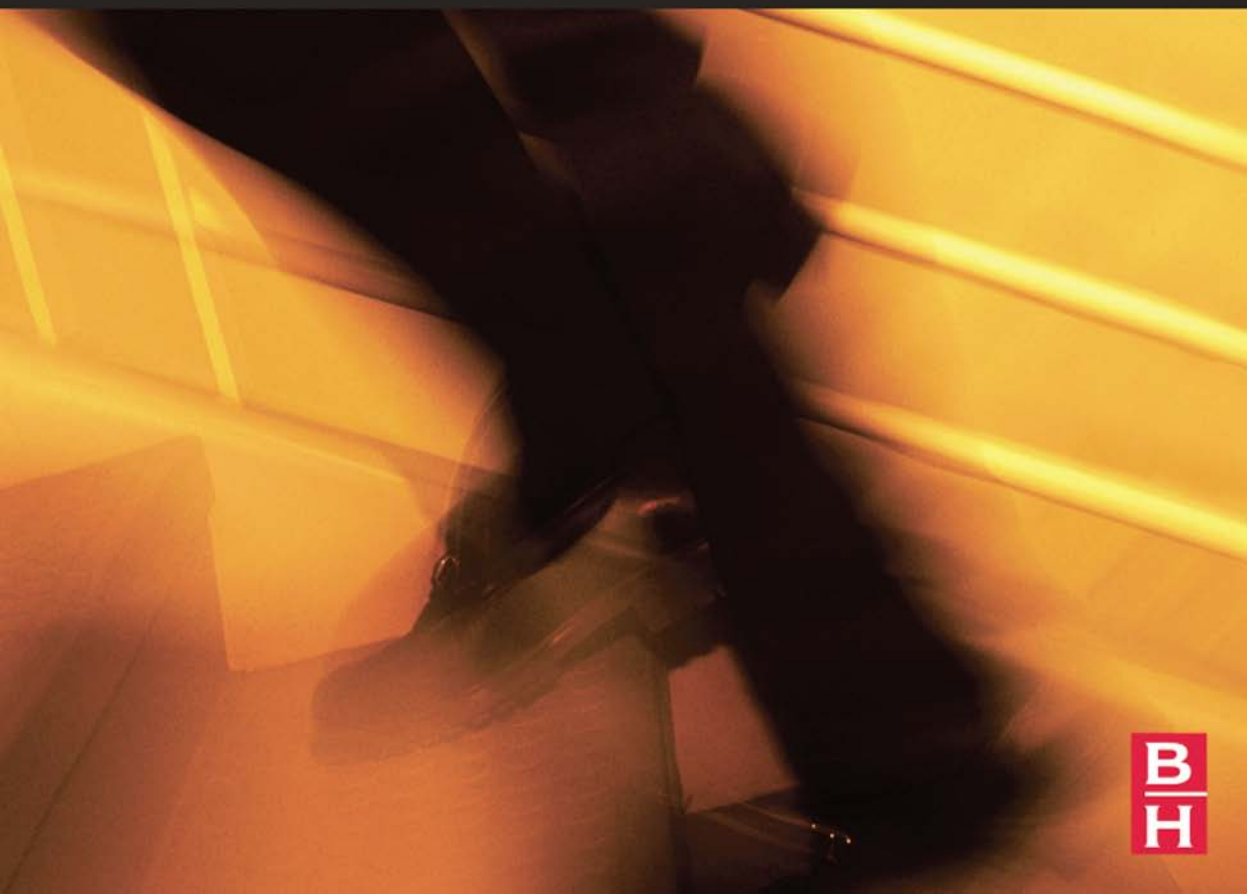Roderic Gray

A Climate of Success

Creating the right organizational climate for high performance

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Foreword

We are all learning to recognize the importance of climate change, whether society as a whole and its concern for global warming or managers and employees and the climate in which they work. This book focusing on organization climate therefore covers an increasingly important topic and brings together a body of knowledge in an organized and easy to read format illustrated with critical incidents and cases in real world organizations.

Over recent years we are seeing considerable changes in the way organizations operate; managers strive to lead and employees contribute their services. It is no longer taskmaster and servant. Power is diffused and shared. In contrast with traditional management models that generations of MBA students have been forced to learn in which structures and systems are derived from a mechanistic predefined strategy, the new workplace seeks to balance what matters for the company (its strategy) and what matters for the individuals (their life strategies).In this new paradigm in which priority for sustained personal development goes hand-in-hand with the employer's business performance and growth, a supportive and enabling corporate climate is the new source of authority. The climate provides the whole contextual environment defining much of the essence of the relationship between an organization, its employees, customers and shareholders and the environment in which it operates.

From the start, the author differentiates clearly between inherent organization culture and organization climate and emphasizes the latter is strongly influenced by the behaviours of leaders and managers which they themselves can change. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are particularly helpful to the reader as they provide an important summary of the key underlying models and frameworks and how climate can be assessed and categorized. The origins and facets of corporate climate are not simply attributable to a single variable and the author brings together issues of behaviour, perception (what it feels like), motivation, and work satisfaction etc.

But this is more than a review of theoretical constructs. There are 16 mini-case studies that serve to illustrate these key ideas. They cover a wide spectrum of incidents in a range of different businesses. They address many of the fundamental issues that managers have to consider – such as goal setting, participative decision making, innovation, job satisfaction and motivation, as well as threats and opportunities from and in the external business environment. This case study approach has the advantage of making the issue of organization climate very real for the reader and readily transferable to their own experience and frame of reference.

Organizations often focus on systems and process changes. But the key message from this book is the importance of behaviours and actions by leaders and managers that can lead to a supportive climate that respects and reinforces employee commitment that thereby contributes to the longer term sustainability of the organization. When a climate is put in the context of realizing business objectives and solving business issues, its results are greatly enhanced.

This book will be of value to managers to help them understand how their behaviours have consequences for the working context of their employees and thereby how they can synergize the needs of the organization with the needs of the individual employee and secure the best for all. It will also be of value to students of business and management who need to learn and understand the increasing importance of these 'soft issues' of work and organizations, over and above functional disciplines and business economics.

As the author extols in Chapter 14 ('The way ahead'), the process of improvement begins with self-knowledge and the first step towards a better climate is an assessment of how things are now and can be. This book will help the reader achieve these ends.

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Preface

A happy sailor is an efficient sailor
**Lt Cmdr Dean Woodruff RN, at the launch of HMS Daring – 'the
world's most advanced destroyer' – on 1 February 2006**

Happiness and profits have something in common: both are elusive if pursued directly. Profits usually come as a by-product, or side effect, of doing or making something that has value for other people, in the same way that glycerine is a valuable by-product from the manufacture of soap, or grapeseed oil from winemaking. The range of activities which may produce profits is almost infinitely varied but the basic mechanism is always the same: people buy your product or make use of your service and in return they pay you, if you've organized things correctly, more than the activity has cost you. The difference is profit.

Happiness, too, is a by-product of other activities. Again, the range of activities which may bring happiness is infinitely varied (a fact which is a rich source of profit for tabloid newspapers) and very often it is only when those activities are combined with other factors that we feel happy. The ingredients of this cocktail are fairly constant: freedom – to make decisions and to exercise some control over our own lives; relationships with other people who value us; security or freedom from threat; challenge – within the limits of our own individual comfort level; and usefulness, or the feeling that what we are doing has purpose and value.

This book deals only with workplace activities. It's only very recently, in evolutionary time, that the designations 'work' and 'non work' have had any meaning for human beings. It may make sense in our current social environment to distinguish between them, but psychologically it isn't very helpful to us. 'Passive' and 'active' are more meaningful for us, but our active phase is very much the same whether we are performing a task in return for pay, or engaged in a leisure activity, cutting the grass, doing DIY, shopping, playing with our children, learning a foreign language, taking part in sport or doing voluntary work.

It is because our minds, deep down, don't recognize the distinction between working for an employer and every other kind of activity, coupled with the fact that we spend a significant proportion of our lives in our workplaces, that it is necessary for those workplaces to fulfil the basic requirements of a social setting where we can function as human beings. If they don't, we won't feel comfortable and we won't perform to our full potential. That's what this book is about. It isn't (mainly) about happiness, although I hope and believe that increased happiness will be an evident side effect of putting this book's message into practice. Making people happy won't, directly, lead to their becoming efficient, but a work environment in which people can be happy is also one in which they can be effective, which is much more valuable than mere efficiency.

I began my exploration of the concept of organizational climate after observing the deeply negative impact of a threatening environment on people at work. I reasoned that removing threats should lead to better performance. As I researched this proposition in more depth I came to realize that eliminating negative influences wasn't the whole story; there were positive influences to be promoted as well. In fact, the holistic package that determined 'what it feels like to work here' needed to be kept in balance if people were to give their best. I met with opposition. People told me that employees had to know that there would be penalties if they didn't measure up, otherwise they would get lazy and complacent, and take advantage. So I checked, and I found through rigorous research – my own and other people's – that this idea didn't fit with the evidence; work outcomes tended (and we can seldom assert more than this where human activities are concerned) to be significantly more successful where threat was low and positive factors more prominent.

Over several years I have applied and developed this valuable lesson, both as an observer and as an active participant in organizational change. This book is largely the product of that experience. It's in three parts. First (in Chapters 1–5) there is an explanation of the concepts and theory, and I present evidence to show the characteristics of an organizational 'climate of success'. Then (in Chapters 6–13) there are narratives, or case studies, to illustrate each of eight climate factors in a real world setting. Finally (in Chapter 14), there are suggestions of how the ideas in the book might be put to work in a variety of workplace situations.

I believe, in fact I'm sure, that the application of the concepts explored in this book will lead to noticeable improvements in organizational effectiveness. Inextricably bound up with this increased effectiveness will be an extra helping of that elusive by-product – individual happiness.

Roderic Gray
Leigh-on-Sea

Metaphor and reality

Metaphor is often regarded as a device for embellishing discourse, but its significance is much greater than this. For the use of metaphor implies a way of thinking *and* a way of seeing *that pervade how we understand our world.*

Gareth Morgan, ***Images of Organization,*** **1986**

The term 'organizational climate' is, of course, a metaphor, but rather a good one for my purpose. Actual (meteorological) climate is a highly complex phenomenon, with characteristics that can be individually measured such as high, low and mean temperatures, rainfall, prevailing winds, seasonal variations, hours of sunlight, and so on. It is also subject to local exceptions, known as microclimates, which seem to defy the regional norms and standards. And sometimes the climate seems to lose its senses and completely unexpected climatic events occur which have the potential to do enormous damage. In any case, measurement and documentation of individual characteristics only tell part of the story: the term 'climate' only conveys real meaning as a package of characteristics taken as a whole. The proper term for this is a 'system' and systems have 'emergent properties', i.e. characteristics of the whole package which don't obviously come from any of the component parts. I will explore this in a little more detail later.

There is another property of meteorological climate which isn't easy to observe and measure, and that is what it *feels* like. This arises from another package of components, those that go to make up the individual experiencing the effects of climate on his or her well-being. This is very subjective and it would be risky to make assumptions about that experience. Only the individuals themselves can tell us definitively how the climate suits them: if we want to know we have to ask them. However, because we are all genetically very similar it's possible to predict very broadly the kind of climate which will probably be acceptable to, if not ideal for, most people and this gives us at least a starting point.

What this means is that if we were to ask as many people as possible about their preferences concerning some of the main climate factors we might well find that their answers followed what statisticians call a 'normal distribution'. That is, if plotted on a graph they would produce a shape like a bell, which is close to being symmetrical, with most people's preferences lying towards the middle, as illustrated in Figure 1.1 (see over).

I'm writing this in south-east England, where I don't meet too many people who would enjoy genuinely arctic conditions. Many people do, though, enjoy a bright
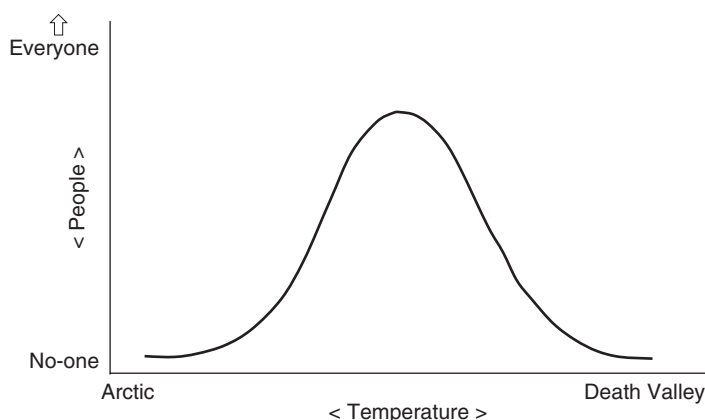
Figure 1.1   A normal distribution curve.

frosty winter morning, so their comfort zone would begin towards the left of the curve in Figure 1.1. Similarly, most people here would find sustained temperatures of 40–50°C quite unbearable, but many (like myself) have a strong preference for moderately hot weather. Our comfort zone would be towards the right of the curve. The majority would find their preference towards the centre.

This would give an indication of one of the many contributing factors in meteorological climate, but climate is much more than just temperature. If we prepared a similar graph for, say sunshine, it's likely that the curve would be a little skewed, because (probably – I haven't any research evidence to substantiate this) more people like sunny weather than cloudy. If we then combined the two graphs it would show that the appeal of cold, dull weather was quite limited, but cold bright weather fell within the main body of the bell-shaped curve, with warm sunny weather close to the centre. Do the same for rainfall, then for consistency versus variety, then for every other identifiable climate factor, and combine all the graphs. We would have a description of a climate that would at least be acceptable to most people, although, importantly, there would still be some who wouldn't be happy or comfortable in it.

Of course, we have very little control over meteorological climate. We can take palliative measures to warm ourselves up, cool ourselves down and protect ourselves from the elements, but in the end if our local climate doesn't suit us our only recourse is to move somewhere else. In practice, though, most of us are able and willing to compromise. We may have our preferences but between quite wide parameters we accept things as they are and get on with our lives. Familiarity, or perhaps just time to adapt, has a big influence on this. Human beings, or their predecessors, are believed to have originated in central Africa. As our species

slowly spread out across the world we had time over many generations to adapt to a wide variety of climates, using our high intelligence to find ways to compensate for conditions that were too extreme for human bodies to cope with unaided. We wore the skins of other animals, made fire and built ourselves shelters, so that long before recorded history we were surviving and thriving in climates that would quickly have finished off our earliest ancestors.

When the climate metaphor is applied to organizations we find that some, at least, of the characteristics of organizational climate are also susceptible to observation and measurement, and I will examine some of the research activity that has been directed towards this in the following chapters. We also find 'microclimates' within organizations that seem to be markedly different from that of the wider setting. Sometimes things go wrong and the climate seems to change suddenly or unexpectedly, leading to confusion and depression among employees (theoretically, of course, the change might be for the better but somehow this is less often seen in practice). Again, the subjective element is absolutely crucial: the experience of organizational climate is essentially an individual, personal experience which is governed by the degree of synchronicity between the objective, measurable characteristics of the organizational environment and the idiosyncratic needs and preferences of the unique human being on the receiving end. Because of this, I will argue that the essence of organizational climate is to be found in the deceptively superficial-sounding question 'what does it feel like to work here?'.

Of course, each employee is likely to give a different answer to this question:

> Different individuals, working side by side in the same organization, may be working in organizations that are in effect different – one person may experience the organization as a hostile and malevolent force, bent on destruction, while a second experiences the same organization as a model of everything that is good and right and a third 'is only doing a job' and does not care one way or another for the organization.
>
> Gabriel and Schwartz, 1998

These variations in the ways that individuals perceive the organizational climate in which they work will certainly influence the ways in which they respond to it and, therefore, the effectiveness of their workplace performance. This presents a real challenge for managers, which has to be addressed on several levels.

Fortunately, unlike the weather, organizational climate can be influenced, even controlled to a certain extent, by the actions of managers. First, we need to identify those characteristics of organizational climate that are likely to be most conducive

to good performance. This is actually at the core of one of the oldest, and one of the most contentious, issues in management theory and practice, although it's more recognizable with the label 'management style'.

It's important to recognize that the view expressed by Cmdr Woodruff that 'a happy sailor is an efficient sailor' is actually considered quite heretical in some management circles. How indicators of contentment among employees, such as 'satisfaction', relate to productivity is disputed. Back in the 1950s Douglas McGregor reviewed the available management literature and detected a clear underlying set of assumptions – which he labelled 'Theory X' – which led him to the conclusion that 'the principles of organization which comprise the bulk of the literature of management could only have been derived from assumptions such as those of Theory X. Other beliefs about human nature would have led inevitably to quite different organizational principles' (McGregor, 1960). The assumptions of Theory X are:

1. The average human being has an inherent dislike of work and will avoid it if he can.
2. Because of this human characteristic of dislike of work, most people must be coerced, controlled, directed, threatened with punishment to get them to put forth adequate effort toward the achievement of organizational objectives.
3. The average human being prefers to be directed, wishes to avoid responsibility, has relatively little ambition, wants security above all.

Whilst management thinking has moved on quite a lot in the half-century since McGregor, the Theory X command and control assumptions are still very common, and modern computerized monitoring systems make their implementation easier and more intrusive than McGregor could possibly have foreseen (Arkin, 1997). It's clear that the happiness of employees doesn't figure very prominently in this kind of thinking but there is a clear assumption that this is the way to maximize productivity. It would be fair to assume that people working in an organization based on these principles would be likely to find the organizational climate rather harsh, although McGregor did accept that in practice Theory X can be expressed as a more benign, paternalistic regime.

When I first began investigating organizational climate some ten years ago, I came across some venerable expressions of allegedly 'motivational' thinking which helped me to define the two ends of the spectrum. The most coercive, threatening style is captured by the Roman statesman Accius (150–c90 BCE) who said 'let them hate, so long as they fear'. Of course, twenty-first century managers can't

apply the methods that were available in ancient Rome, but I have certainly come across managers who were thoroughly detested, and feared, by their staff and who showed every sign of being convinced that this was the only reliable way to get things done. I call this the 'Accius Orientation'.

The alternative view was expressed by Shakespeare in *The Taming of the Shrew*, where Tranio advises Lucentio that 'No profit grows, where is no pleasure ta'en'. In other words, people need to enjoy their work and get satisfaction and fulfilment from it if they are to perform well. Because *The Taming of the Shrew* is set in Padua (which by a happy coincidence is a rather nice, historic town with an agreeable climate), I call this perspective the 'Padua Paradigm' (Gray, 2002). Just as McGregor's Theory X reflects an updated version of the Accius Orientation so the Padua Paradigm captures in a few words the essence of McGregor's alternative vision of managerial attitudes, which he called 'Theory Y'. This view holds that 'the expenditure of physical and mental effort in work is as natural as play or rest'. Importantly, it is, potentially at least, within the control of managers as to whether people regard work as a source of satisfaction to be 'voluntarily performed', or as a source of punishment 'to be avoided if possible' (McGregor, 1960).

McGregor goes on to claim that, contrary to the assumptions of Theory X, 'The capacity to exercise a relatively high degree of imagination, ingenuity, and creativity in the solution of organizational problems is widely, not narrowly, distributed in the population' and warns that 'under the conditions of modern industrial life, the intellectual potentialities of the average human being are only partially utilized' (McGregor, 1960).

The issue for managers is to decide where they stand on three important questions: where the limits of acceptable behaviour lie, in terms of the effects of management behaviour on people's working lives; whether such ethical considerations override issues of profit and/or productivity; and whether a tendency towards one or other set of assumptions – Accius or Padua, Theory X or Theory Y – is more likely to promote the kind of organizational climate in which most people, most
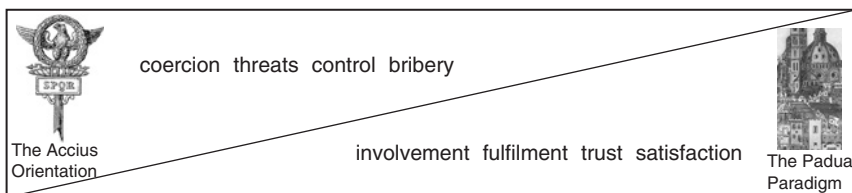

Figure 1.2 The Accius <> Padua spectrum.

of the time, will contribute most effectively towards the aims and objectives of their employing organization.

These questions don't present themselves in any particular order. For example, if managers decide that the evidence points to the Padua Paradigm (or Theory Y) as being the management style which is most likely to result in maximum productivity they don't have to worry about the other two questions; pure objective economics will determine a mode of behaviour towards employees which will pass the most stringent ethical tests without damaging or endangering profits.

On the other hand, if the Accius Orientation (or Theory X), appears to offer the best hope of maximizing profit and productivity, then managers are obliged to ask 'how far should we go?'. The boundaries may be set, albeit not very effectively, by law, but managers can't avoid forming an opinion and making choices. As Jean-Paul Sartre (1943) said, 'we cannot not choose. If I do not choose, that is still a choice. If faced with inevitable circumstances, we still choose how we are in those circumstances'. Managers are continually having to choose 'how they are' in their relations with their employees and those choices will, as I will argue, have a significant impact on the success of their organizations.

In the chapters that follow I will first try to give some academic respectability to this debate by examining the concept of organizational climate in more detail, reviewing some of the trends in research into the subject, and identifying specific performance management issues which are linked to climate issues. I will then look at how managers can assess the climate of their own organization, or perhaps that subset of the organization that most concerns them, such as their own department or team.

The major part of the book will be devoted to a collection of narratives, or case studies, each illustrating a particular aspect of organizational climate and how it might impact on performance. Each narrative is genuine, in the sense that I, or a colleague, have actually seen the incidents and situations in a real organization, or received a first-hand account from someone directly involved. However, to make them more useful to the reader I have simplified what are often fairly complex accounts and in some cases I've combined features from more than one organization. Most of the narratives are what I would call fairly low key; there are no cases of drastic re-engineering or dramatic corporate failures. Redundancies, where they occur at all, are relatively modest in scale. In short, these stories reflect everyday organizational life as experienced by many people. I've had one or two similar experiences myself.

Also, all the narratives are set in England, mostly in south-east England where I live and do the majority of my work. The principles contained in them, though,

are universal. Cultures differ and this has effects on the expectations individuals have of their workplaces and the conditions that they will find most comfortable (Trompenaars and Woolliams, 2003), but this is largely a matter of 'fine-tuning'; in general the ideas expressed here can be applied with very little modification almost anywhere.

Needless to say, all the names I have used in the narratives are fictitious and none of the accounts as I present them accurately reflects any one existing organization.

THE ESSENTIALS OF THIS CHAPTER:

- Organizational climate is a metaphor.
- Like real (meteorological) climate it has measurable characteristics but the real point is what it's like for the people who live and work in it. Organizational climate means 'what it feels like to work here'.
- Individuals have different needs, but there are characteristics of organizational climate which are likely to suit most people most of the time.
- Some organizational climates are more likely than others to be associated with successful work outcomes.
- Managers can influence the climate of their organizations, or their part of the wider organization.

2

Climate, culture and perception

Central to most, if not all, models of organizational behavior are perceptions of the work environment, referred to generally as 'organizational climate'.

Patterson et al., ***What is it Like to Work Here? The Climate of UK Manufacturing,*** **1996**

When the term 'organizational climate' first began to appear in management literature it was often used almost interchangeably with 'culture', as when Porter, Lawler and Hackman (1975) wrote about '. . . organizational climate or "culture" – a set of customs and typical patterns of ways of doing things'. Denison (1996) suggests that a kind of reversal in the terminology took place so that studies which talked about 'climate' in the 1970s would be thought of as addressing 'culture' by the late 80s. It's important to distinguish between the two concepts because, although related, they focus on quite distinct aspects of organizational life and, crucially, managers can have more influence on climate than they can on culture: 'climate is held to be a summary perception of how an organisation deals with its members and environments, and thus develops from factors primarily under managerial influence' (Wallace, Hunt and Richards, 1999).

Although it's quite reasonable to argue that 'climate can most accurately be understood as a manifestation of culture' (Reichers and Schneider, 1990) the two concepts, culture and climate, are distinct, whilst being clearly related in various ways:

> the 'feel of an organization' reflects both its *climate* and *culture*. The climate of an organization is inferred by its members . . . . The inferences organizational members make about climate are based on the policies, practices, procedures and routines that they are subject to, as well as on the kinds of behaviors that are expected and that get rewarded and supported.
>
> Schneider, Brief and Guzzo, 1996

Burke and Litwin (1992) point out that 'climate is much more in the foreground of organizational members' perceptions, whereas culture is more background and defined by beliefs and values. Climate is of course affected by culture and people's perceptions define both at different levels'. In fact, 'climate and culture are viewed as reciprocal processes, the one causing the other in an endless cycle over time' (Reichers and Schneider, 1990), which I regard as a rather wise observation.

First, organizational culture is often summed up as 'the way we do things round here' although I think Lucas (2006) adds a little to this meaning when he says that it's 'generally agreed to be a combination of values (what matters to people) and expectations of behaviour (the way things are done). It is, you could say, what an organisation does when it thinks no one is looking'.

The term 'culture' itself is borrowed from the science of anthropology and began to appear in management literature in the 1970s (Despres, 1995). Writers have used the term with different meanings even within the context of management (Baron and Walters, 1994) and anthropologists might wince at the ways some of their core concepts have been applied (Meek, 1988). One thing which most writers seem to agree about is the idea of distinctiveness; that 'the way we do things' is somehow different from the way someone else might do them. This draws attention to observable characteristics of behaviour in organizations, but it does rather invite the question *why* do we do things this way? Culture researchers have been trying to answer this question pretty much from the beginning.

The broad conclusion has been that organizational culture develops through social learning mechanisms (Schein, 1985; Kilman et al., 1985; Hofstede, 1991). These accumulated experiences build on original models put in place (consciously or not) by the organization's founders and the context in which the organization was set up, in much the same way as the personality of an individual forms and develops through the interactions of genetics and life experiences (Rose, 2003). Actions and behaviours which are associated with favourable outcomes tend to be repeated, and eventually become behavioural norms. Underlying assumptions become established in a similar way.

Because cultures become established through a process of development, it follows that they are not static, but go on developing under the same pattern of influences. This gives managers the idea that culture can be changed according to some strategy or plan. On the whole this is an illusion. Whilst writers generally agree that planned culture change is a theoretical possibility, there's fairly wide consensus that it's a long, slow, laborious task with uncertain outcomes (Trice and Beyer, 1985; Baron and Walters, 1994), leaving aside the really quite tricky question of what kind of culture would be 'better' than the one you've got. 'After countless research studies there's precious little evidence that it can be manipulated, no clear guidelines showing how to do it, and no real proof that a new culture leads to better business results' (Manning, 1990). I won't go any deeper into organizational culture here. Readers who are interested in an academic review of the literature can look at Gray (1998) or find a less formal account in Gray (2004).

The distinction between climate and culture arises from two mutually reinforcing threads. First, one of perspective. Culture – the way things are done – can, in theory at least, be observed by an objective outsider without reference to the participants. Some writers have suggested that this is the only useful level at which culture can be studied, because the underlying reasons *why* things are done are too deeply buried to be accurately identified (see, for example, Morgan, 1986, or Schein, 1985), and too complex to be disentangled. Culture, therefore, refers to impressions gained from the outside, looking in, whilst climate refers to the feelings someone on the inside has about the organizational context in which they find themselves.

Second, once the terminology had settled down it began to become apparent that researchers were often approaching their subjects from quite different disciplinary paradigms. According to Williams (1998) 'whilst the constructs of culture and climate have developed in parallel, they have been driven by researchers from different disciplines using different methodologies. There has been little cross-fertilisation of methods and ideas and considerable debate among researchers about the relatedness of the two constructs'. Climate studies have mainly been conducted from an individually-focused psychological orientation, concerned principally with personal values and attitudes and explainable in terms of personality and individual experience.

Culture studies, in contrast, have been mainly anthropological in character, if not always in formal discipline. Their 'frame of organizational reference is group understanding … or ways of perceiving, thinking or feeling in relation to a group's problems' (Williams, 1998). In fact, one criticism that has often been levelled at organizational culture writers, including such eminent figures as Edgar Schein, is their tendency to extrapolate observations of small groups and apply their findings to much larger organizational sets (Hollway, 1991).

Another characteristic of the anthropological approach in the context of organizations and management is that the 'purpose of anthropology is to observe/describe' (Reichers and Schneider, 1990); it isn't primarily concerned with relative effectiveness of one culture compared with another. Since the main justification for researching (and teaching) organizational culture is to contribute to improved effectiveness this could be considered a potential weakness.

Still, it would be wrong to exaggerate the divergence between the two fields of study. It's true that psychological constructs, primarily those constructs that relate to group behaviour, do figure prominently in culture studies. At the same time, a number of writers on organizational climate have also tended towards a group

perspective, defining their topic as 'shared perceptions' (Reichers and Schneider, 1990). This is understandable because it's difficult to talk about an *organizational* climate that is experienced as such by only one person; to be meaningful, or at any rate to be useful, what we learn about the climate has to be generalized so that it applies to a significant number of people or even to the whole organization.

However, I take the view that in this context it isn't the *sharing* which is the vital factor, because each individual's perceptions of the prevailing climate are and remain his or her own and not part of some collective phenomenon. Rather, the climate which we can perceive and, perhaps, change in positive ways is a construct of the *aggregated* individual perceptions of the people involved, 'a synthesis of perceptions' (Sparrow, 2001) or as Litwin and Stringer, who were among the earliest researchers of climate as a separate phenomenon, put it: 'the sum of the perceptions of the individuals working in [an] organization' (Litwin and Stringer, 1968).

Thus, if we were to model the climate perceptions of each person and plot them on a graph, then overlay all the graphs one on top of another, the collective description of the climate would be that central section of the bell-shaped curve which represented a broad consensus among the subjects of the enquiry. This 'high level of consensus' is very difficult to achieve (Payne, 2001), which is not surprising if we accept that climate is a construct of individual perceptions, and at best it provides a starting point, a kind of base camp from which to explore the complexities of climate and performance in any particular organization.

So, although I have emphasized the importance of individual perceptions in modelling and assessing climate, it is important to remember that when we talk about organizational climate we are usually referring to the sum or aggregate product of those perceptions, making climate 'an attribute of the *organization*' (Ekvall, 1996, my use of italic for emphasis), rather than simply of individual members of it. It's here that the climate metaphor, like all metaphors, reaches a limit of useful meaning.

Meteorological climate isn't a product of the perceptions of the inhabitants of a region; its characteristics would still be the same even if there were no people there to experience them. Organizational climate, in contrast, exists only as a psychological construct – a product of 'a conglomerate of attitudes, feelings, and behaviours which characterizes life in the organization' (Ekvall, 1996). I disagree with Ekvall when he goes on to say that climate 'exists independently of the perceptions and understandings of the members of the organization' although, as with other group norms, certain patterns of behaviour can outlast any – or indeed all – those individuals who make up the membership of the organization at any particular time (as shown by Jacobs and Campbell, 1961). This is partly why Tagiuri and