

The Importance of Culture: Evidence and Practice

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What do I mean by “culture”?

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Observable



Unobservable

← Stories,
Jargon,
Metaphors,
Artifacts

← Norms

← Values

← Beliefs and
Assumptions

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SPOTLIGHT ON THE EMOTIONAL ORGANIZATION

SPOTLIGHT

ARTWORK Paul Vézina, *Orbit Series*, 2010
Aluminum (found card), wire, plywood, vinyl paint



MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONAL CULTURE

Most leaders focus on how employees think and behave—but feelings matter just as much. *by Sigal Barsade and Olivia A. O'Neill*

■ Harvard Business Review January-February 2016

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Observable



Unobservable



Facial expressions
Stories,
Jargon,
Metaphors,
Artifacts



Norms,
Rituals



Values



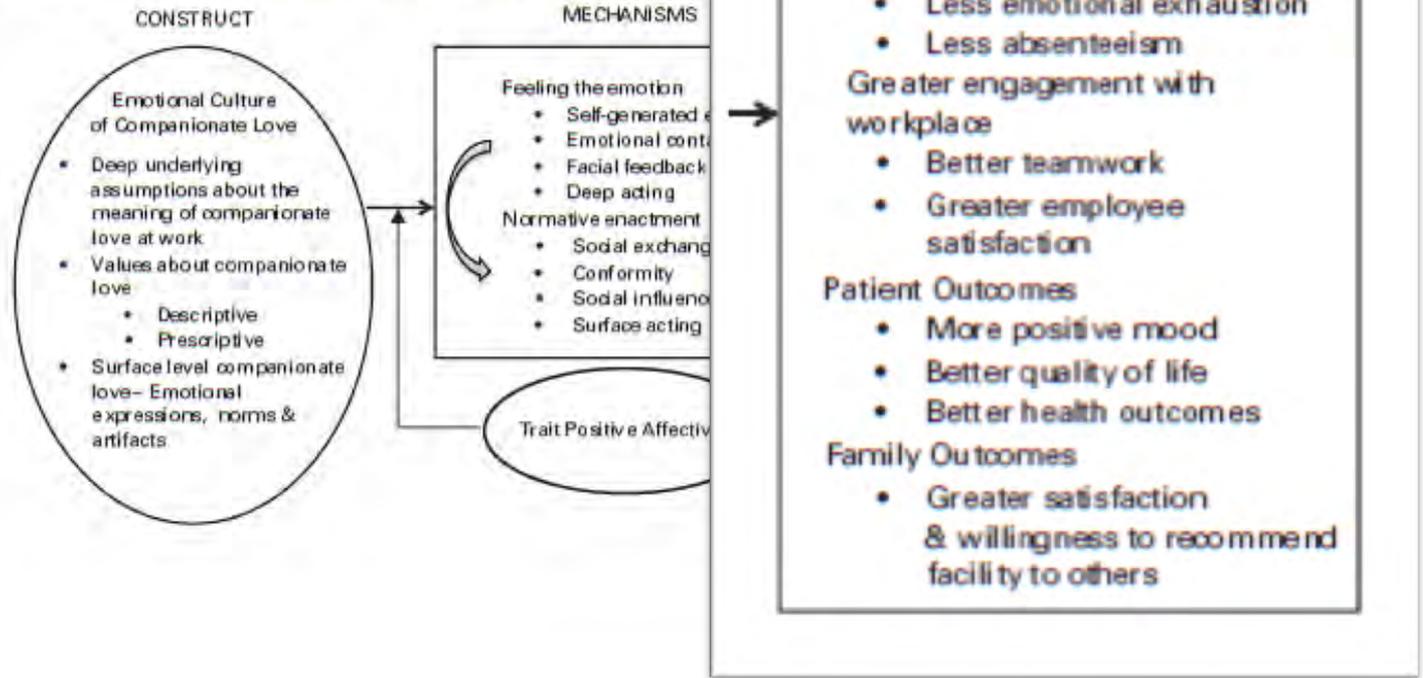
Beliefs,
Assumptions



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So what?

Figure 1. Theoretical model of emotional culture of companionate love.



Source: Barsade & O'Neill (2014)

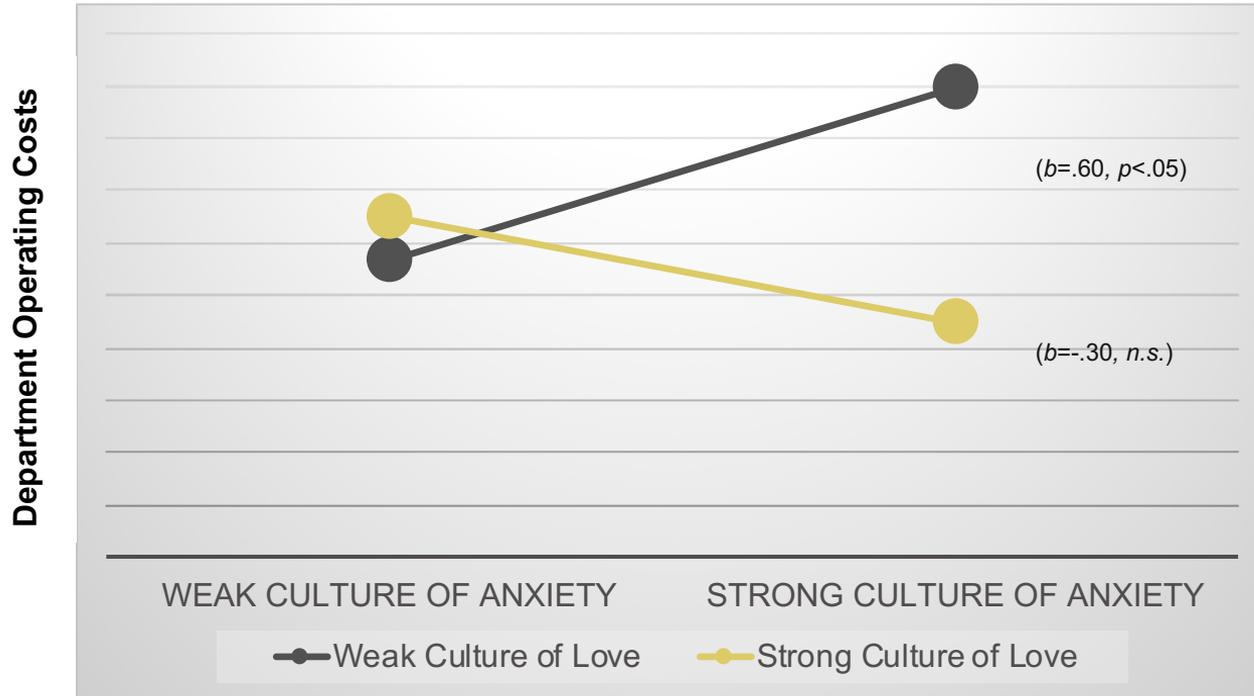


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Is there a place for caring (“love”) in competitive, results-oriented companies and industries?



Effects of Anxiety and Caring (“Love”) on Department Operating Costs





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“And the reason I used the term “family” was because we are kind of like family. We had a great camaraderie. We were probably like brothers and sisters, a lot of us. Really strong core, we did a lot of things outside of work together. Till this day a lot of us still do. [...] And obviously you’ve got special bonds...it’s like brothers and sisters, because we pick on each other. We fight, but we still have a camaraderie and when the tough comes around...That’s always been something that we’ve done as a corporation. We always seem to pull together when there is a big issue and hammer through it, work it up.”

-- Senior Staff Test Engineer,
Global Semiconductor Firm, U.S.



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Can we go from “caring” to “inclusive”?



Culture of Inclusion

- Different from hiring quotas or mandates
 - Easier for successful firms
 - Unintended consequences
- Desire for impact
 - A seat at the table is not enough
 - The dance metaphor
- Importance of authenticity
 - Not being required to hide how you really feel
 - Fit with personal values and convictions
 - Meaningful activities and behaviors



Challenges

- Necessary evils and the need for “tough love”
 - Having difficult conversations
 - Sanctioning bad behavior
 - Delivering negative feedback
 - Letting people go
- Maintaining a positive culture as it grows and changes
 - Financial pressures
 - Bureaucratic structures and systems
 - Rapid hiring, growth
 - Leader transitions
 - Changing norms and regulations



Top management: craft the vision and provide the resources

- Create a vision to cultivate and manage emotional culture
- Provide the resources (financial, psychological) for desired culture

Managers: Model the behavior you want to see

- Leaders drive rules, rituals, and practices
- Leaders' emotions disproportionately influence the culture (e.g., through emotional contagion)

HR: Hire the right people, hold people accountable

- Creating job interview questions that give an indication of whether employees would complement or detract from desired culture
- Create performance appraisal measures that assess behaviors that support or undermine desired culture

Individual contributors: Maintain or create desired culture through small acts and micro-moments



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What does it take to be successful?



1. Establish the business case in moral and monetary (\$) terms

- Cultivate or seize onto a sense of urgency
- Provide “hard” evidence and a strong rationale

2. Partner with change agents outside HR

- Establish greater credibility by having line managers in other functions involved (e.g., Investment, Risk, Operations)

3. Select middle managers carefully and partner closely with them

- Encourage face-to-face interactions whenever possible
- Send HQ representatives frequently to distributed sites

4. Cultivate a meaningful and authentic corporate culture that can be understood embodied across people and cultural differences

- Example: BigTech (on coming to any BigTech site around the world): “It’s like coming home...”

5. Encourage and respect local norms, rituals, and routines that are consistent with overarching corporate culture

- e.g., Company-sponsored off-sites that promote high-quality connections



grat·i·tude

/ˈgrədə,t(y)ōod/

noun

the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.

"she expressed her gratitude to the committee for their support"

synonyms: gratefulness, thankfulness, [thanks](#), [appreciation](#), indebtedness; [More](#)

Questions? Suggestions? Collaborations?



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