

**AN ASSESSMENT OF BIAS AND FAIRNESS OF THE CULTURE
ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT**

by

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DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

DOCTOR IN COMMERCE

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The logo of the University of Johannesburg, featuring two stylized hands holding a sunburst.
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in the

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Supervisor: Prof Gert Roodt

October 2003

STATEMENT

I certify that the dissertation submitted by me for the degree Doctor in Human Resources (Leadership in Performance and Change) at the Rand Afrikaans University, is my independent work and have not been submitted by me for a degree at another faculty/university.

THEMBA JAMES NKOSI

OCTOBER 2003

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I DEDICATE THIS STUDY TO MY LATE LOVING SISTER-IN-LAW,
EMILY MYENI.

Themba James Nkosi
October 2003

ABSTRACT

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Background

The diversity of the South African population, with its variety of cultures, led to a need for valid, reliable, unbiased, and fair culture assessment instrument. The requirement is that such measuring instrument should respect cultural diversity and make accurate predictions of members of different race, gender, age and language groups. Such an instrument can provide valuable insight into the culture of a company represented by a heterogeneous workforce.

Literature Research

The theoretical research objectives of the study focus on the construct organisational culture. A review of the literature revealed that the construct organisational culture is characterized by a myriad of definitions and research paradigms. Controversies exist about virtually all aspects of this construct including the extent of its contribution to organisational performance.

What is borne out by the literature is that questionnaires can play an important role in the quantitative analysis of organisational culture (Reichers & Schneider, 1990; Rousseau, 1990). However, quantitative assessment of organisational culture has been criticised because of a strong mono method bias in the field. There is thus a need for a multilevel and multi-method conceptualisation. In this respect, Schein's (1985) three level typology provides a distinctive role for both quantitative and qualitative measurement.

Empirical Research Objective

The primary objective of the empirical research is an assessment of possible bias and fairness of the Culture Assessment Instrument of Martins (1998) on the different race, gender, age and language groups.

Participants

For this study a convenience sample, consisting of 4066 participants from five different companies representing various industries was used. The majority of the respondents are white, male, Afrikaans speaking and in the age group 25-35.

The Measuring Instrument

The Culture Assessment Instrument (CAI), the object of this study, consists of six dimensions, covering the internal and external environments. The internal environment entails five organisational systems, whilst the external environment entails different stakeholder groups. Although the latest version of the instrument consists of 89 items, only the 56 items that were common to all the companies in the sample were included in the study. The 56 items are proportionally representative of the six dimensions.

The Research Procedure

The data set was built from data gathered from the participating companies over the last few years. The information was gathered mainly with a view to improve the performance of the companies. Hence, the aim in gathering the information was the same in all cases.

Statistical Analysis

The appropriate statistical procedures were selected for their suitability to test the research hypotheses of the study. In the first phase of the study procedures include descriptive statistics, factor analyses, and iterative item analyses to establish the reliability of the constructs being used. In respect of the factor analyses a procedure developed by Schepers (1992) was followed. This procedure includes first as well as second level factor analyses. In the second phase of the data analyses, analyses of variance and a measure of association was applied to test for differences between the mentioned groups. The Statistical Consultation Service of the Rand Afrikaans University conducted the analyses. All calculations were done by means of the SPSS-Windows program of SPSS-International.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The empirical findings of the study did not support the expectations of the study. It was expected that the instrument would identify significant differences in culture between the different race, gender, age and language groups. Although differences in mean culture scores between the different biographical groups were identified, only small portion of these differences could be attributed to differences in race and language. Differences on an item level were detected and the wordings of these items were also qualitatively scrutinized. On these grounds it was concluded that the CAI is unbiased and fair in relation to race, gender, age and language.

It was found that the instrument is highly reliable and assessed the communalities between the race, gender, age and language groups very well. However, these communalities are mainly at surface level, i.e. the level of artefacts and creations with reference to Schein's (1985) three level typology. At this level the different race, gender, age and language group may appear to have the same culture.

Emanating from the findings of the literature and the empirical research of this study it is recommended that further research be undertaken to operationalise the construct organisational culture at deeper levels, which are, the levels of tacit values, taken for granted assumptions and basic beliefs. The author is of the view that with proper operationalisation at the more fundamental levels it will be possible to successfully distinguish cultures between the different race, gender, age and language groups from the positivistic paradigm.



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