short period of time. The camp program isn't monitored closely by them, so they are unable to assess how well the camp is doing. It is rare that parents are able to reliably identify which outcomes the camp should engender, and which ones are unlikely to be influenced (without prompting). Furthermore, they are very unlikely to be able to identify the elements that go into achieving a given outcome (see process modeling resource) and assess the presence, absence, or quality of those elements.

Misattribution

People misattribute the source and cause of events all the time. Maybe the change occurred at school, through church, from a mentor, or via a friend. Maybe children generalize the euphoria they feel at camp to other areas of their life, but it later doesn't turn out to be true. A very strong example of this is the judicial system. When DNA evidence was new, a sample of cases where the conviction of the person was based solely on eye-witness testimony was retried with the new DNA evidence. It turns out that 90% of those people were innocent. It's amazing that witnesses had to sit next to the judge, look the defendant in the eye, and proclaim that that was the person who did it – send him to jail or put her to death. These witnesses were really, really sure, but they were wrong.

As another example, people often associate beauty with intelligence, even though that is a poor predictor in reality. Along the same lines, commercials also use misattribution for their benefit. They want you to misattribute excitement, sex, or whatever to their product. In a Darwinian sense, the reason commercials use such tactics is because they work.

Suggestibility

Memory can be quite suggestible. When parents receive the marketing materials that were very carefully crafted, visit the web page, and talk with the director, they are being bombarded with suggestions about the nature and outcomes of the camp experience. Quite likely, they believe much of it, and want to believe it. Likewise, campers may get an earful about the benefit of the experience, which could color their responses.

Hypnosis, eye-witness testimony, leading questions, and reinterviewing are all examples of the suggestibility of memory. When it matters (e.g., courts, FBI), suggestibility is taken very seriously as a concern about validity. In mock trials, throwing in a false question like "Mr. Hoffa, how long were you in the mafia?" was enough to throw the outcome even though the answer was "I was never in the mafia!"

⁴ Schacter, D. L. (2001). *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers*. Houghton Mifflin.

Bias, Socially desirable responding, Dissonance, and Selection threats

These four threats to the validity of the data you collect are certainly not always present. The catch is that you usually don't know when they are or are not operating. If even one of them is present in the data you collect, the information can gum up the works. Qualitative information from parents, campers, and counselors can't be used as the *only* measure of your processes or outcomes. Qualitative data needs to be compared to data that is valid and reliable, which in some cases can be other qualitative data.

Bias

Memory encoding and retrieval are highly dependent on, and influenced by, preexisting knowledge and beliefs. Much of perception depends upon why the parents sent their child to camp in the first place. For example, the parent(s) likes you and confounds that with results/outcomes. Because they like you, they want to believe that what you're saying is true.

Take another example. Counselors' rating of the children under their care is in a way also a rating of their own performance. Believing the data might be used to evaluate them, counselors may adjust their responses to questions. Even if that isn't the case, it may also be true that counselors with high self-esteem (which was likely selected for in the hiring process) will want to believe they are making a difference. People are capable of searching for evidence that confirms what they already believe.

Finally, bias creeps in with something called "post experience euphoria." In other words, when people are happy, they tend to look at the world through slightly more rose-colored glasses. When people come out of comedy clubs, they tend to rate their happiness higher than normal, donate more money, rate their self-esteem higher, and view the future as a little more positive than beforehand. Their happiness and joy *temporarily* seeped into other parts of their brain. It happens.

Socially desirable responding

As we all know, sometimes people will tell you what you want to hear (or not tell you what you don't want to hear) to be nice. Sometimes they want you to feel good (a common human drive), and sometimes they just don't have the heart to tell you what they really think. Very similarly, people will often not offer the whole truth, because they don't want to deal with the confrontation and discussion that would likely ensue. Whether it is to be nice or to avoid confrontation, the comments people offer may not always be the whole truth. There is no question that this phenomenon occurs, the question is how prevalent is it and how markedly different are the comments from the true feelings/assessments.

Dissonance

Dissonance isn't a word in most people's vocabulary, but it refers to an inconsistency or lack of agreement. When given a free choice (what camp to choose) and significant effort or money has been expended, people often believe their decisions and attitudes are correct. "I chose that camp and it is a good one." People are inclined to think that their decisions are good ones – especially if it was a difficult one that wasn't made under duress.

Again, as with all of these possible threats to the accuracy of the information that is collected, they aren't always relevant. Sometimes you'll be getting the whole truth, but it is difficult to know when that is and isn't the case without having a valid and reliable means of collecting the information.

Dissonance is a very common phenomenon in everyday life. A recently published book⁵ goes into great detail about how it is relevant to everything from smoking, to diet, to seat belt use, to making decisions and evaluations.

Selection

There are many characteristics of the population you serve that need to be taken into account. The evaluation resource goes over them in detail. For now, I want to briefly address just one general one – selection. More than likely, the people that populate a camp chose (and were chosen) to be there. By that very selection, there is likely something different about those people than the general population or other subpopulations. Those differences might be in attitudes and values, personality, capabilities, geography, religion, socio-economic status, or some other variable.

For example, one camp chose demographically at-risk youth who were positively exceptional in many regards. These children may have flourished with or without the camp experience because of their characteristics. Consider that your population displays, or will display, the positive outcomes you hope to instill.

The question this raises for the evaluation of your outcomes is: will the program benefit any who attend, or is it more likely to benefit those who select your camp or were selected by you? What the received benefits look like might vary drastically depending on the answer to that question.

⁵ Harmon-Jones, E., & Mills, J. (1999). *Cognitive Dissonance: Progress on a Pivotal Theory in Social Psychology*. American Psychological Association.

Examining camp symbols for insight and utility

Isn't this "just" about physical artifacts?

Yes, but not all symbols are worthy of significant attention. Symbols can range along a continuum from powerful to weak, and this discussion is about symbols that hold significant influence. *Because symbols have often drifted into our subconscious, reviewing their nature, influence, and breadth is very useful.* These physical artifacts need to be matched to espoused values and deep assumptions, and a conscious, systematic review of key symbols is a good start. By using the word physical, purposefully excluded are rituals, traditions, rites, normal events, special events, people's actions, and stories, because they are beyond the current scope. All of those things help to create the culture.

A decent list of symbols appears later, but to get a handle on them, some camp examples include: awards, what is on the walls in the dining hall and lodge, flags, bunk arrangement, the nature of the building, sculpture and large symbols, etc. Other examples are things people place around their desks to create ambiance, how people decorate their homes, landscaping, wardrobe, tattoos, the medicine bundles many Native Americans used, and the Vietnam war memorial (the wall).

We already thought about this

We are constantly aware of important symbols in our everyday life. Paradoxically, it is that constant attention that relegates symbols to the subconscious. Symbols are always reflected in the very heart of an organization and point us toward it, but many of them are often tacitly known and difficult for people to talk about.

I enjoy the following quote by Lurie⁶, which describes our unconscious use of symbol to construct meaning: "Long before I am near enough to talk to you on the street, in a meeting, or at a party, you announce your sex, age, and class to me . . . and possibly give me information (or misinformation) as to your occupation, origin, personality, opinions, tastes, sexual desires, and current mood. I may not be able to put what I observe in words, but I register the information unconsciously . . . By the time we meet and converse we have already spoken to each other in an older and more universal tongue." (p.3) Yes, we're wrong some of the time, but we use symbols as rules of thumb because they are often more helpful than not.

Stark incongruencies are rare (e.g., holding church service in McDonalds), but moderate ones either exist from the start or creep in over time. Frequently, camps give symbols a lot of thought at the outset (hopefully), and then only casual consideration occasionally. A better strategy is to give them high attention at the outset, moderate attention, and then high attention after three or four years. The meaning of symbols can change over time, and new ones are added. The purposeful attention to symbols will strengthen the culture.

On camp director toured camps across the country taking pictures of symbols he felt enhanced the camp environment. He collected and organized the photos and implemented many of the ideas he came across. In essence, he benchmarked symbols in line with the outcomes he cared about.

Aren't symbols too abstract to be meaningful?

Most definitely, symbols can mean different things to different people. But to relegate them to randomness and meaninglessness is just as wrong as assuming they mean the same thing to all people. The American flag or eagle has significant meaning, even though that meaning varies to some degree. It is still a useful symbol – just look at what happened after the World Trade Centers were leveled.

Because there is no dictionary of symbols (although dream dictionaries try), the cultural researcher must use three methods to ascertain what a given symbol means. First, it is important to take the symbol in context, as whether, for example, a rifle is on the firing range or hanging over the fireplace in the lodge. Second, your idea of what that symbol means might be different from those in the environment, so they must be asked. Third, several people should be asked what it means to get a more reliable interpretation. For example, if you saw a feather in the center of small fire circle, you would know it was probably meaningful. If you saw a group use it to indicate who had the floor to speak and how it quieted a rowdy group, you'd know more. Asking those people about it might also tell you how that symbol gained its power. Generally, the goal is to assess the emotions, thoughts, and actions that symbols engender as well as the meaning they convey. This method isn't a perfect, but it is helpful to gain a general sense of a symbol.

⁶ Lurie, A. (1981). *The language of clothes*. New York: Random House.

Power of symbols

Symbols aren't everything, but when they are congruent with deep assumptions, they are like having the wind at your back. They help the student of organizational culture reveal the shared systems of meaning. They help people make sense of the environment and guide their behavior.

We are familiar with strong symbols like the flag, a doctor's white coat, a police badge, and the picture of a man on the moon. They guide our behavior, feelings, and thought. Let's take the example of the doctor's white coat. In the Korean war, doctors (and nurses) administered sugar water to patients in pain, because they didn't have enough morphine. It worked, because the wounded believed it would based on their expectations. Dr. Stanley Milgram was a psychologist who got people to administer what they thought was a lethal shock to subjects. He used a white lab coat and simple phrases like, "The experiment requires you to continue." Switching examples, the mere presence of a gun in the room made children and adults more aggressive than without it even though it was left purely on display. The broken-window hypothesis states that the presence of symbols of dilapidation, like broken windows, increases crime. When those symbols were removed, crime went down. Symbolic order often begets real order.

If strong symbols can have such an effect, then we should pay attention to the power of moderate symbols as well. Especially with their cumulative effect, they are quite influential. *Many symbols are so specific to a given camp that they can't be listed in anything less than a large book.* A cultural review (see that section) with symbols in mind needs to be done to reveal important symbols in a given camp. A few illustrative symbols follow, but the artifacts, deep assumptions, and enculturation sections offer further food for thought.

Example symbols by location/domain

Outside symbols

- o Water: pool, lake, pond. Manmade or natural.
- o All fire circles surrounded by reflecting pools
- o Dedicated council fire spot
- o Dedicated campfire spot
- o Dedicated vespers (assembly, church) spot
- o Garden – hobby, decorative, functional, or working farm. Compost.
- o Certain paths lined with quotes
- o Large sculpture/play objects: dinosaur, windmill, lighthouse, castle, totem pole, tree house, catapult, animals,
- o Friendship circles
- o Meeting spots
- o Golf carts or other mechanized elements
- o Paved and unpaved areas
- o Continuum from manicured to natural for different areas
- o Presence of animals/farm/mini-zoo
- o Where cars are and how they travel through camp
- o Soda and snack machines
- o Designated spots for smoking and drinking
- o Degree of litter, dilapidated items, piles of old whatever, and orderliness of things
- o Presence of trashcans, and if and how they are decorated
- o Symbols indicating the special character and purpose of the environment – unique touches, clever design, frequency, etc.
- o Signage or other notification of service projects done by campers and staff

Buildings

- o Degree (or presence or absence) of metal, plastic, and wood in structures
- o Numbered, named, or nothing. Lore behind names?
- o Painted or natural
- o Graffiti
- o Decorated
- o Symbols indicating the special character and purpose of the environment – unique touches, clever design, frequency, etc.
- o Relative location of buildings to each other. Site plan.
- o Gazebo built by campers as service project
- o Type: Yurts, cabins, tents, dorms, teepees, . . .
- o Function plus noting presence or absence: recycling, nature, woodshop, movie house, staff house, photography, theater, . . .

Dining hall

- o Open or closed structure
- o Meals eaten primarily inside or outside
- o Cafeteria or family style
- o Grouped by cabin, age, assigned, or free-seating
- o What's on the walls: nothing, pictures, awards, murals, educational information, paintings, sculpture, . . .
- o Plates with hand-drawn pictures by campers permanently sealed on plate, plain, plastic, ceramic
- o Food: vegetarian, options, sweets
- o Gong, bell, triangle, conch shell, or other musical tone
- o Recycling center

Housing

- o Bunk arrangement: military, each group decides, structure dictates, artistic randomness
- o Belongings: trunks/bags, cubbies, dressers. Locked, unlocked.
- o Floor: dirt, wood, carpeted
- o Emphasis on tidiness (degree of acceptable clutter)
- o Degree of personal decoration by inhabitants and as they originally found it
- o Counselors live separately or together with campers
- o Electronic: radios, game machines, tv, cd players, laptops
- o Electricity present or not
- o Fans/air conditioning
- o Bathroom inside or outside, flush or latrine, mirrors or not
- o Food allowed or not
- o Cabin lore (name, photographs, journals, logs)
- o Bookshelf

Health house (i.e., infirmary)

- o Educational materials
- o Play materials
- o Waiting room
- o Decoration of sick and examining rooms
- o Uniform for personnel
- o Symbolic lore

Lodge

- o Awards
- o Photographs
- o Symbolic lore
- o Fireplace

Staff house

- o Television
- o Movies
- o Candles (scented, uniquely shaped, wax over bottles)
- o Hand-painted (drawn) notes (no computer generated ones), posters, and informational pieces
- o Games: board, card, darts, pool, foosball, . . .
- o Nature, type, and amount of seating
- o Knowledge management center
- o Books
- o Short-order chef (or kitchen with utensils)
- o Computers (e-mail/internet)
- o Telephones (how many?)
- o Private fire circle
- o Day-off beds
- o Food storage: cupboards, refrigerator, pantry
- o Weight room
- o Tapestries/murals/collages

- o Flowers/plants
- o Incense
- o Warm-fuzzy board (written pats on the back)
- o Symbolic lore

Library

- o Books
- o Magazines
- o Computers
- o Educational displays
- o Book reports
- o Type, number, and arrangement of seating
- o Games
- o Symbolic lore

Activity areas

- o Presence or absence of certain activities (see deep assumptions domain)
- o Educational information posted
- o Rules posted
- o Awards criteria posted
- o Names of outstanding campers listed
- o Pickup games: horseshoes, pop-a-shot, ping pong, bocce ball, shuffle board, croquet, . . .
- o Degree of quality and repair
- o Symbolic lore

Miscellaneous symbols

- o Quiet feather – the person holding it has the floor
- o Talking stick – an ornately carved stick. Bearer has the floor.
- o Candles – for rituals, ceremonies, . . .
- o Advertising – simple, splashy, what is in it, what isn't
- o Memorabilia: handmade art, awards, t-shirt, yearbook, pictures, video, water bottles, logs, journals, scrolls, camp newspaper, and the like
- o Daily schedules. Some camps print up a program offerings and news sheet daily for campers
- o Bulletin boards – where and what is on them?
- o Extemporaneous symbols – e.g., letters, shoe, bell, match. They become symbolic because of their often unanticipated role in events.

Symbols offer a language for discussion. They can serve as shorthand to refer to complicated thoughts, feelings, or processes, and they can refer to things very specific to the camp. Unique symbols also provide the people with a sign of group membership.

Bases of Power

French, J. R. P., & Raven, B. H. (1959). The bases of social power. In D. Cartwright (Ed.), *Studies in social power* (pp. 150-167). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Coercion

Person A has power over person B because person A can administer some form of punishment to B. Verbal abuse, physical strength, and humiliation are also examples included under coercion.

Reward

Person A has power over person B because A controls rewards that B wants. Candy, bedtime stories, a fun cabin activity, more responsibility, new equipment, transferred power, etc. Leads to compliance, but not conversion. Also, there is a psychological heuristic that if one is compensated for something one would have done anyway, the act is not worth doing in its own right - the over justification effect.

Legitimate

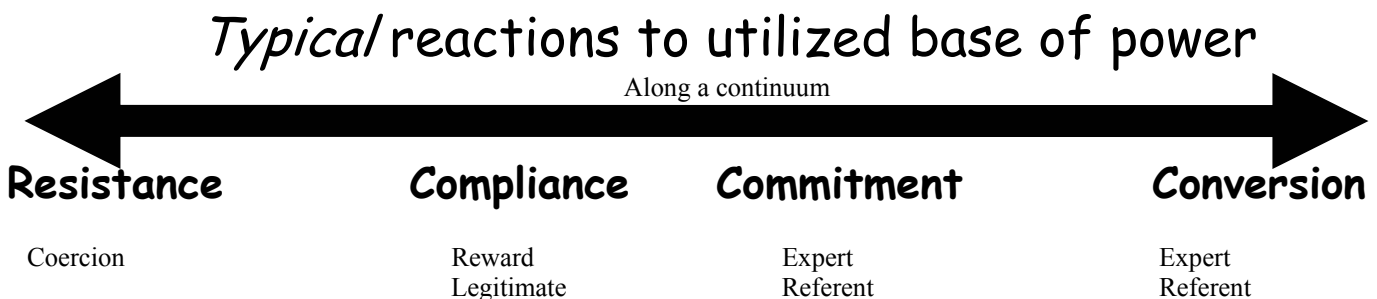
When person B submits to person A because person B feels that A has a right to exert power in a certain domain. Often referred to as authority. Depends only on one's position and not the relationship between people. Derived from culture, social structure, or designated as in a president or director. This power base is being used when you say, "because I said so!" When you don't know a child and you talk to or discipline them, this is usually the base that is being used.

Expert

Person A gains power because A has knowledge or expertise relevant to B. Usually refers to a narrow area.

Referent

Person B looks up to or admires person A, and, as a result, B follows A largely because of A's personal qualities, characteristics, or reputation. Also called charismatic power. The respect and personal relationship helps the target to open their mind and examine their behavior and the means they are using to achieve a given end.



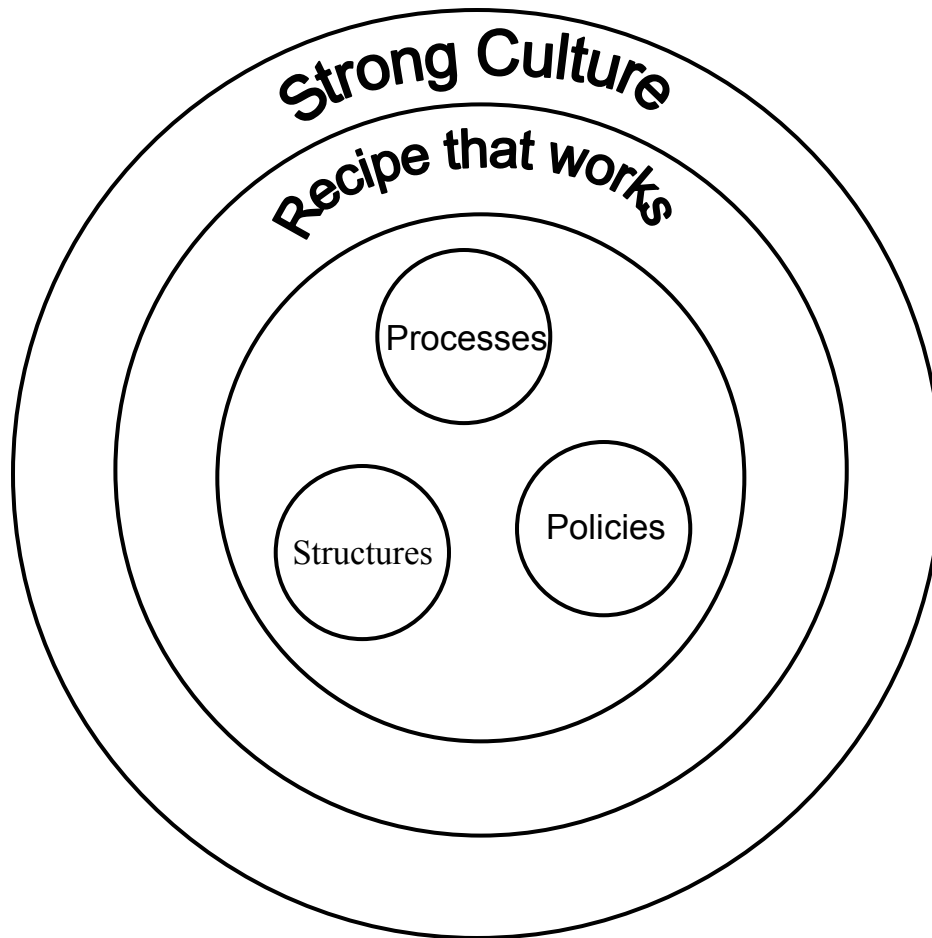
Effective managers were found to use the bases of power as follows:

54% of the time, they used referent (personality and leadership skills)

28% of the time they used expert

18% of the time they used legitimate, reward (allocate resources), and coercion (hire, fire, & reprimand).

Exceptional camps: A simple model



Strong culture

Please see the section on that in the main body of the text.

Recipe that works

Camps need to have their business act together. That includes things like instituting knowledge management, engaging in benchmarking, having empowered staff, implementing the elements that lead to motivation, being a learning organization, utilizing the principles in the “From good to great” resource, having staff training best practices, and all those other buzz words that really do make a difference in a camp’s (or any organization’s) ability to achieve its ends.

More specifically, camps need to be using the principles involved in achieving given outcomes. For example, if the outcome is to improve self-esteem, there are things that work and things that don’t. Not all roads lead to the top of the mountain – see the “Self-esteem” resource. For each intended outcome, there needs to be a recipe that will actually result in the desired end. The principles for improving social skills, self-esteem, environmental attitudes and awareness, self-confidence, etc. are largely the same whether the environment is a school, home, church, or camp. To use another example, means of transportation vary from cars, planes, and trains – the methods are different. But, the underlying principles of physics apply in any case. If you jump off a cliff wearing feathered wings (some wrong or absent principles), you’re in trouble.

Camps often don’t understand all the key principles involved in achieving a given outcome, or the degree to which they need to be implemented to have an effect. They don’t have the full recipe, or sometimes even the right one. Thus, the ingredients of processes, structures, and policies aren’t the right ones or the right mix. Going through the process modeling resource will help insure the recipe is a good one.

Processes, structures, and policies

A process includes activities. Please see the explanation in the body of the text – page 11.

Planting Seeds with Your Staff

Growing Your Camp's Culture

By Jeff Jacobs

Reprinted by permission: *Camping Magazine*, January 2002

An enculturation story

As a camp director, I often do not have the opportunity to be on the front lines—with campers in cabins or consistently leading program activities. Even though I attempt to stay in touch with campers and staff as much as possible, the administrative and leadership duties and responsibilities of being the director occupy the bulk of my time. This often takes me away from the daily rhythm of camp—regardless of how early I wake up or how many “rest periods” I skip in an attempt to get my office tasks done during the camper’s down time. However, as a camp director I have the amazing opportunity to influence each person at camp—campers and staff—through my efforts to shape and direct our camp culture. The shaping of our camp culture is one of my biggest and most exciting challenges and responsibilities.

Camp Culture

My view of camp culture includes the pace, tone, sense of community, common vision, mission, priorities, energy level, aura, and special feel of a camp. Many camps share some common values and beliefs, such as fostering an appreciation for the outdoors and providing opportunities for new experiences. Yet, each camp is unique and can make intentional decisions regarding its camp culture. Regardless of the length of a summer camping program, each summer camping experience can only accomplish certain goals and emphasize a limited set of priorities. Shaping a camp culture is the opportunity to determine what goals, objectives, and priorities will rise to the top of the list and will be emphasized from the moment someone enters through the front gate. The camp culture needs to be established in a way that will maximize the opportunities to fulfill the camp’s highest priority goals and objectives.

It’s early October and the last of the summer camp equipment has finally been put away. As I start to settle into the fall routine, I realize that there is a message on my desk from someone already requesting an application for next summer. I rattle the old filing cabinet open and dust off a copy of the previous year’s staff information and application materials. Images of summer staff pulling through the front gate for another amazing summer start to fill my head, and I begin what I feel is my most important responsibility—shaping our camp culture.

Shaping the Culture

Establishing Tone and Atmosphere

As I begin to compose the letter that will serve as the cover page for our staff application, I am mindful that this is likely to be the first thing that a perspective staff member will see and read about our camp. Within this one 8 ½ inch by 11 inch piece of paper, I will attempt to establish a tone and atmosphere that will lay the groundwork for our upcoming summer. I must select from our sixty-five year history and 200+ acres what I want to share with applicants. With clear priorities in mind, I am able to fashion a letter that provides a glimpse of what this coming summer will bring.

Fine Tuning the Application

Tackling the review of the application itself is my next step. Each year I fine tune this important document to help maximize not only my opportunity to get to know and evaluate applicants, but also to assist applicants in getting a feel for our camp and to establish aspects of our camp culture. Questions are designed to gather basic information and to connect with staff training topics, such as “What is your favorite memory?” and “What lesson(s) would you like to pass on to children?” These questions set the stage for discussions at staff training regarding our unique opportunity to create lasting memories and to pass along important and meaningful lessons to children.

In the past few years, I have added a "short answer" section to our application. This part of the application has provided even more opportunities for our camp culture to shine through. Questions center on scenarios, providing a window into our camp life, and allow applicants to discuss in a little more depth their perspectives on team building, conflict resolution, motivation, responsibility, encouragement, nurturing, priorities, and creativity. These questions draw applicants into a slice of a "day at camp" and allow for a mental "test drive" of being a camp staff member.

Interview Opportunities

The interview provides the next opportunity to reveal even more to applicants about the ideal camp culture. During an interview, some time is usually spent sharing a typical day at camp—highlighting the aspects and components that distinguish our unique camp culture. My pace slows as I talk about not only what we do, but more importantly,

why we do it. Applicants can begin to understand the amount of planning, thought, and preparation that goes into designing an ideal camp experience. Time shared during an interview gives me the chance to establish my expectations of staff members, as well as clarify what staff members can expect from me. Throughout the entire interview, my passion for camp simmers very close to the surface and on several occasions erupts as I get a gleam in my eye talking about the magic of camp.

Welcome Packet

The welcome packet sent to all staff members in the spring provides yet another excellent opportunity to focus the staff on some of the major aspects of our camp community. The tone of this packet fosters a sense of enthusiasm and excitement that spills over into the first day of staff training. Included in the packet are a list of staff members and their favorite quotes (obtained from an application question). A brief outline of the staff training week, purposely omitting a great deal of detail, helps build anticipation and a sense of wonder. The packing list, actually written more like a story than a listing, provides some insight into the fun-filled activities and programs that will fill our summer. Throughout the packet, staff are thanked and acknowledged for committing to this incredible endeavor—setting the tone for continued staff appreciation.

Staff Training

Arrival Day

The first day of staff training arrives—the most critical day of the entire summer. I spend more time preparing for this day than all the other days of staff training combined. From the moment that staff drive through the front gate, I treat them in a way that clearly and emphatically role models our camp culture. I sit, although sometimes stand because I am so excited, at a welcome table at the entrance to our camp. I want staff to feel welcome and appreciated from the moment they get out of their cars.

Staff members know in advance that it is important to arrive on time, since we start our first staff training component as soon as possible. Staff are given a few minutes to set their things down and find a pair of comfortable shoes. Then we head to an open playing field. I ring the bell, and we all gather on the field—standing in a circle, everyone with a front row view. I officially welcome the summer staff and try to find the words to express how excited I am to be working with everyone this summer. I explain that we will begin with some community building activities. I do not hide my strong feelings that a healthy, fun-loving, supportive, and nurturing staff community is the key to a great summer. We spend about an hour on the field playing, sharing, laughing, and establishing some of the core elements of our camp culture.

After this first hour session, we take a quick break and then gather to set a foundation for our summer during another hour-long session. This session focuses on the campers. I always make a point of saying, “without campers, there would be no camp.” Our campers need to be welcomed and appreciated, just as I have tried to welcome and appreciate our staff. Each camper needs to be valued. My hope is that during the months leading up to camp, I have already demonstrated in my treatment of staff how we will be treating and greeting campers.

After our first dinner together we take a hayride and tour camp. This provides an opportunity to not only tour the facility, but also adds to our list of shared experiences that help foster a sense of community. Before the day ends, we gather together and I put the staff to bed the same way that I hope that counselors will put campers to bed once they have arrived. I tell a story and share a little bit about myself. I set some goals for the week and plant the seeds of excitement for what is to come. I also want to make sure everyone is comfortable, both physically and emotionally, before nodding off to sleep on this first night. I ask staff to jot down how they are doing and what their reactions are to the first half day we've spent together. These writings allow me to check in with all staff members and to begin to establish helping and nurturing relationships.

Day One

At the pre-breakfast staff meeting, I match staff in pairs of staff training buddies, because I don't want any staff member to feel as though they are going it alone. I attempt to engineer for success by strategically placing staff members together—with attention to experience, personalities, and staff dynamics. These buddy partnerships provide opportunities for staff to check-in with someone else and to share and reflect with a partner. By placing staff with a buddy at the beginning of the week, I am again demonstrating a strategy that staff can utilize at the beginning of the week with campers.

It is the first morning of staff training and staff members have yet to receive a staff manual. Staff manuals and camp policies and procedures are important, but on this morning I have decided to leave manuals aside and have assembled the staff on the team building course, hoping to continue building our supportive staff

community. My sequencing of events during the staff training week speaks to my priorities and areas of emphasis. After a morning of team building, we eat a quick lunch and start packing our bags for our staff trip. We load up in fifteen passenger vans with our buddies and head out for either a backpacking or canoeing trip. This shared adventure continues to add to our sense of community, while teaching important skills and procedures for off-site tripping.

During the evening campfire, we reflect on the great day and share stories about our adventure. I direct the discussion to consider what made today a great day. Ideas are generated, and I encourage staff members to consider how these same aspects and attributes that contributed to our great day can be replicated with campers. We begin to discuss strategies that provide campers with opportunities to work together, learn new skills, explore, feel a sense of accomplishment, overcome obstacles, and have spontaneous fun. The campfire wraps up with campfire stories, legends, and tales of our camp's folklore.

The Week

The balance of the staff training week includes skill practice, safety management, policies, procedures, logistics, and schedules. However, each program and area of camp is introduced experientially, with all staff members going for a horseback ride and up into the high ropes course. Effort is made to allow staff members to experience camp as our campers will experience it. This strategy produces staff who can more easily identify with some of the issues and obstacles campers face. Staff are often heard saying to campers, "Yeah, I know. I didn't really want to take my swim test either, but I needed to if I wanted to use the waterfront." Campers are pleasantly surprised to learn that staff members had to endure some of the same hardships that campers face.

Throughout the staff training week, I shine the spotlight on some amazing characteristics found among our staff that I would like to see incorporated into our ideal camp culture. I provide situations where staff members can view Chris's incredible ability to encourage others or Emily's commitment to respecting our environment. I attempt to showcase and acknowledge the amount of time Sarah and Tom take to go out their way to help others. Time is set aside for Michelle's passion and love of camp to come through and for Aaron's amazing ability to listen and be patient and caring to shine. There are opportunities to admire Amy's compassion and Paul's work ethic. Every staff member contributes to the camp culture through the incredible talents and abilities they bring to camp. The summer season provides additional opportunities, during structured staff meetings, to direct everyone's attention on each individual staff member, highlighting the fact that each one brings something valuable and special.

The Results

By the end of the staff training week, it is important that staff not only know what to do when our first campers arrive, but that they know how to do it. The camp culture that is established during staff training guides staff members as they interact with campers and fellow staff members throughout the summer. Counselors remember that we did not keep score during our staff game of ultimate Frisbee. The ropes course director, while working with a cabin group, doesn't forget that during our staff debriefing sessions we implemented strategies to make sure we heard from every member of our group. The tripping director remembers that she first learned how to use a camp stove on a staff trip when someone who knew, sat back and allowed her to safely experiment and practice until she was successful. The nature director recalls being in awe while viewing her first sunset over the lake and strives to provide opportunities for nature to whisper in camper's ears.

Planting the Seed

Letters, applications, interviews, welcome packets, and especially staff training set the tone and establish the core of the camp culture. Most of what occurs with campers throughout the summer has been established before they even start packing their bags. I will always remember when I pulled my broken down car into the camp parking lot fourteen years ago, reporting for my first summer as a camp counselor. Within minutes, I was greeted by one of my favorite counselors, now the assistant director, and he said, "Great to see you, I'm really glad you are here!" He planted a seed that let me know that I was valued and appreciated. From the day the first request for an application comes in to the last day of summer camp, I am constantly attempting to plant seeds in staff members and campers that promote and support the ideal camp culture for our camp.

Sidebar:

Camp Henry, located in Newaygo, Michigan, is a co-educational residential camp serving over 1,600 campers from ages seven to seventeen each summer. It was established in 1937 and is owned by Westminster Presbyterian Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In addition to a traditional camping program, Camp Henry also offers specialized programs in horseback riding, water-skiing, rock climbing, teen challenge, and offsite adventures.

Glossary

Culture

It is the shared norms, values, beliefs, assumptions, and patterns of behavior alive at your camp. These facets are the reasons, the why, behind all planned behavior and products of such. More specifically, culture is represented by artifacts, espoused values, and deep assumptions.

Artifacts

They are the observable world, which includes things, behavior, and perceived thoughts and feelings. For example, things might include clothing, specific language as symbols (jargon), journals or logs, books, fire circles, and sculpture. Behavior could include how people conduct meetings, what counselors are like with children, what counselors are like with each other, the activities the children engage in, how children go through their day, working hours, what people do in their time off, etc. Feelings could include fun, morale, enthusiasm, trust, and satisfaction. Artifacts are like looking into a mirror. You aren't going to be able to see what's behind it, but rather only what the surface reflects back to you. Often, you'll see yourself, as you interpret the artifacts according to your assumptions.

Espoused values

Espoused values are the principles that the camp openly advocates. Some examples include: integrity, teamwork, empowerment, creative, expert staff, environmentally friendly and active, individual attention, safe, fun, learning organization, continuous improvement, accountability, etc. That are what the organization wishes to be true.

Deep assumptions

There are four characteristics of deep assumptions, but essentially they can be thought of as the real drivers of artifacts. *All planned behavior is the result of a deep assumption.*

- (a) Deep assumptions are the same as espoused values when they match -- a true espoused value.
- (b) A false espoused value (doesn't match deep assumption), means that there is a hidden deep assumption operating. Since espoused values are good things, the hidden deep assumption is negative for the camp. For example, a camp may espouse being a learning organization, but it doesn't receive at least eight suggestions from every staff member during the summer. The camp may also not maintain a knowledge management center, conduct an external search for best practices, or do an evaluation of its outcomes. The real deep assumption might be that learning things in very specific domains is what is really valued.
- (c) A hidden deep assumption may also be positive -- the undiscovered jewel. These are the pleasant surprises when staff go above and beyond the call of duty, while honoring the espoused values as well (e.g., be safe).
- (d) There are several deep assumption domains that categorize the underlying assumptions about artifacts. Some examples include: group boundaries, time, space, human nature, and reality and truth. These domains help to bring to the surface many hidden deep assumptions.

Culture strength

Fragmentation - across the three levels of culture

The degree to which the three levels of culture – artifacts, espoused values, and deep assumption – are all in line. When the artifacts match up with the espoused values and deep assumptions to a large degree, the culture is not fragmented. Camp Quiet Brook and Majestic in the “Stories” appendix offer several examples of fragmentation. Like the other two dimensions of culture strength, fragmentation occurs along a continuum.

Integration - between hierarchical levels

Refers to the consistency of culture between hierarchical levels. Do the counselors and administration have the same norms and values? Other examples include the senior and junior administration, the director and administration, director and board, and counselors and supervisors.

Differentiation - within a hierarchical level

Refers to subcultures within organizational levels or groupings. Subgroups, cliques, and crowds are perhaps more common referents. People sometimes describe this as cohesiveness. How homogenous is the culture among all the counselors? How is it with the administration?

Structures, Processes, Policies, & Outcomes = see page 11.

The “Do-it-yourself camp culture assessment/improvement” kit

Introduction

The pitfall of “do-it-yourself”

It is with no shortage of unease that I provide a “Do-it-yourself” evaluation kit. I feel like a surgeon who has presented the essentials of anatomy and physiology, provided a few surgical instruments, and told you to go ahead and conduct exploratory surgery on yourself.

The reason for my unease is that many elements of culture are often invisible to those living within it. My evidence for that comes in two forms. First, the “How do you assess it?” section, the points (2,3,4,6) in the “Why should you assess it?” section, and the critical caveat in the “Enculturation” section detail some of my rational reasons. The “Introduction to deep assumption domains” and “How is culture created?” sections include more.

Beyond those, there is good evidence from the corporate world that in-house cultural assessments provide too little insight to be of major assistance. For example, S&P 500 (index of 500 blue-chip stocks) companies average a 20 year lifespan. Also, over the past 30 years, only 11 blue-chip companies have managed to go from average to exceptional and stay there (see the “From good to great” resource). In the last 30 years, roughly 600 camps have closed. In other words, the patient often dies. Even if the camp is successful in terms of money and return rates, how does it know if and to what degree it is achieving its outcomes beyond fun and satisfaction (see “Is it all good?” appendix)?

So, why provide a do-it-yourself kit at all? Because the insight that will be gained (especially by camps willing to seriously engage the process) is going to be valuable, and perhaps very valuable. ***Given the choice of doing it or not doing it, doing it is definitely the preferable course of action!***

Why isn't there a survey I can use?

As I noted in the “How does one assess it?” section, there are significant problems with surveys. Giving a nod to those problems, surveys are still a worthwhile endeavor – especially when not done in isolation. The best surveys available for camps (the first two in the taxonomies section), are not freely available for reprint. Thus, I can't legally provide you with a quality survey.

What if I do want to hire a consultant?

My recommendation would be to hire someone from a university, or a skilled practitioner, who is qualified to do a cultural assessment. This person should have at least some understanding of camps, and a *thorough* understanding of culture. If the consultant doesn't insist on spending a few days at your camp, you've got a lemon. If you go this route, check with me as I might be able to help you assess the person you're considering using.

The 12 Step Program

1. Get a handle on the questions and elements listed in the deep assumptions domain.
2. Go through the espoused values and list artifacts that either confirm or refute their presence.
3. Have the counselors go through the espoused values.
4. Utilize a culture survey.
5. Conduct interviews and focus groups that target areas of concern and growth.
6. Have a few new staff (5% of the overall staff) complete the “Journaling by fresh eyes” task
7. The Cosmo Survey: Are you and your camp a good match?

Diving deeper into the cultural waters

8. Utilize the enculturation section to assess how well new staff are selected and socialized.
9. With a knowledge of the “Symbols” appendix, examine your camp's symbols.
10. Brainstorm cultural artifacts using the “How culture is created” section.
11. Visit other camps
12. Repeat every 5 – 7 years.

Each step is addressed on the following pages. Information from “How does one assess culture?” is not repeated.

Step 1

Get a handle on the questions and elements listed in the deep assumptions domain

Because those questions and elements are already explicitly delineated, they are not repeated here. Just the headings are reproduced for general review. Go through and write down where you stand, why, and what evidence supports and detracts from that stand. Those in the administration and people with longstanding experience at the camp can be very helpful. The first two steps would be well suited to a leadership retreat. Ask disgruntled staff as well, so the opinions aren't limited.

- Measurement (internal and external)
- Common language and symbols
- Group boundaries: Who is in and who is out
- How relationships are defined
- How rewards and status are allocated
- Your place in camping
- Human nature
- Individual or group focus
- Activities, structures, policies, and outcomes
- Reality and truth
- Time
- Space

Step 2

Go through the espoused values and list artifacts that either confirm or refute their presence for the ones *that apply to your camp*. The values list overlaps quite a bit to aid brainstorming. The administration should work on this task together.

For each espoused value, there are artifacts that will provide evidence both for and against its presence. The proverbial “plus – minus” list should be made for each one. It may be helpful to review the example artifacts and stories appendix. The “Staff—camp fit” under the enculturation section might spur additional thought as well. Reduce fragmentation as much as possible -- it can't be done completely. Work on a plan to address the artifacts that detract from the espoused value being a universal (integration and differentiation) deep assumption.

Espoused values:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Accountability and responsibility○ Appreciative of staff○ Build social and emotional skills○ Continuous improvement○ Community○ Customer orientation – providing value○ Emotionally healthy and safe environment (e.g., friendly, caring, sensitive, helpful, empathetic)○ Empowerment○ Environmentally friendly and active○ Everyone should help and pitch in when there is a need	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Expert staff○ Fiscal responsibility○ Fun○ Good communication○ Hard work, but not overly difficult to meet camper and staff needs○ Inclusive○ Individual attention, but good of the group come first○ Informal○ Innovative & creative○ Integrity○ Learning organization – everyone should always continue to learn○ Multi-cultural environment○ Mutual influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Non-competitive○ Non-hierarchical○ Positive role models○ Product quality○ Professional development and individual growth are important for all staff (personal, professional, physical, camp activity areas, etc.)○ Respect○ Safe○ Selflessness○ Spiritual growth○ Teamwork // Camaraderie // Collaboration○ Trust

Does the list seem ridiculously long? Not only is it long, but it isn't complete either. The benefit of a strong culture is that most espoused values can happily reside on the deep assumption level. The deep assumptions are the very fabric of existence in strong cultures, so they need no introduction or re-introduction. The ones that happen to be most important, and need the most development, are the ones that are espoused. That core list (usually no more than 10) is combined with the vision and mission to be the key, open drivers of the camp.

It's also usually fun and interesting to keep a list of times when “cultural indigestion” occurs. At the other end, think of your camp as nirvana where everything ran perfectly according to the norms and values. What would that look like?

Step 3

Have the counselors go through the espoused values.

Post the espoused values during the summer and ask your staff to write in an open journal under the poster what things, behaviors, observed feelings, structures, policies, processes, and outcomes they feel contribute to or detract from the espoused values. Ask them to also add espoused values that they feel aren't represented. *Hidden deep assumptions will be uncovered, as well as opportunities to extend deep assumptions to more and/or new artifacts.* Be sure to set the expectation that no organization is perfect and that this exercise is an effort for the camp to truly be learning and proactive.

If there is any indication that the culture isn't reasonably strong, the camp would be wise to conduct steps 8, 9, and 10 before step 3. The goal is to uncover as many hidden deep assumptions as possible before the staff generate their usually lengthy lists. For those willing to engage this process, it is always enormously valuable.

Step 4

Utilize a culture survey.

In the middle of the summer (or after weeks of exposure), utilize one of the first two surveys listed in the taxonomies section. The free, available survey from the learning camp resource can also provide a wealth of knowledge. The results of a survey are especially useful when conducting interviews and focus groups.

Step 5

Conduct interviews and focus groups that target areas of concern and growth.

Using interviews and focus groups is an opportunity to flush out areas of concern as well as brainstorm ways the camp can deepen the breadth of the espoused values. New areas to address will also likely be uncovered. When this tool is utilized by camp administration, many questions are automatically off limits, or the answers will be filtered. Try to find someone from outside the camp who the staff will trust to conduct this step.

Most questions will come from the results of steps 1-4. A few general questions for consideration follow.

- How social or formal is the relationship between counselors and administration?
- How much does the camp trust you?
- Who fits in and who doesn't?
- When there's a crisis, what happens?
- How honest are evaluations?
- What is the relationship between new staff and old-timers?
- Autonomy -- empowerment / theory x, theory y
- When staff on the same level make a mistake or slack off, does anyone call them on it? How? What would happen if someone went to a higher level to resolve the dispute?
- Informal power -- who do people go to in both directions?
- What kind of behavior is rewarded and punished?
- Are rewards and consequences handed out uniformly?
- What are the rewards and punishments?
- Does status rest on tenure, competence, commitment, or...? What are the relative weightings?
- Are there heroes? If yes, who are they and why?
- Is there an expectation to work during your free time?
- What can you do at night?
- What should you do in your free time?
- Where do you go in your free time? Days off?
- What are the relationships like after the summer?
- How hard do people work when working?
- Across the staff, what is the consistency of effort? What is the cohesion?
- When the going gets tough, the tough..._____
- What 10 words would you use to describe camp?
- Is there time available for people to be innovative and creative?
- What's cool?
- What's uncool?
- What do the "bad boys" do?
- What do the "good boys" do?
- How good is the word of those in leadership positions?
- How much red tape is there? What is the result in terms of behaviors of existing levels?
- What are the "Top 10 Lies" at _____?

Step 6

Have a few new staff (5% of the overall staff) complete the “Journaling by fresh eyes” task

The details were described in the main text. Of additional note, it seems to work out better when strict, formal guidelines aren’t given. The chosen staff often find it makes an excellent resume/portfolio item, and they are usually ecstatic to be trusted with such a task. If at all possible, sit down with the staff person(s) to go over the results in person after reading through their report.

Step 7

The Cosmo Survey: Are you and your camp a good match?

The enculturation of new staff is critical to shaping, developing, and stabilizing a camp’s culture. That section includes the full information which needs to be considered. For now, a do-it-yourself survey that staff could “fill out” on your website or at a fair is offered. Think of it as a little like a dating survey, where the results are extremely important; you’re married for three months! What actually goes on this survey will vary a bit depending on the camp. While this will help insure a stronger culture, some camps may not be in a position to turn away staff because they aren’t a very good cultural fit. If that is the case, just recognize that a strong culture will be harder to obtain. Diversity in norms and values is the definition of a weak culture.

Everyone wants a staff person who is emotionally intelligent, cognitively intelligent enough, has some leadership ability, is good with children, safe, fun, and has some camp skills. After that, you need someone who is a good fit with your camp.

In general, you are seeking someone who is in synch with your vision, mission, structures, processes, and policies. You want someone who is in line with the norms and values alive at your camp. You want someone who is going to gel with how and why things are done at camp. Once you have assessed your culture carefully, the elements of organizational fit, as well as a hierarchy of them, will be crystal clear. *If you don’t start with staff who are a very good fit, serious problems are likely to arise.*

Are you and your camp a good match for each other? Take the following survey and find out! For every selection, rate the importance of your choice on the following scale. Report your results to the camp of your choosing and enjoy!

1	2	3	4	5
Pretty unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very important	Extremely important

Is the camp a:

- (a) Day camp
- (b) Resident camp

Is the camp:

- (a) Urban
- (b) Suburban
- (c) Rural

For residential camps, the living conditions are:

- (a) Tents
- (b) Rustic cabins
- (c) Moderately nice cabins
- (d) Deluxe with carpets and air-conditioning

The campers stay for:

- (a) Less than a week
- (b) One week
- (c) Two weeks
- (d) Three or four weeks
- (e) More than four weeks

The campers are (select all that apply):

- (a) At-risk because of _____
- (b) Terminally ill
- (c) Handicapped
- (d) Average
- (e) In the top 10% income bracket
- (f) Religious
- (g) Families

The age of the campers is roughly:

- (a) 5 - 8
- (b) 8 - 12
- (c) 8 - 16
- (d) 14 - 18
- (e) Adults
- (f) Other _____

The focus of the camp is (select all that apply):

- (a) Sport skill development
- (b) Fun with a capital F – primary goal
- (c) Therapeutic (outcomes, benefits)
- (d) General focus
- (e) Education/Academic
- (f) Travel
- (g) Wilderness/tripping
- (h) Arts
- (i) Heavy focus on values/character/personal growth
- (j) Religious

The camp is:

- (a) Competitive
- (b) Non-competitive
- (c) A moderate mix

The camp is:

- (a) All male
- (b) All female
- (c) Co-ed

To be more specific, your camp should include the answers to the following questions at the bottom (or back) of the “Cosmo Survey.” It may seem odd to try and talk precious staff out of a job, but doing so insures a good fit, which is the best overall outcome. To that end, it is your job to educate staff about alternatives to the way you do things and your essence.

Some people feel these two pages are too long, because potential staff won’t read it. But, if your staff don’t read them at some point, do you really want them? Do they really want you? How do you know?

Perks and other reasons to work at your camp should be included in another section.

Our vision and mission are:

The campers go through their day in the following manner and this is why we chose to structure it this way. Other camps have different models where campers move through their day in this manner. The reason they do it that way is _____.

The activities we have at camp are as follows. The activities we don’t have at camp are _____ and this is why.

The 5 most important outcomes for our campers are _____. This is why we feel those are the most important. The 5 most important outcomes for our staff are _____.

Our 10 core principles, or espoused values, are: [A bulleted list – the interview goes into these more]

The food at camp is (vegetarian, options, mandatory eating, organic, always healthy, who prepares, how often).

Our most successful staff have the following qualities. [A chance to include character attributes and other espoused values]

The 7 most distinguishing elements of our camp are:

Diving deeper into the cultural waters

Seriously engaged, the above seven steps will likely make a big difference in the quality of the camp experience and in the strength of the culture. The following five steps require even more reflection and are less structured. By the time you arrive here, the cultural milieu will be much clearer, as will how to think about examining your own culture. The information necessary to conduct these steps is sufficiently supplied in the main text of this book. Congratulations on getting this far and enjoy the improved experience the following steps will offer your camp!

Step 8

Utilize the enculturation section to assess how well new staff are selected and socialized.

Step 9

With a knowledge in the “Symbols” appendix, examine your camp’s symbols.

Step 10

Brainstorm cultural artifacts using the “How culture is created” section. The goal is to uncover hidden deep assumptions – both good and bad. Going through the espoused values and deep assumptions will uncover much of the culture. However, many of the culture’s hidden gems and pits won’t be discovered. The only way to find them is through an archeological dig, so to speak. Through an examination of as many artifacts as is possible and reasonable, these gems and pits will be discovered. The “How culture is created” and the example artifacts sections are good places to start.

Step 11

Visit other camps.

Step 12

Repeat every 5 – 7 years.

By the time 5 – 7 years have passed, the vast majority of the staff will likely be relatively new. Several things at camp will probably have changed as well. Much of the initial work of a cultural analysis will be behind you. The main task ahead of you is editing that knowledge.

Message from Bob Ditter on Camp Culture

Much has changed in the twenty years that I have been working with camp professionals across the United States. Some camps have gone out of business, succumbing to the pressures of development, over-regulation and increased competition; while others have grown stronger, diversifying their programs and widening their alumni base. The industry itself has been infused with a fresh crop of young owners and directors who are even more knowledgeable about child development and the needs of today's families.

Perhaps the greatest changes have occurred in the environment in which camp now operates. First of all, parents are generally more demanding about what they want for their children, whether it be in school, day care or camp. Second, the industry itself has for several years been making more public noise about the value and positive impact that a quality camp experience can provide children. Third, camps are under even greater scrutiny and regulation by watch dog agencies, especially when it comes to the emotional and physical well-being of children in the custody of care-givers. Add to these factors the increase in competition for a child's time in the summer and the surge in the number of children coming to camp with challenging emotional or behavioral histories, and it is clear that camps have a lot to live up to. For all of these reasons, camp professionals need to be more aware of the conditions that produce a quality experience for the youngsters they recruit.

Enter Randall Grayson, whose notions about camp culture are ripe for this industry. As I have said to many camp groups over the past twenty years, it is not a question of *whether* your camp has a culture; it is only a question of *what that culture truly is*. Because, as Dr. Grayson so simply points out in this crucial work, "if culture guides the thinking and behavior of people, it is *wise to create and foster a culture at camp that best facilitates the outcomes you care about*."

Consider, for example, the camp story of a long time friend and colleague. Ham Robbins⁷ went to the boys' camp he now owns and operates for eight years as a camper, junior counselor and full fledged staff member. He finally worked his way up to Assistant Director before he figured out a way to buy the camp himself. His love of camp and all it could do for young men is deeply seated in his own experience. Listening to Ham talk about "the good old days," you can hear not only tales of adventure, but a solid sense of learned responsibility, love of Nature and respect for other human beings. By the time Ham was in college he was convinced that being a camp director was his life's work.

For twenty-five years Ham has visited prospective and returning campers in their homes throughout the Southern United States. Ham sees his personal connection with families as a key ingredient to the success of his camp. What he tells parents is that he wants each boy that attends Camp to benefit from the experience like he did. Thus, it was no surprise when Ham met me at an ACA Fall Conference in Nashville in the mid-1980's that he wanted me to come to his camp to work directly with his staff. My coming to Camp was just another part of the excellence Ham put into his work. He wanted his counselors to be as prepared and able to work with campers as possible. There was even a training session on "the Mother Functions," a set of tasks compiled by a former Tennessee camp director that outlines the care-taking tasks traditionally performed by moms at home – things like making sure clothes are clean, teeth are brushed, tears are dried with reassurances and beds are made.

From satisfied parents and happy campers, this seemed to be a model camp. Thus, it was a big surprise when one summer night a car full of counselors returning from a night off flipped on the highway at over 60 miles an hour. The miracle was that no one was killed, though there were several broken bones and a badly shaken group of young men bailed out by their faithful director. It had been determined that the driver and occupants were drunk.

⁷ While based on true occurrences, the identities of the camp directors and their camps have been altered for reasons of confidentiality.

The accident spurred some soul-searching by the entire camp community. What came out was the realization that for years, young, mostly underage counselors would join older staff on their nights off and come back to camp drunk. In addition to posing a danger on the road, it was common that hung-over staff were not as “present” the next day during cabin clean-up or coaching softball and other activities. Though the senior staff had been aware of this for some time, it was considered “a rite of passage” for junior counselors, who had finally achieved great status by being asked to become a member of the staff.

Ham, being the responsible Camp Director he is, initiated a new training session for orientation. He did all the right things – things most conscientious directors would do. He had the counselors involved in the accident tell their story. He had an “expert” come and talk about the effects of alcohol on performance. He had his staff sign an affidavit swearing they would not come into camp drunk on a night off, and even had them have a witness co-sign the document, which was then collected and put into each staff member’s file. This approach worked – for one year; the year in which the memory of the accident was still vivid enough to act as a deterrent. As the years passed, so did the impact of the story and the training.

I mention Ham’s story because many camps in the United States are run by competent, responsible, caring people who believe unconditionally that their camps provide safe, fun experiences that have the potential of increasing a child’s self-reliance and self-confidence. What most directors, including Ham, do not consider is the culture that exists at camp, which is the context for all behavior. What was never addressed, for example, were the deeply held beliefs, or what Randall Grayson terms “deep assumptions,” operating at Ham’s camp. These beliefs might be summarized as follows:

- 1) boys will be boys and drinking is part of that;
- 2) camp doesn’t end once you become a staff member; the activities just change and drinking is one of those activities;
- 3) counselor’s time off is none of the business of the administration.

Until these beliefs could be addressed, the drinking behavior and the consequences that come with it do not change in a lasting way. Drinking was part of the *culture* at Ham’s camp, and it was intensely affecting the quality of what happened there. It just never surfaced as completely as it did when the accident occurred. And it didn’t change until a group of senior staff members got together and decided to challenge some of their own deeply held beliefs, one chief among them being that it was solely up to the director to enforce the “not drunk in camp” rule.

What happened was that a small but influential group of *senior* staff members went through some self-examination which resulted in a change in their deeply held beliefs about camp. The beliefs they established were as follows:

- We are the community.
- We share the responsibility of enforcing the rules (it’s not just Ham’s job).
- We must make a personal commitment to camp.
- Camp is bigger than just us, just this season.
- We need to mentor the younger staff members.

Without this *critical mass* of *senior* staff members, the attitudes and behavior around drinking would never have changed at Ham’s camp. Only by looking at their own behavior and attitudes could they impact the culture and thus change what happened. Indeed, we know how culture is passed along: the younger members of a group look to and mimic the older members of the group, who in turn look to the *most popular* members (not the ones with the most authority) of the group. Thus, the senior members put together their mentoring program, announced it to Ham, who endorsed it (heartily!), and then presented it to the entire staff. It worked. Drinking dropped and alternate forms of night off activities began to show up. The culture, after several years of sustained work, changed.

Had Ham known about culture and how it impacts everything that happens at camp, he might have known that simply telling a story and having staff sign a piece of paper would not change the culture that had existed at Camp for many years.

I can relate many similar tales of excellent camps that have cultures that operate largely out of sight and in opposition to the stated aims and goals of the camp itself. There is the nurturing camp in the Northeast where a group of male counselors, unmoved by extensive selection, training and supervision, tied their campers to their beds, wrote on them in their sleep and threatened them with various physical humiliations if they didn't "behave." (The deeply held belief on the part of those counselors was that "these kids are spoiled and need to be "toughened up.") Or the well known camp in Michigan known for its fine religious program where campers were "initiated" in ways totally counter to the teachings or stated goals of camp. The stories are all there, and they reinforce one basic notion: to deliver a "world of good," camp professionals must know how culture develops and how it changes. Reading this book is a great first step in this process of greater awareness and understanding.