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ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND: MYTHS AND REALITIES

Huston, Brian R.

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THESIS

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND: MYTHS AND REALITIES

by

Brian R. Huston

June 2018

Thesis Advisor:	Sean F. Everton
Co-Advisor:	Edward H. Powley IV

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For 40 years a large amount of literature has concluded that organizational culture and innovation are closely linked. This thesis uses a prominent organizational culture diagnostic tool, the organizational culture assessment instrument, to map the organizational culture of Air Force Special Operations Command operational units and determine if the organization is naturally inclined to innovate. This study, conducted over a period of six weeks, concludes that Air Force special operations personnel believe their organization has a culture that is not inclined to innovate.

This thesis compares and contrasts a theory of the historic Air Commandos' organizational culture with a modern-day empirical analysis of Air Commando culture today. It illuminates potential conflicts in narratives and sources of organizational pain. It also uses the data collected to inform leadership of the tendencies of the current and desired organizational culture. Finally, it provides suggestions for further research to expand knowledge regarding organizational culture and innovation in special operations.

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**ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS
COMMAND: MYTHS AND REALITIES**

Brian R. Huston
Major, United States Air Force
BA, Northern Arizona University, 2004
MBA, University of Phoenix, 2012

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
June 2018**

Approved by: Sean F. Everton
                Advisor

                Edward H. Powley IV
                Co-Advisor

                John J. Arquilla
                Chair, Department of Defense Analysis

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ABSTRACT

For 40 years a large amount of literature has concluded that organizational culture and innovation are closely linked. This thesis uses a prominent organizational culture diagnostic tool, the organizational culture assessment instrument, to map the organizational culture of Air Force Special Operations Command operational units and determine if the organization is naturally inclined to innovate. This study, conducted over a period of six weeks, concludes that Air Force special operations personnel believe their organization has a culture that is not inclined to innovate.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFSOC	Air Force Special Operations Command
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COIN	Counter-Insurgency
CT	Counter-Terrorism
CVF	Competing Values Framework
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance
OCAI-CP	Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument-Current Profile
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
SOF	Special Operations Forces
WWII	World War II

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I.   INTRODUCTION

A.   THE AIR COMMANDOS OF TODAY

Across six of the seven continents, America's Air Commandos from Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) are deployed or on temporary duty, performing the full range of Special Operations Missions. These missions range from small-scale partner development and interoperability exercises in Europe and Asia to full-spectrum combat operations in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. These Air Commandos have been at the tip of the spear in America's conflicts since 9/11 with a force that has consistently deployed to fight our nation's wars. The modern Air Commandos include over 19,500 service members, both on active duty and serving in the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve.[1] AFSOC operates a variety of aircraft including the CV-22B, MC-130H/J, AC-130J/U/W, EC-130, MQ-9, U-28A, C-145, and C-146. AFSOC also includes a variety of other personnel and teams providing battlefield airspace control, surgical team capabilities, and combat weather teams.[2]

During the last 17 years of sustained conflict, AFSOC has evolved to meet the requirements to fight extended counterinsurgency (COIN) and counterterrorism (CT) campaigns. This has involved expanding intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capability as well as increasing the availability of special tactics personnel to support special operations missions. This expansion of forces has involved rapidly fielding new technologies to create a more lethal force able to fight the enemy with precision on a level never before known in American combat operations. However, the focus on COIN and CT operations, while paying great dividends to the increasing the lethality of the force, has come at a cost. The COIN and CT fights have been conducted primarily in locations where no credible threat to AFSOC aircraft existed. Except for the initial rounds of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, AFSOC aircraft have been to operate with impunity. The ability to

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[1] Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), "Air Force Special Operations Command Fact Sheet," accessed April 11, 2018, http://www.afsoc.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/162540/air-force-special-operations-command/.

[2] AFSOC, "Air Force Special Operations Command Fact Sheet."

operate this way has led to more focus on what the current campaigns required and less focus on fighting in denied or less permissive environments. However, tensions with various countries including North Korea, Iran, China, and a resurgent Russia now require a shift in focus and resources.

B.   EMERGING THREATS AND THE NEED FOR INNOVATION

The 21st century is a volatile time in several parts of the world. Despite 17 years of conflict, the Middle East is, arguably, at its least stable point since the end of World War II. Iranian nuclear ambitions and the density of Iranian anti-air threat systems demonstrate the need to focus on new technologies to ensure survivability of AFSOC aircraft and personnel should a conflict in that country occur. Likewise, North Korea's well-known nuclear ambitions and missile testing programs create grave concerns on the Korean peninsula with a robust, though not modern, anti-aircraft defense force. China's expansion and territorial ambitions in the South China Sea and the construction of militarized islands in the region challenge freedom of navigation and access for all countries in that region, including the United States and its allies. Finally, a resurgent Russia has demonstrated it will not be ignored, mounting actions in Crimea, Eastern Ukraine, and Syria where is has deployed its most advanced aircraft and anti-aircraft systems.

Modern threat systems have outpaced the defensive technologies designed to defeat them. While a detailed discussion of this is not permissible in this study, it should be sufficient to acknowledge that anti-access and area denial systems have proved to be a cheaper alternative for countries that cannot afford or do not have the technology to counter U.S. air power. However, the presence of these systems does not change the threats they are protecting. The U.S. and its allies must innovate to counter these threats should diplomatic efforts fail to deter potential aggressors from acting against our interests. The question that remains is this: How is AFSOC postured to innovate to counter these threats in the 21st century? The answer to this question can be answered in large part as to whether or not AFSOC's organizational culture is inclined to support innovation.

C. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, METHODOLOGY, AND INNOVATION

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, researchers began looking at successful companies to discover what made them successful. Unfortunately, each organization studied resulted in a different list of factors or variables. This led Robert E. Quinn and John Rohrbaugh to question researchers not on the results of the individual studies, but on the assumptions behind the studies.[3] Their research resulted in the creation of a map upon which it seemed researchers used as a theoretical framework for identifying an organization's underlying values.[4] They named this framework the Competing Values Framework (CVF) because they discovered that it was not uncommon for organizations to value competing traits. While this may seem contradictory, it comes down the degree that these values are present. For example, an organization can value stability and control for its personnel but also desire expansion and adaptation, the only remaining question is which trait is valued more dominantly.

The CVF created a diagram that contrasted opposite values along two axes. The first axis is internal focus versus external focus. The second axis is flexible versus control. This research was expanded to include the four culture types commonly recognized today: Clan, Adhocracy, Market, and Hierarchy culture types. Research has found innovation in organizations of every culture type. However, the most effective innovation is found in organizations with a Clan or Adhocracy dominant culture.[5] Further research used the CVF to create survey instruments to measure dominant traits to determine culture types in organizations.

This research uses two methods to analyze Air Commando organizational culture. The first is a review of the historic Air Commandos to analyze what their organizational values were. To some extent, modern Air Commando culture should be derived from the

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[3] Robert E. Quinn, *Beyond Rational Management* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1988), 47.

[4] Quinn, 47.

[5] Thorsten Buschgens and Andreas Bausch, "Organizational Culture and Innovation: A Meta-Analytic Review," *Journal of Product Innovation Management* 30, no. 4 (July 2013): 763–81. 763.

historic Air Commandos, though organizational culture is expected to change over time.[6] The second method used in this research is the employment of a survey tool known as the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument-Current Profile (OCAI-CP). Kim S. Cameron and Robert E. Quinn created this survey tool to assess organizational culture based on the CVF and, according to Santoriello, the OCAI-CP "is the most extensively used, tested and validated instrument for assessing organizational culture."[7]

D.   COMPETING HYPOTHESES AND EXPECTED RESULTS

The initial research for this project led to formulating three competing hypotheses and uncovered one apparent inconsistency in the form of AFSOC narratives. The first hypothesis is derived from the historical study of Air Commando cultural values. While the original Air Commandos (considered those Air Commandos from WWII through the Vietnam conflict) cannot be surveyed en masse, it is possible to examine historical studies and derive conclusions. The conclusions derived from this study support the claim that the historical Air Commandos likely valued Clan or Adhocracy dominant cultures. Chapter II of the thesis explores this in detail. The second hypothesis for consideration applies a known phenomenon in organizational culture research to the first hypothesis.

In their research, Cameron and Quinn observed that "new or small organizations tend to progress through a predictable pattern of organization culture changes."[8] This pattern of culture change shows organizations gravitating to Market or Hierarchy dominant cultures.[9] If one were to apply this predictable pattern change to the historical culture of the Air Commandos, then the results of this research would find a Market or Hierarchy dominant culture type. The final hypothesis for consideration comes from previous research conducted on similar organizations.

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[6] Kim S. Cameron and Robert E. Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture: Based on the Competing Values Framework* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 53.

[7] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture.* 23*;* Anthony John Santoriello, "Assessing Unique Core Values with the Competing Values Framework: The CCVI Technique for Guiding Organizational Culture Change" (PhD Diss.,Portland State University, 2015), 1.

[8] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture.* 53.

[9] Cameron and Quinn. 53.

Research on government and public administration organizations reveal strong dominance in the Hierarchy quadrant.[10] This should come as no surprise given that government organizations are inherently designed for control and bureaucracies are internally focused. Therefore, this hypothesis predicts that AFSOC has a Hierarchy dominant culture type.

Having defined the competing hypotheses, I expect the results of this research to support hypothesis number two. That AFSOC has morphed into a Market or Hierarchy dominant culture type. The historical Air Commandos maintain Clan and Adhocracy cultures because they were formed and disbanded several times from World War II until the 1980s. Modern AFSOC is credited with forming between 1983 and 1988 depending on the book you read. After 30 years of existence and massive growth, it is logical to assume the organizational culture has morphed as research demonstrates it should.

E.   CONCLUSION

This thesis examines the organizational culture of AFSOC to determine its inclination to innovate. The flow of this thesis includes a literature review of the historic Air Commandos and their culture; as well as a review of literature on organizational culture and innovation. Chapter III reviews the study of organizational culture and various methodologies including an in-depth review of the methodology for this research. The next chapter is the results of the survey, implications of the results, and a suggestion for how to innovate with the organizational culture of AFSOC. This thesis will conclude with a summary of the research and recommendations for future studies.

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[10] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture,* 69.

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II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

A.   OVERVIEW

This chapter's goal is to explore the history of AFSOC and the concept of organizational culture and innovation. Some part of every organizations' culture is derived from the history of the organization, or at least how an organization views its history. Understanding historical narratives associated with the Air Commandos and contrasting that with the OCAI-CP will help illuminate any rifts between the narrative and the organizational culture, which could cause organizational pain. A review of prominent theory regarding organizational culture and innovation contributes to this work by scoping what organizations can focus on to encourage innovation.

B.   HISTORICAL AFSOC AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The history of AFSOC is rife with creation of units in wartime and their disbanding in peacetime. From WWII through Vietnam, and some authors say even beyond, most units tasked with conducting air special operations were disbanded.[11] The repetitive cycle of creation and destruction creates a historical picture of highly innovative organizations. Orr Kelly, in his work *From a Dark Sky: The Story of U.S. Air Force Special Operations,* found himself amazed that the history of Air Force Special Operations so often focuses on the resourcefulness and innovation of the individuals or groups of individuals.[12] Similarly, Hoffman found in his thesis that innovation and creativity were more important for the historical air commandos than technology or other factors.[13] When you start from nothing it is easy to understand why the founders of special operations units had to be creative and innovative.

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[11] Philip D Chinnery, *Any Time, Any Place : Fifty Years of the USAF Air Commando and Special Operations Forces, 1944–1994* (Annapolis, MD.: Naval Institute Press, 1994).

[12] Orr Kelly, *From a Dark Sky: The Story of U.S. Air Force Special Operations* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1996), ix.

[13] Justin Hoffman, "'To Hell with the Paperwork:' Deciphering the Culture of the Air Commandos" (Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2008), v.

1.   1st Air Commando Group

This lengthy history of innovation begins with John Alison and Phil Cochran in World War II in the China-Burma-India Theater supporting the British forces there. Long before the Normandy invasion would make gliders and airborne assault forces famous, Alison and Cochran were perfecting glider operations deep into enemy territory during Operation Thursday with the British Chindits.[14] Alison and Cochran had 346 aircraft and only 523 personnel assigned to their command. This is approximately one quarter of what a standard United States Army Air Corps unit should have according to doctrine in WWII.[15] To overcome personnel shortfalls, all of their personnel would have multiple jobs. In perhaps one of the substantive events displaying adaptation of the unit, pilots of Alison's and Cochran's discovered a large contingent of Japanese aircraft sitting on several airfields. After exhausting all of the ammunition in their P-51 Mustangs, the pilots went back to base and jumped in their B-25 bombers to return to the airfields to finish off the sitting Japanese aircraft.[16] While it was not unheard of in WWII for pilots to qualify in different aircraft, it would have been very rare for frontline combat units to have pilots qualified and actively flying fighter, bomber, and transport aircraft. Finally, Alison and Cochran were the first to employ helicopters, a new technology at the time, on the battlefield in a search and rescue role with their four YR-4s.[17] While Alison and Cochran were innovating and terrorizing the Japanese in the Pacific theater, another group of Air Commandos was trying to do the same thing in the European Theater.

2.   The Carpetbaggers

The formation of the carpetbaggers in the European Theater in WWII is perhaps the earliest example of a long history of the friction between conventional air forces and Air Force Special Operations.[18] The precursor to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA),

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[14] Kelly, *From a Dark Sky*, 26.

[15] Kelly, 18; Chinnery, *"Any Time, Any Place,"* 18.

[16] Kelly, 29.

[17] Kelly, 31.

[18] Kelly, 43.

the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), requested USAAF support for operations in the European Theater. At the time, the British were already running some special operations missions into Europe, using their own Air Forces. The OSS wanted to support partisan elements in Axis-occupied territories and needed air support for insertion and resupply of these forces. There was little support for these operations from the established Air Force headquarters at the time.[19] However, the OSS ultimately prevailed, and a unit known as the "Carpetbaggers" began supporting them in Europe. Often flying alone, these aircrews did not have the protection of fighter escorts or the comfort of massive bomber formations. Consequently, they developed new and innovative tactics, flying low to the ground, alone, and at night to hide from enemy fighters and air defense artillery.[20]

The carpetbaggers developed these tactics and modified their aircraft to conduct personnel airdrop and resupply missions. On occasion, they would even land their aircraft behind enemy lines to resupply partisan forces. They were equipped with B-24 and B-25 bombers, C-47 cargo planes, and eventually gained a few DH.98 Mosquitos from the British. None of these aircraft were purposefully built for special operations and all had to be modified for carpetbagger missions. The carpetbaggers also developed different procedures for mission approval than other bomber units in the European Theater. They were allowed to choose what missions they flew and what missions they rejected at the Group level. No other Group in the Eighth Air Force enjoyed this measure of autonomy.[21] WWII, however, would not be the last time ad hoc special operations capability was built in the Air Forces.

3.   Post World War II and Korea

Following WWII, Air Force special operations capability was reduced to almost nothing. The start of the Korean War would mark a drastic change in the formation of special operations. While Heinie Aderholt was running around Korea flying cargo and passengers everywhere no one else would fly, the newly formed United States Air Force

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[19] Kelly, *From a Dark Sky,* 43.

[20] Kelly, 48.

[21] Kelly, 50.

embarked down an interesting and short-lived path to developing special operations capability.

Brigadier General (ret) Heinie Aderholt, sometimes referred to by the call sign "Air Commando One," is one of the more colorful founders of the modern Air Commandos. His exploits in Korea and Vietnam conducting special operations are legendary in the special operations community. Aderholt commanded a detachment of C-47s in Korea.[22] His parent unit was based in Japan, and many times the airplanes would fly to Korea to complete their missions and fly back to Japan the same day. Other times the airplanes would remain in Korea to fly until the crews were ready for a break and then return to Japan.[23] Aderholt would later recall at the time "I was taking all comers…If they wanted something done I did it."[24] Aderholt flew missions parachuting Korean agents behind enemy lines not only in Korea, but also into China. His unit also developed an ingenious method for tracking enemy forces after the Chinese intervention. They would provide the agents they airdropped with different colors of smoke grenades and fly their airplanes over their assigned areas. Whatever color smoke they observed would tell them if the Chinese or North Koreans or even Allied units had passed through their area.[25] While Aderholt would leave Korea and go on to fly for the CIA until Vietnam, the Air Force attempted to formalize special operations in a worthwhile, yet ultimately abandoned expansion of special operations capability. [26]

During the Korean War, the Air Force decided to formalize special operations into six wings of 6,000 personnel each.[27] These combat wings would not only perform psychological operations, but also aerial resupply of ground forces. While a seemingly innocuous term, the personnel charged with forming these new units meant they would be performing the same types of missions as the carpetbaggers and air commandos of

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[22] Kelly, *From a Dark Sky,* 104.

[23] Kelly, 112.

[24] Kelly, 104.

[25] Kelly, 106.

[26] Kelly, 111–118.

[27] A wing is the Air Force equivalent to an Army Brigade.

WWII.[28] Unfortunately, budget cuts after the Korean War forced the Air Force to dismantle its special operations units, and the Air Resupply and Communications Service Wings disappeared.

4. Vietnam and Beyond

Aderholt continued in special operations throughout the Vietnam conflict working closely with both the CIA and Special Operations units in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Under his leadership the first gunship aircraft were developed, much to the dislike of the bomber generals running the Air Force at the time.[29] During Vietnam and afterwards, Air Force Special Operations were formalized and not dismantled, though Air Commandos were aligned under conventional Air Force commands, both Military Airlift Command and Tactical Air Command at different times.[30] The aftermath of the Iran hostage rescue failure in 1980 spurred Congress into action and a realignment of the U.S. military saw the creation of both U.S. Special Operations Command and its subordinate commands, including Air Force Special Operations Command. For the first time since the Air Commandos started in Burma, they finally had their own command to call home.

5. Organizational Culture and Values in the Air Commandos

In Hoffman's thesis, he identified three key themes for the historic Air Commandos which he described this way:

> The shared beliefs and basic assumptions of the Air Commandos uncovered over the course of this study are: Humans are the most critical resources in an organization; innovation, improvisation, and adaptation are more important than advanced technology; successful mission accomplishment is more important than adherence to standard military conventions.[31]

Portions of these values are still included in the narratives of AFSOC today but may not be reflected in the underlying values that create modern Air Commando culture. The

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[28] Kelly, *From a Dark Sky,* 113.

[29] Kelly, 155.

[30] Chinnery, *Any Time, Any Place*, 233.

[31] Hoffman, "'To Hell with the Paperwork:' Deciphering the Culture of the Air Commandos." 67.

historic Air Commandos (almost by default through frequent creation and destruction) appear much more clan or adhocracy dominant organizations, shown in Figure 1, than AFSOC today, where so often the focus is on results and productivity. It is not possible to determine with absolute certainty what a profile of the historic Air Commandos valued, but the research in this thesis and others indicates a culture much more focused on people and innovation to create results. It is also apparent that the Air Commandos of the past were never in existence long enough for the organizations culture to change as expected.
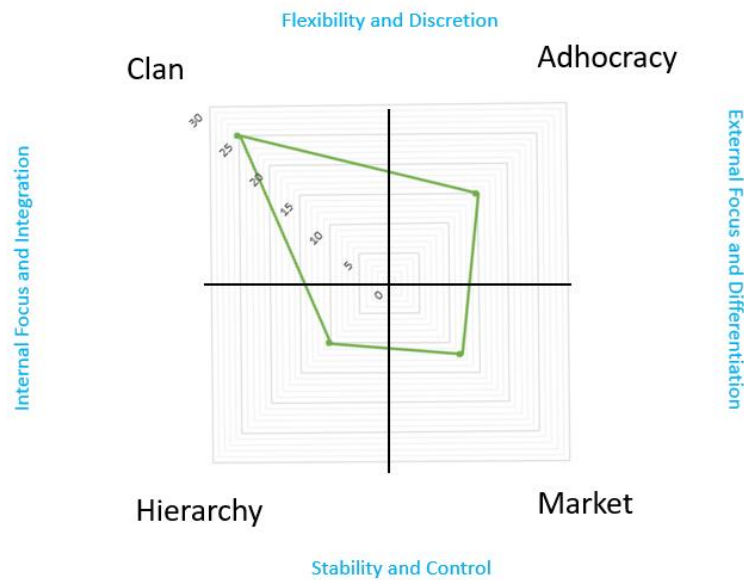
Figure 1.   Possible Historic Air Commandos Profile

It is possible that 30 years after the formal creation of AFSOC and after 17 years unrelenting combat operations, the organizational culture has adapted to the circumstances. Today it appears AFSOC is a results driven organization led by hard-charging high-performing individuals. This would indicate a more market dominant organization. AFSOC has also experienced a large amount of growth since 2001. This measure of growth requires increased command and control mechanisms, which may have also driven a trend toward the hierarchy quadrant of culture.

C.   ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND INNOVATION

In the wake of the rise of tech giants in the 1990s continuing through to present day, there is much literature concerning organizational culture and innovation. A common definition of innovation is 1) "the introduction of something new" 2) "a new idea, method, or device."[32] But what fosters the greatest innovation in organizations and other groups?

1.   Innovation and Culture

There is a great amount of research on how organizations innovate and foster an environment conducive to innovation. There seems to be consensus that innovation in an organization requires three criteria to be met. The first is an organizational culture conducive to innovation. The second is an organizational structure that encourages innovation. Finally, the organization must have processes in place to turn ideas into action to realize innovation.[33] Other authors claim that innovation is more about people than structure.[34] It is important to note that some of these are linked very closely. Organizational culture is partly determined by how the organization views people and what behaviors are encouraged or discouraged.

2.   Leaders and People

The creation of an organizational culture conducive to innovation is leadership. In the information age, we have seen the rise of Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg and other highly successful individuals. These individuals possess great creativity and vision for certain, but that may not be enough to create an innovative and successful company. There may be a misperception that visionary companies inspire innovation. However, Francis Horibe proposes that visionary companies can stifle innovation purely because they already have their goal and may shun any innovations

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[32] *Merriam-Webster, s.v "Innovation" Accessed 1 June 2018,* https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/innovation.

[33] Kazuaki Ikeda and Anthony Marshall, "How Successful Organizations Drive Innovation," *Strategy & Leadership* 44, no. 3 (2016): 9–19; Rob Cross et al., "How to Catalyze Innovation in Your Organization," *MIT Sloan Management Review* 58, no. 4 (2017): 39–47.

[34] Frances Horibe, *Creating the Innovation Culture : Leveraging Visionaries, Dissenters and Other Useful Troublemakers in Your Organization* (Toronto : John Wiley & Sons, 2001), 6–7.

outside of achieving the goal.[35] In fact, in a number of conceivably innovative companies the chief innovator is the leader of the company, and the teams and managers underneath only drive the machine enabling innovations already created.[36] Horibe is a proponent of three groups of people every organization needs to innovate: "The troublemakers, the visionaries, [and] the dissenters."[37]

What do these supposedly disruptive employees bring that incites innovation? First and foremost, these employees are less likely to be influenced by the group or corporate culture and are more likely to be innovative.[38] The dissenter can challenge the group into thinking in ways that would be taboo if no dissenter were present.[39] This may seem like an invitation to conflict, but Ronald Heifetz from Harvard addresses this problem by saying, "Companies tend to be allergic to conflict…but conflict is the primary engine of creativity and innovation."[40] While focusing on individuals, Horibe is more importantly writing about how tolerance of dissenters is a central part of creating an organizational culture that encourages innovation.

3. Organizational Structure and Innovation

Another theory is that companies need to create a distributed structure for innovation that focuses on innovative teams linked through various individuals.[41] This structure requires brokers, energizers, and central connectors to enable collaboration between teams and to operationalize ideas.[42] This concept places importance on organizational structure and innovative teams, but recognizes that certain key personnel

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[35] Horibe, *Creating the Innovation Culture,* 12–13.

[36] Horibe, 13.

[37] Horibe, 25.

[38] Horibe, 28.

[39] Horibe, 28.

[40] Ronald Heifitz quoted in I Frances Horibe, "*Creating the Innovation Culture,*" 25.

[41] Rob Cross et al., "How to Catalyze Innovation in Your Organization," *MIT Sloan Management Review 58*, no. 4 (2017): 39–47.

[42] Cross et al, How to Catalyze Innovation, 41.

are critical to controlling the processes by which the organization manages innovation. The concept of structure is a recurring theme in the research on innovation in organizations.

One of the more interesting works on organizational structure is *The Starfish and the Spider* by Ori Brafman and Rod Beckstrom. The central tenet of this book is that the greatest innovations occur in highly decentralized organizations.[43] They include among their many examples the development of peer-to-peer media sharing software ultimately culminating in eMule, which was largely done by different individuals adapting software to circumvent the numerous legal challenges by the music industry. The authors also include an analysis of Jack Welch's tenure as CEO of GE where he shed any business that was not in the top one or two in its field. However, equally important to shedding businesses is that Welch broke the individual companies underneath the GE umbrella and forced them to carry their own balance sheets. This not only decentralized the larger organization giving the companies more autonomy, but also made them more accountable as they could no longer hide unprofitable endeavors.

Brafman and Beckstrom go on to describe organizations ranging from the Aztecs and Apaches to Craigslist and Skype.[44] The point make is simple: centralization versus decentralization. They apply the principles of decentralization and centralization primarily to command and control structures, but also to overall organizational structure. Centralized organizations, in this book the example is a spider, have a head and can be attacked similarly to the record companies and the Aztecs with their capital at Tenochtitlan. Decentralized organizations, such as the later versions of the peer-to-peer file sharing networks and the Apaches of the American Southwest, are similar to starfish. You can cut a leg off a starfish, and it grows back.[45] In terms of innovation and organizational culture, the authors offer this simple, yet telling passage: "When you give people freedom, you get

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[43] Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider* (New York: Penguin Group, 2006), 7.

[44] Brafman and Beckstrom, 11–27.

[45] Brafman and Beckstrom, 35.

chaos, but you also get incredible creativity. Because everyone tries to contribute to the community, you get a great variety of expression."[46]

Decentralization is a key aspect of enabling innovation, at least according to Brafman and Beckstrom. However, few organizations can thrive on complete decentralization and the autonomy of employees. On the other hand, strongly centralized organizations will not encourage innovation and may not keep up with changing dynamics of their various operating environments. To address this concern the authors developed the hybrid organization.[47]

4.   Conclusion

Brafman and Beckstrom's work is not only persuasively descriptive on how innovation has occurred in the past. The book also provides an abstract formula for how to structure an organization for an innovative future. Unfortunately, not all organizations can inherently function as a decentralized entity, nor can a hybrid model be sufficiently adopted when various companies or sub-organizations are sufficiently inter-connected. In the case of structural impasses that cannot be overcome, an organization needs to examine its culture and how it approaches employees to encourage innovation.

Others argue that innovation can and should take place in a structured environment, albeit with some informality built into it.[48] These environments appear more distributed structurally than hierarchies though. Also, these networks exist not only internally to an organization but also externally. A 2006 study by IBM found that 41% of CEOs agreed the primary source of ideas and innovations to be their employees, yet 39% and 36%, respectively, agreed that other companies and customers provided the primary source for

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[46] Brafman and Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider,* 28.

[47] Brafman and Beckstrom, 159.

[48] Cross et al., "How to Catalyze Innovation in Your Organization" 40; Ikeda and Marshall, "How Successful Organizations Drive Innovation." 9.

innovation and ideas.[49] Decentralization is also a central tenet of Brafman and Beckstrom's ideas on organizational effectiveness and innovation.[50]

Given all the literature and ideas regarding innovation, it seems improbable that any one theory can explain how an organization innovates. It does seem apparent, though, that people, structures, and processes are the centers of gravity for innovation. In large part, organizational culture will determine if the people in a given organization are encouraged to create ideas and foster innovation or if the culture will discourage people from upsetting the status quo.

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[49] Peter Baloh, Sanjeev Jha, and Yukika Awazu, "Building Strategic Partnerships for Managing Innovation Outsourcing," *Strategic Outsourcing: An International Journal 1, no. 2* (2008): 100.

[50] Brafman and Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider*, 186–187.

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III. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

A. METHODOLOGIES FOR STUDYING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The literature on organizational culture is vast and diverse, at least partly due to the variation among purposes of the authors.[51] Other factors creating broad literature are the different approaches and methods used by scholars to understand culture across a broad range of organizations.[52] Most scholars do agree on the basic concepts of organizational culture. Organizational culture is a combination of formal and informal behaviors, norms, values/assumptions, and shared experiences derived from facing challenges and internal group integration.[53] Where scholars in the field of organizational culture diverge is the best method to observe and study organizational culture.

While there are certainly disagreements in methodological approaches, it is important to note that researchers continue using the various methods outlined below to examine organizational culture. The complexity of organizations and a variety of research goals may encourage the use of different methodologies by different researchers. This diversity should contribute to an increasing literature on the effectiveness of the differing methods.

1. Challenges with Organizational Culture

One challenge in developing methodologies for studying organizational culture is a fundamental disagreement on how culture exists and interacts in an organization. This insight was pioneered by Joanne Martin at Stanford in 1992. Martin asserts that, depending on the researcher, organizational culture research falls into three competing camps: integration, differentiation, and fragmentation.[54] Each camp offers a different viewpoint

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[51] Matz Alvesson, *Understand Organizational Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 2002), https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=254769, 3.

[52] Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 203.

[53] See Schein (2004), Martin (1992), Cameron and Quinn (2006), Beyer and Trice (1987).

[54] Joanne Martin, *Cultures in Organizations: Three Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 12.

on how culture affects an organization. Those arguing for an integrating effect contend that organizational culture creates a unifying attitude for various subgroups of an organization. A central tenet of this viewpoint is that culture is clear and shared among subgroups of an organization. Differentiation theorizes that culture within an organization is inconsistent between subgroups in that organization that leads to conflicts among them. Finally, fragmentation is a concept where culture lacks clarity and ambiguity itself is the foundation of organizational culture.[55] However, according to Schein, it is important to note that differentiation and fragmentation does not imply that the subcultures do not share the same underlying values and assumptions that make up the holistic organizational culture.[56] Given the conflict Martin highlights, how do scholars approach the study of organizational culture?

2. Differing Approaches to the Study of Culture

One approach to studying organizational culture is to focus on observable behaviors in a group. Trice and Beyer put forth that some parts of culture remain partially exposed through physical behaviors; the authors focus on rituals as an observable behavior where researchers and managers can interpret not only what actually happens, but also the expressive intent of the ritual.[57] Rituals result in four consequences that can be observed or interpreted. These are practical and expressive consequences, and each of these consequences has evident (visible) and hidden subcategories. Evident consequences are available for researchers and group members alike to observe, hidden consequences are the interpretation of the underlying meanings and implications of a ritual.[58] This approach contrasts Martin's approach in her study of OZCO (a pseudonym for a fortune 500 organization) as written in her book *Cultures in Organizations*.

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[55] Martin, "Cultures in Organizations," 12.

[56] Schein, "Organizational Culture and Leadership," 21.

[57] Janice M. Beyer and Harrison M. Trice, "How an Organization's Rites Reveal Its Culture," *Organizational Dynamics* 15, no. 4 (March 1, 1987): 5–24, https://doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616(87)90041-6, 7.

[58] Beyer and Trice, 10.

In *Cultures and Organizations,* Martin uses a quote-based approach to remove as much of her own bias as possible. Martin contends that by using actual quotes from interviews of OZCO employees, the culture of the organization is portrayed more accurately than by injecting her interpretation of the interviewees' responses and creating generalizations.[59] Another principle goal of this book was to organize and understand culture from the three perspectives noted earlier. Using direct quotes without interpretation, organized according to the three perspectives is effective at demonstrating the validity of the approach. Martin's interview approach consisted of both one-on-one and team interviews.

Edgar Schein advocates for an approach similar to ethnography while recognizing that studies and methodologies of organizational culture should be tailored to the research objectives.[60] Schein prudently insists that the organization should not be too involved in the study and the researcher plays an indirect role in events through observation and the use of informants.[61] Schein also makes specific critiques of the survey/questionnaire method including that surveys cannot assess deeper shared assumptions of an organization nor that a canned questionnaire can address the particular details of any given organization, but would need to be tailored. He continues with several other critiques, perhaps the most important of which is that the survey process itself is too invasive to achieve any accuracy.[62] These critiques notwithstanding, the research design for this process is a survey/interview method formulated by Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn.

Cameron and Quinn developed, among other assessment tools, the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument based on the Competing Values Framework (CVF). The goal of this six-question assessment is to characterize and map an organization's assumptions and values in six areas. These areas are:

- Dominant characteristics

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[59] Martin, Cultures in Organizations: Three Perspectives, 25.

[60] Schein, Organizational Culture and Leadership, 205.

[61] Schein, 205.

[62] Schein, 206.

- Organizational Leadership

- Management of Employees

- Organization Glue

- Strategic Emphasis

- Criteria of Success.[63]

There are three reasons for choosing this methodology. The first is this methodology can be applied to a large organization in an efficient manner. The second reason for choosing this tool is that it is an empirical method where actual data from service members can be used without introduction of bias from the researcher.[64] The final reason is the amount of literature supporting and expanding the concept of the competing values framework.[65]

The other approaches outlined above require extensive amounts of time and resources. The direct observation of behaviors, gathering extensive quotes from interviews, embedding a researcher in an organization, and recruiting informants are longitudinal approaches. However, The Competing Values Framework and the OCAI-CP (Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument-Current Profile) provide an empirical approach with the following advantages: Practicality; timeliness; involving; it is qualitative and quantitative; manageable; and valid.[66] The data gathered from this type of research could also be useful for future researchers who wish to explore subcultures within the broader organization.

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[63] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture*, 26–27.

[64] Cameron and Quinn, 23.

[65] For a few examples, see the following: Goodman, Zammuto, & Gifford, (2001). Lavine (2014), Liz Abbett, Anna Coldham, Ryan Whisnant (2010)

[66] Cameron and Quinn, 19–20.

3.   Methodology and Research Design

This study will consider AFSOC's historical culture narrative combined with Cameron and Quinn's Organization Culture Assessment Instrument-Current Profile (OCAI-CP) to analyze, interpret, and map AFSOC's organizational culture.[67] The use of previously conducted historical culture analysis combined with a review of themes central to the formation of AFSOC should provide an accurate picture of the organizational culture of the original air commandos. This analysis will be contrasted with the OCAI-CP to determine variance and potential conflicts between AFSOC's cultural narrative and the actual organizational values.

The OCAI-CP provides an empirical method to analyze organizational culture according to the CVF originally conceived by Quinn. The CVF assumes that organizational culture and values are dynamic and are in conflict with each other to some degree.[68] In the early 1980s, organizational culture theorists began trying to understand the variables that produce successful organizations. Unfortunately, after scrutinizing numerous studies, researchers discovered that the attributes and variables in the various studies were different.[69] Quinn and others then began asking experts what they thought about organizational effectiveness in an effort to understand what the assumptions were in their research. This research resulted in the creation of a framework (Figure 1), which shows the values organizations may have laid out along an X and Y axis with competing values directly opposite each other.

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[67] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture,* 23.

[68] Quinn, *Beyond Rational Management,* 47.

[69] Quinn, 47.

HUMAN RESOURCES MODEL
Toward
human commitment

Toward
decentralization,
differentiation

OPEN SYSTEMS MODEL
Toward
expansion,
adaptation

Value of
human resources,
training

Adaptability,
readiness

Cohesion,
morale

Growth,
resource acquisition,
external support

flexibility

Toward maintenance
of the socio-technical
system

internal   external

Toward competitive position
of the overall system

Information
management,
communication

Productivity,
Efficiency

control

Stability,
control

Planning,
goal setting

Toward
consolidation,
continuity
INTERNAL PROCESS MODEL

Toward
centralization,
integration

Toward
maximization of
output
RATIONAL GOAL MODEL

*Competing Values Framework (Quinn, 1988, p. 48)*

Figure 2.   Competing Values Framework: Effectiveness[70]

This framework allows researchers to analyze and understand the interaction of different aspects of organizational culture. This led to the development of the OCAI-CP, which today is one of the most widely used tools to analyze organizational values and culture.[71]

The OCAI-CP is a tool developed by Cameron and Quinn to analyze organizational culture using the competing values framework.[72] This six-question survey will be given to the AFSOC command group and staff, as well as select subordinate units of the command.

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[70] Mark Federman, "Deeper Thoughts on Competing Values and Organizational Effectiveness," Blog, What Is the (Next) Message (blog), February 27, 2006, http://whatisthemessage.blogspot.com/2006/02/deeper-thoughts-on-competing-values.html; taken from Quinn, Beyond Rational Management, 48.

[71] Santoriello, "Assessing Unique Core Values with the Competing Values Framework: The CCVI Technique for Guiding Organizational Culture Change." 1.

[72] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture,* 31.

The responses to the interviews are plotted onto a graph similar to the one in Figure 2 to determine what a given organization values and what tendencies it will have as a result of its organizational culture. The four quadrants represent the types of organizational cultures that Cameron and Quinn use in their methodology. These are Clan (collaborate), Adhocracy (create), Hierarchy (control), and Market (compete) cultures.[73]
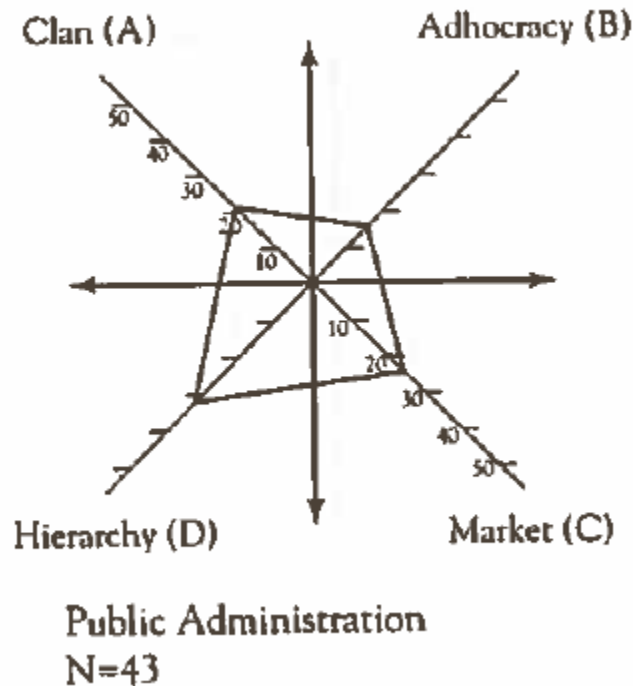
Figure 3.   Public Administration OCAI Profile[74]

The authors have researched and plotted over 3,000 organizations in the course of their work.[75] This methodology is also particularly useful because it allows an individual to plot an organization's tendencies without requiring absolute commitment to a certain type of organization or set of values. For example, as shown in Figure 3, in public

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[73] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture*, 37–45.

[74] Cameron and Quinn, 78.

[75] Cameron and Quinn, 75.

administration organizations, the dominant tendency is to a hierarchical organizational culture, yet their research also supports a conclusion that these organizations possess some tendencies of market, clan, and adhocracy cultures.

The OCAI-CP consists of six questions with four statements in each question. The research subject is allowed 100 points to allocate in each question however they feel best describes their organization. There is also a column for the research subject to allocate 100 points in each question about how they would prefer the organizational values in three to five years. The different areas under each question represent the four quadrants of organizational culture in the CVF. This format allows for the assessment of competing values rather than committing the research subject to choosing one form of organizational culture.

Research subjects were also asked to provide demographic information. The demographic questions included which Wing or Staff Directorate the subject works in and which mission/job function best describes the subject's experience or line of work. The subjects were asked to provide their rank. The subjects were also asked two questions regarding length of service in the military. The first question is how long the individual has served in/worked for the US military. The second question is how long the individual has served in/worked with AFSOC. Finally, subjects were asked to provide their gender and age.

B.   RESEARCH GOALS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected during this research is analyzed with two principal aims. The first is to create a map of AFSOC's organizational values to compare with the historic study of Air Commando culture and values. The intent is to establish if AFSOC indeed carries the same values as the original Air Commandos. It has been suggested before that using the Air Commando narrative as part of the culture of AFSOC today may result in organizational pain if AFSOC does not carry the same values.[76]

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[76] Justin Hoffman, "'To Hell with the Paperwork:' 71.

The second purpose for undertaking this research is to understand any changes AFSOC Airmen desire in the organization's values. Throughout its history, AFSOC has performed as well or better than similar special operations organizations. However, in the pursuit of excellence in the profession of arms, organizations cannot afford to become static. In special operations it is assumed humans are more important than hardware, therefore, if the Airmen of AFSOC desire changes in the organizational values it seems prudent to change the values.

1.   Data Analysis

The data will be analyzed first by using all surveys collected to understand the organizational culture at large. This view of the values will be used to compare the smaller demographic breakouts to look for deviations or any particular demographic groups whose organizational values may be different from the group at large.

The demographic breakout values are just as important as the overall values of the organization. One demographic aspect of particular interest is how the time a service member spends in AFSOC affects their view of the organizations values. It is common to assume that all special operations service members go through both formal and informal indoctrination when they are assigned to special operations units. This survey provides a method to check if AFSOC's indoctrination programs are effective. If service members with less time in AFSOC share the same cultural values as those with more time in AFSOC then it leads that the indoctrination programs are effective from a values perspective.

Another demographic breakout of interest is the area of mission an Airman identifies with. In the research, subjects were given a choice of identifying with Fires, ISR, Mobility, Special Tactics, Support, Other, and Decline to Respond. AFSOC has broad and diverse missions and these terms provided the best accounting for these mission areas for the purposes of this broad work. One failing in this research is the use of the term "support" as a demographic. Given the sheer numbers and diversity of the support personnel in AFSOC, it was not feasible to include every Air Force functional area in this research. However, this study, as the first of its kind, was deliberately kept at the broadest level where possible to map out the organizational values. The various mission areas in AFSOC

often operate together in a complementary manner. However, they also exist and sometimes function independently. Therefore, it is worthwhile to understand any differences these micro-cultures have from the overall AFSOC culture.

Each demographic group will be analyzed for its particular values as compared to the overall values of AFSOC. However, not all demographics are expected to yield significant differences. For example, officers, enlisted personnel, and civilian employees who have all served the same amount of time in AFSOC are expected to be indoctrinated into the organization's culture and values. Therefore, it is not expected to see variation between these groupings.

2. Hypothesis and Expected Results

In the introduction to this thesis, three competing hypotheses are provided based on a review of the historical Air Commandos and academic research. These competing hypotheses suggest that AFSOC may have a Clan or Adhocracy culture is the values of the original Air Commandos have been maintained. Otherwise, Cameron and Quinn's research suggests that any government organization will have strong hierarchical cultural values.[77] However, their research also includes the expectation for any organization's values and culture over time is to migrate to either hierarchy or market dominance.[78] Based on this expectation, it is possible that the founding of modern AFSOC and the growth of Air Force Special Operations have caused the organization to implement the formal control measures that define the hierarchy culture type.

The next chapter of this thesis is the analysis of the data collected and what was learned about AFSOC. This chapter also includes recommendations for the encouragement of innovation based on the data collected and the study of the historical Air Commando culture.

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[77] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture*, 69.

[78] Cameron and Quinn, 53–54.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS, AND IMPLICATIONS

A. DATA COLLECTION AND DISPOSITION

The OCAI-CP was conducted during a six-week period from January through March 2018. The survey was distributed via electronic mail by AFSOC Headquarters to the AFSOC Staff and several subordinate units in the command. The intended audience of the survey was the AFSOC staff and the operational units under the command, as well as the newest wing in AFSOC, the 492nd Special Operations Wing, formerly known as the Air Force Special Operations Warfare Center.

The targeted population for this research fluctuates almost daily but approximately 6,000 personnel qualified for inclusion based on the target demographics. Of this 6,000, it is estimated that between 4,000 and 4,500 personnel received the survey. In this research, estimation is required because the research team did not have visibility on who forwarded the email solicitation after the initial invitation message. However, review of the demographic data collected, specifically the units reported by respondents, enables a fair estimation of the number of personnel who received the initial message. A review of demographics also indicated that no personnel outside of the target audience responded to the survey.

Over the six-week period, 231 personnel from across the targeted units completed the survey in its entirety; 274 personnel attempted but did not complete the survey. None of the attempted responses was complete enough to include in the final data set.

The data set is currently maintained on Naval Postgraduate School electronic media and controlled via login and password security. The data set was coded with markers and stripped of individual unit reports to protect against using the demographic data to identify individual respondents. This sanitized data set was shared with AFSOC HQ/A9 division. The research team has also authorized the use of the data for future academic research in the sanitized form.

B.   DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

1.   Data Analysis

The data was analyzed as a complete set as well as various demographic breakdowns and comparisons. In all, 39 distinct data breakouts were completed to test for variations among the different demographic groups. This analysis consisted of checking both the overall culture profile (now and preferred profiles) as well as differences in the six key dimensions. In general, while some variations were noted (to be discussed later on in this chapter), the data set was consistent across most demographic groups.

2.   AFSOC at-large Results

The overall results resulted in scores of 31 for Market culture, 25 for Hierarchy culture, 20 for Clan culture, and 21 for Adhocracy culture. These results for the AFSOC current profile show a strong Market dominant culture (shown in Figure 4). The Hierarchy culture is strongly valued but not dominant, with lesser values in the Clan and Adhocracy quadrants. This profile is, in some ways, surprising considering that OCAI-CP studies done on government organizations usually indicate strong Hierarchy-dominant cultures.[79] This profile also contradicts the profile that could be created using the historical studies of the previous Air Commandos that indicate their culture aligned with the Clan and Adhocracy quadrants.

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[79] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture, 69.*
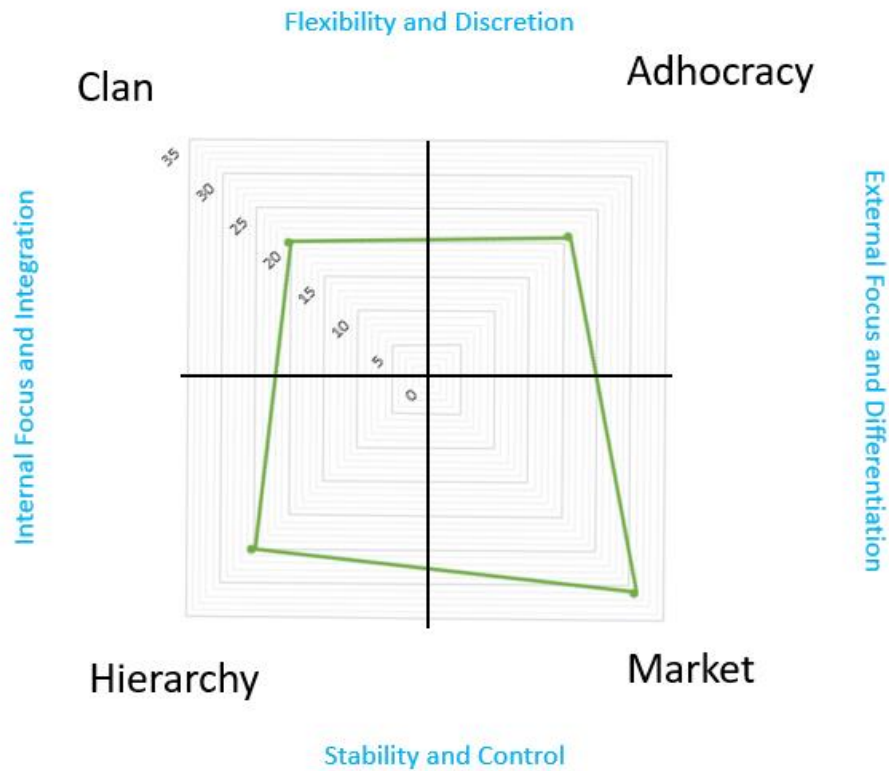
Figure 4.   AFSOC Now Cultural Profile

The second portion in the OCAI-CP is the preferred culture for the organization that had participants answer the same questions but from the perspective of how they would want the values to be in three years. Similar to the now profile, the responses across demographic groups were consistent with a couple of exceptions (explained later in this chapter). The scores for this profile are 24 for Market culture, 20 for Hierarchy culture, 29 for Clan culture, and 23 for Adhocracy culture. The preferred profile is strong dominant in the Clan quadrant. The Market and Hierarchy quadrants are decreased in importance, while the Adhocracy Quadrant increased slightly (shown in Figure 5).
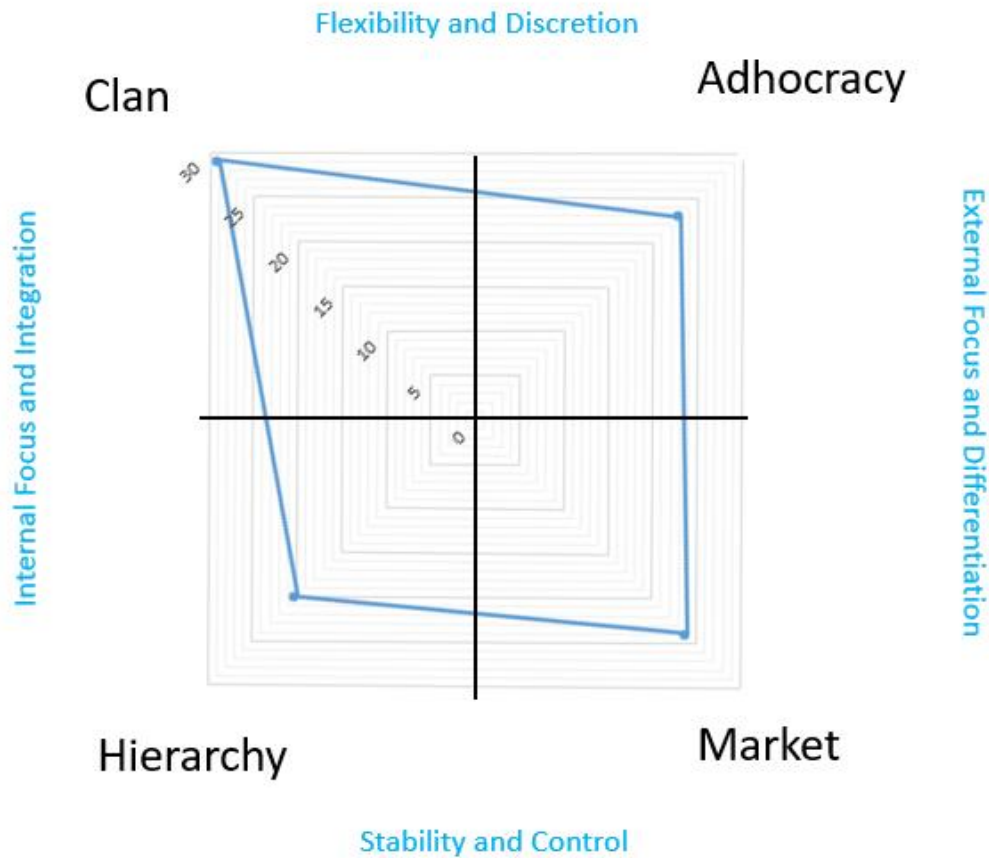
Figure 5.   AFSOC Preferred Cultural Profile

3.   Demographic Variations in Data

Overall, the demographic breakouts accomplished with this data set did not reveal significant variations amongst groups. Thirty-five demographic analyses yielded little variation. These analyses also included examination of the six dimensions, which revealed the data was mostly congruent with strong symmetry. Within the six-dimension analysis there were a few outliers observed. However, these differences were not significant enough to question the symmetry of the master profile created. Given the substantial number of responses for this assessment for this assessment (N=231), it is concluded that this data set produced an accurate model of the organizational culture within the operational units of AFSOC. That said, two demographic variations are worth mentioning: (1) females

compared to the males and (2) officers who identified in ops career fields compared to officers who identified in a support career field.

Members who identified as male made up the vast majority of respondents (N=188). Therefore, it is not surprising that breaking the data out and conducting an OCAI-CP profile using the male data set resulted in a profile with no meaningful variation from AFSOC as a whole. However, when the female (N=21) OCAI-CP profile was completed the NOW profile was very similar to the overall organizational profile. However, the preferred profile differed from the overall organizational preferred profile significantly. Female respondents preferred to move to a dominant Clan culture but preferred no change to the value of hierarchy culture in the profile. Market culture was reduced as expected to increase the Clan culture dominance, and no significant change to adhocracy was noted. This research does not offer a significant conclusion as to why this demographic variance occurred. However, a topic of future research could explore this variation and conduct a root-cause analysis of why females may prefer to maintain the same level of hierarchy.

The second demographic variation is between officers who identified as Ops career fields and officers who identified in support career fields. Support career field officers (N=14) believed the market culture was much more dominant in AFSOC than Ops career field officers (N=64). Support officers also consider hierarchy as a much less dominant culture in AFSOC. However, both groups preferred culture profiles have no substantial variation. The variation in the now profile is puzzling because SOF (Special Operations Forces) claims to value flat organizations, considering ability over rank, and pushing decision-making to the lowest level. In my own experience I believe, while there have been exceptions, that AFSOC values these things as much as most other SOF units. However, its puzzling that officers who identify in Ops career fields would so strongly rank hierarchy when that culture type is at odds with these values.

C.   COMPARISON WITH SIMILAR STUDIES

Two other studies used this methodology with similar or larger sample sizes. James Pierce at the Army War College conducted a study for the U.S. Army in 2010.[80] Andrew Pollman at the Naval Postgraduate School conducted one for the U.S. Marine Corps in 2015.[81] Interestingly, these two studies yielded a number of similarities and only a few significant differences to those found in this thesis. For example, in the NOW profile, the three studies were very similar in all scores, with the exception of AFSOC which placed a much higher emphasis on Adhocracy (Army-11.77, Marine Corps-13.4, AFSOC-21) than the other two studies.[82] In the PREFERRED profile the only significant difference was that AFSOC preferred less of a Market culture than the Marine Corps, but when compared to the Army neither service demonstrates a significant difference (Army-27.08, Marine Corps-29.6, AFSOC-24).[83]

D.   AFSOC AND THE MARKET CULTURE

The differences in the culture profiles indicate a desire by the members of AFSOC to institute cultural changes. The market culture is dominated by a focus on the external environment, which is considered competitive and hostile.[84] This culture is results driven with emphasis on productivity, efficiency, and maintaining a strong position in the marketplace where activities are conducted. The leaders of market organizations are typically hard-charging, driven individuals who are strict and demanding. Accomplishing

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[80] James G. Pierce, *Is the Organizational Culture of the U.S. Army Congruent with the Professional Development of Its Senior Level Officer Corps?*, Letort Papers (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010), https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pdffiles/PUB1015.pdf.

[81] Anthony Pollman, "Diagnosis and Analysis of Marine Corps Organizational Culture for the Office of the Senior Marine, Naval Postgraduate School," (MBA Capstone Project, Naval Postgraduate School, March 2015).

[82] Pierce, *Is the Organizational Culture of the U.S. Army Congruent with the Professional Development of Its Senior Level Officer Corps?, 79.*; Pollman, "Diagnosis and Analysis of Marine Corps Organizational Culture for the Office of the Senior Marine, Naval Postgraduate School." 20.

[83] Pierce, *Is the Organizational Culture of the U.S. Army Congruent with the Professional Development of Its Senior Level Officer Corps?, 86–87.* ; Pollman, "Diagnosis and Analysis of Marine Corps Organizational Culture for the Office of the Senior Marine, Naval Postgraduate School." 20.

[84] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture*, 40.

goals and winning are the glue that holds the organization together.[85] Competition drives the desire to perform better but Market dominant cultures are not known for innovation in the pure sense.

Among the six dimensions, the most prominent areas distinguishing the Market-Dominant culture are the dominant characteristics, organizational leadership, and management of employees. This should come as no surprise. The war on terror created a no-fail environment for AFSOC. Leadership adapted to this and created an intensely competitive culture focused on results and success. This focus led to the promotion of leaders who are driven individuals that do not accept failure. Likewise, the war on terror also produced a large amount of growth in AFSOC that led to the need for more control mechanisms. These control mechanisms are reflected in the Market focus on management of employees.

Market dominant organizations are not known for innovation according to a strict definition of the word. However, in the drive for competitive advantage and market dominance, these organizations do tend to evolve to perform their existing activities better or with greater productivity and success.[86] There is also a great amount of literature on how to foster innovation in Market organizations discussed in chapter five of this thesis.

Given that the vast majority of organizational culture literature is written for the business community, it is necessary to define how a market organization exists in the military. Central to this is understanding the environments that AFSOC and its personnel are constantly operating in because this is not a central marketplace or niche business. AFSOC constantly operates in three domains that can be equated with market spaces. The first domain is what I term the in-garrison domain.

The in-garrison domain consists of the day-to-day activities AFSOC conducts while not deployed. This environment is a largely internal creation of AFSOC's, though

[85] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture,* 40.

[86] Stefano Calciolari, Anna Prenestini, and Federico Lega, "An Organizational Culture for All Seasons? How Cultural Type Dominance and Strength Influence Different Performance Goals," *Public Management Review*, October 4, 2017, 1–23, https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2017.1383784. 4.

interaction with elements outside the command occurs frequently. In-garrison AFSOC units are cooperating to complete training objectives, such as mutual support events like tilt-rotor aerial refueling or calls for fire training. AFSOC units are also competing with one another for resources such as flight hours, range times, and other training activities or resources.

The second domain in which AFSOC conducts business is the larger Air Force marketplace. This domain consists of 10 major air commands, of which AFSOC is one, that compete for resources allocated from the United States government. Certainly, there is cooperation among the commands; however, increasing funds for one command is usually done at the loss of another. This creates a competitive environment where all commands are driven to produce results to create value for the Air Force to secure existing and new resources.

The final domain is the combat environment. AFSOC has constantly deployed units since 2001. The combat environment is competitive in two ways. The first is the nature of combat with an enemy. The failure to succeed in combat could result in lives lost or valuable property destroyed. The second is through competition for resources. It is rare in the conflicts since 2001 that there have been enough resources to conduct all missions requested. This is particularly true for the Air Force and AFSOC, specifically. There are almost insatiable demands for ISR, AC-130s, CV-22s, and MC-130s and normally not enough aircraft and crews available to meet these demands.[87]

Understanding the domains and environments in which AFSOC conducts operations helps paint a picture of how a market organization would form. As noted earlier, organizational culture change over time gradually moves to market and hierarchy culture. As such, it should not be surprising that Air Commando culture today appears to be different from that of the original Air Commandos. Their organizations formed and disbanded according to the needs of the time, whereas AFSOC has existed for 30 years now.

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[87] Army Special Operations Aviation Units have similar problems with meeting all the requests for support in the various theaters of operations.

E. AFSOC AND THE CLAN CULTURE

The responses to the survey indicate a desire to shift from a market dominant organizational culture to a clan dominant one. However, the results do not suggest abandoning the market culture altogether. This highlights the importance of understanding the competing values framework and how organizational culture can seem contradictory. What do these results mean for AFSOC and what would a clan culture value that a market culture does not?

Among the six dimensions, the future profile indicates AFSOC members want a larger focus on Clan cultural values in the criteria of success, strategic emphasis, organizational glue, and management of employees dimensions. This would entail focusing on teamwork, creating consensus, and a shift from thinking of customers as merely consumers to more of a partner-based approach between AFSOC and the other SOF components.

There are some basic assumptions in Clan culture that offer a starting point for what an organization with this culture would fundamentally believe. According to Cameron and Quinn:

> Some basic assumptions in a clan culture are that the environment can best be managed through teamwork and employee development, customers are best thought of as partners, the organization is in the business of developing a humane work environment, and the major task of management is to empower employees and facilitate their participation, commitment, and loyalty.[88]

If the SOF truths are indeed true, then this type of culture seems to create a path to achieving the goal of the first SOF truth: Humans are more important than hardware. United States Special Operations Command expands on this further on their website with:

> People—not equipment—make the critical difference. The right people, highly trained and working as a team, will accomplish the mission with the

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[88] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture, 41*.

equipment available. On the other hand, the best equipment in the world cannot compensate for a lack of the right people.[89]

Next, it is important to get rid of some misconceptions about the Clan culture. According to Cameron and Quinn, the Clan culture does not mean a "culture of niceness, lack of standards, slacking off, or tolerance of mediocrity."[90] What a culture shift would mean for AFSOC is to focus more on human beings, in particular, the use of teams, particularly cross-functional, employee empowerment, more inclusiveness in decision-making across the board, and a more robust method for recognizing employees.[91] None of these changes implies a moving away from the standards of excellence AFSOC has established. Clan cultures also focus on customers and given that most AFSOC operational units exist to support a user, this would be a valuable focus.

F.   IMPLICATIONS AND MOVING FORWARD

Culture change is perhaps the hardest objective an organization can undertake. There are many theories that attempt to explain how to do it and why a particular theory works best. It is not the intent of this section to be specifically prescriptive about how AFSOC should go about changing its culture. It is also not the intent of this section to recommend that AFSOC undertake an endeavor such as changing organizational culture. The purpose of this section is to consolidate what was learned in this study and what the implications are for innovation in AFSOC.

1.   Organizational Culture in AFSOC

This thesis was designed to test AFSOC's organizational culture to determine whether there were gaps between the values of the culture and the values of the narrative culture AFSOC uses to describe itself. The data collected suggests this might be the case. It is doubtful any of the Air Commandos of WWII, Korea, and Vietnam would have believed a market dominant culture was best for their respective organizations. This is not

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[89] USSOCOM, "SOF Truths," accessed April 6, 2018, http://www.socom.mil/about/sof-truths.

[90] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture,* 108.

[91] Cameron and Quinn, 108.

to say a market culture is unacceptable for AFSOC today. Every organization develops a dominant culture or cultures that work for the environment at that time.[92] The only method for determining if AFSOC's senior leadership desires organizational culture change is to have the leadership complete the OCAI-CP. In this study, no respondent identified as a General Officer or member of the Senior Executive Service. Therefore, no conclusions can be reached as to how senior leaders in the command view the organizational culture.

The presence of a gap between actual organizational cultural values and the narratives used to explain those values is a source of organizational pain. The narratives provide the stories that equip AFSOC personnel with how things should be. When the same personnel experience differences between how the narratives teach them things should be and how they actually are, it can leave members confused, disappointed, and disillusioned. A solution to this would be to create new narratives or stories that describe what the modern Air Commandos value to create a more accurate expectation for AFSOC members. This does not imply disregarding history, merely changing the slogans and stories of AFSOC to match what the organization is or wants for its culture.

2.   The Market Culture and Innovation

The second goal of this thesis was to understand how the organizational culture of AFSOC affects the command's ability to innovate. By far the two culture types that tend to innovate the most are clan and adhocracy cultures. However, research indicates that market organizations can be innovative.[93] Research also shows that market organizations need to create structures specifically for innovation that are separate from the day-to-day organizational structure.[94] It may not be prudent to expect the established staff that manages AFSOC on a day-to-day basis to innovate and help the command remain relevant and effective into the future.

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[92] Cameron and Quinn, 139.

[93] Buschgens and Bausch, "Organizational Culture and Innovation: A Meta-Analytic Review." 774.

[94] Charles A. O'Reilly III and Michael L. Tushman, "The Ambidextrous Organization," *The Harvard Business Review*, April 2004, https://hbr.org/2004/04/the-ambidextrous-organization. 76.

There are a number of reasons established structures in organizations are not inherently innovative. Perhaps the strongest description of why organizations are not innovative comes from James Wilson who wrote, "The reason an organization is created is in large part to replace the uncertain expectations and haphazard activities of voluntary efforts with the stability and routine of organized relationships.[95] First, these established structures within organizations are designed to manage and control the organization to efficiently produce results. None of these attributes encourage radical new ideas (innovation). The second reason is all these established structures already have assigned goals and tasks, and they are manned to accomplish. One of the failures of strong organizations committed to goals is they tend to suppress ideas about accomplishing those goals that are new. These organizations also do not recruit individuals with different ideas about how to get things done.[96]

The preferred course of action to encourage innovation in an existing structured environment, particularly with a market culture, is to break out the innovative team from the established organization. Charles O' Reilly III and Michael Tushman researched this concept and coined the term "Ambidextrous Organization."[97] In their research, the most effective organizations were ones that created a separate sub-organization that reported directly to senior leaders. This prevented the innovation structure from directly competing with the established organization for resources and personnel, but also included senior leaders in their processes to ensure flow of critical information to the separate team existed.[98] This research focused on organizations looking to achieve breakthroughs in their businesses. These were not organizations attempting to refine current products or practices. Those objectives can usually be met using existing structures and processes.

Similar to cross-functional teams, or what are sometimes termed "tiger teams" in the Air Force, AFSOC could create short-term teams to solve problems or create

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[95] James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000), 221.

[96] Horibe, *Creating the Innovation Culture*. 12.

[97] O'Reilly III and Tushman, "The Ambidextrous Organization." 76.

[98] O'Reilly III and Tushman, 79.

breakthrough solutions through innovation and collaboration. The advantage of a process like this is that the team can develop an organizational culture of its own for the duration of its existence. These teams will organize their structure and processes around the goal or problem to be solved without constraints or direct influences from the existing structure.[99]

G.   CONCLUSION

This chapter reviewed the results of the OCAI-CP profiles. This analysis reveals a Market dominant culture with a desire to become a Clan dominant culture. The two significant demographic differences were discussed, though conclusions as to why these differences exist are unknown. Detailed analysis of AFSOC and the Market culture reveals that it is likely that the natural progression of culture over time in an organization has created this profile in the Market and Hierarchy cultures. A review of the Clan culture concludes that a shift to the Clan culture would not be at odds with SOF values, though specific recommendations to do this are beyond the scope of this study. Finally, the implications of the dominant culture type regarding organizational pain and innovation were highlighted as potential areas of friction regarding AFSOCs organizational culture versus what the command says it is and wants to accomplish. The next chapter will review the research in its entirety and recommend areas for future research.

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[99] O'Reilly III and Tushman, The Ambidextrous Organization, 80.

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V.   RESULTS

A.   FINDINGS

1.   Historic and Modern Air Commandos

This thesis's first major finding is that the modern Air Commandos and their predecessors reflect different organizational cultures. This observation itself is not a concern as organizational cultures adapt to changing circumstances over time. However, the use of narratives, symbols, slogans, and other artifacts create an expectation for the modern Air Commandos that their experiences in AFSOC will mirror that of their predecessors. However, this is likely not the case. The modern Air Commando today has a drastically different experience than the Air Commandos of the past. For example, the 9/11 attacks changed AFSOC in a dramatic, perhaps traumatic, way. Prior to those attacks, modern AFSOC units were engaged in contingency operations when needed. After those attacks, the force would be engaged in constant combat from 2001 continuing through present day. The historic Air Commandos organized and formed according to the needs of the conflict the nation was fighting. After these conflicts the Air Commandos were disbanded, or in the case of Vietnam, drastically reduced in size during redeployment.

The historic Air Commandos valued their personnel more than anything else, believed in innovation instead of advanced technology, and valued effectiveness over following the rules.[100] Building on Hoffman's work, these findings imply a culture that steeped in Clan and Adhocracy values while minimizing Hierarchy and Market values. This culture model persists through WWII, Korea, and Vietnam simply because in each conflict the Air Commandos were disbanded at the end and had to be created from scratch at the outset of the next conflict. There was no opportunity for the organizational culture to mature over time or drift as expected to the Market and Hierarchy values. However, over time and through traumatic experiences, such as the failure of operation EAGLE CLAW, attitudes about special operations in the Department of Defense changed, and the creation

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[100] Hoffman, "'To Hell with the Paperwork," 67.

of US Special Operations Command and the service subordinate commands has provided an opportunity for the maturation of organizational culture.

This study's results provide a map of the organizational culture of the modern Air Commandos. The results indicate a Market and Hierarchy dominant culture with a desire to change the organizational culture to a Clan dominant model. As mentioned previously, this is no surprise given that the Air Commandos, for the first time in their history, belonged in a single organization that lasted longer than one specific conflict. However, the rapid growth of AFSOC after 9/11 and the maturation of the organization have had unintended consequences which may negatively impact the organization and the goals leadership have established for the future. The concept of growth, maturation, and organizational change is well documented in the research by Henry Mintzberg. Mintzberg concluded that the "simple structure" is usually how organizations begin, but growth and competition force these organizations to bureaucratize to survive in the market.[101]

2.   Mismatched Narratives, Cultures, and Goals

a.   *Narratives*

The second major finding of this research is that AFSOC may have mismatched narratives, cultures, and goals. The creation of expectations that are not realized by actual experiences can create a sense of disappointment in the service members. Service members could also view this as a good thing, but given this research indicated a desire for culture change in AFSOC it can be concluded that this is not the case. This is a source of cultural conflict and pain in the organization. Ultimately, this cultural conflict and organizational pain will decrease morale and organizational effectiveness. By creating an image of the modern Air Commandos as simply a mirror continuation of the past Air Commandos AFSOC is creating expectations that are not likely to be realized.

There are several reasons why using the narratives of the historic Air Commandos does not fit with the modern Air Commandos. Famously, as Cochran prepared his unit to

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[101] Henry Mintzberg, "Organization Design: Fashion or Fit?" *Harvard Business Review* 59, no. Jan-Feb (1981): 103–17. 108.

deploy to support the Chindits, he crossed the unit's typewriters off the list of equipment to be taken.[102] Alison and Cochran were charged with supporting only the Chindits and reported directly to the Brigadier Wingate for their orders. The modern deployed Air Commando unit likely supports multiple Special Operations Task Forces, which requires a great deal more technology, command and control to ensure all resources are operating at maximum effectiveness. Likewise, Brig Gen Aderholt fired a squadron commander at Hurlburt who refused to drink with his troops in the Officers Club.[103] While certainly some Air Commandos consume alcohol today, alcohol use is frowned upon across the Air Force and an alcohol-related incident could end the career of any modern Air Commando. Finally, historic Air Commandos operated with relative autonomy, either by geographic separation from the conventional forces or because their missions were designed to keep them separate from the conventional forces. Modern Air Commandos must comply with most conventional Air Force instructions when in theater and, more often than not, find themselves frequently working very closely with conventional forces.

b.   *Mismatched Cultures*

The framework used in this research is based on the understanding that organizations have competing values, and that organizational culture analysis requires an understanding of which values are dominant in an organization. The modern Air Commando desires a Clan dominant culture instead of the current Market dominant one. Because these cultures are opposites and the desired change is one of culture dominance it is expected that the current culture is likely causing friction in the organization. This organizational friction should be expected to decrease effectiveness. The need for change in organizational culture is typically driven by outside forces.[104] The failure to change due to external conditions can produce dramatic results. For example, between 1996 and 2006 46% of the companies in the Fortune 500 dropped off the list. Likewise, of the largest 100

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[102] Kelly, *From a Dark Sky*, 15.

[103] Warren A Trest, *Air Commando One : Heinie Aderholt and America's Secret Air Wars* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 137.

[104] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture, 7.*

companies at the beginning of the 1900s, only 16 are still around today.[105] This is not to say AFSOC will disappear without change, but its relevance and supremacy in providing special operations forces to the joint fight may suffer. Without a suitable organizational culture, the goals the leadership in the command has set forward may not be attainable.

c. AFSOC culture and Goals

Cameron and Quinn provide numerous examples with their framework to highlight the importance of organizational culture. One of the important findings is that "…without another kind of fundamental change, namely, a change in organizational culture, there is little hope of enduring improvement in organizational performance."[106] The goals of AFSOC can be paraphrased to readiness now, future relevance, and resiliency in the force.[107] To ensure completion of the second and third goals will require changes in AFSOC. The future operating environment will likely involve contested airspace and threats that Air Commandos have not experienced since Vietnam and Desert One.

Maintaining future relevance will require an agile and innovative organization to predict and stay ahead of future threats. The current AFSOC force has operated in mainly uncontested airspace for well over a decade. The future fight will likely see temporary loss of control or utilization of the cyber and space domains. The future fight will also be flown against advanced air defense systems where competition for electronic warfare assets will be fierce. To counter these threats requires an agile and highly innovative force. As discussed previously, the Market culture may help you do what you do better, but it will not foster an innovative environment capable of finding new ways to operate to achieve mission success. Finally, maintaining resilience in the force requires action in several domains.

One of these domains is creating a work environment people want to work in. One of the factors to create this is to ensure the culture of the organization reflects what the

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[105] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture,* 8.

[106] Cameron and Quinn, 11.

[107] AFSOC, "Air Force Special Operations Command Fact Sheet."

organization's members desire. According to this research, the Air Commandos desire an organizational culture change to reflect what they believe the organization should value. That value can be summed up as "humans are more important than hardware."[108] The Clan culture values humans, as Cameron and Quinn describe "…that involvement and participation of employees foster empowerment and commitment. Committed, satisfied employees produce effectiveness."[109] A culture shift to empower the Airman of AFSOC will produce more effective results due to the nature of special operations personnel than a hard charging, management driven organizational culture.

B.   CULTURE CHANGE AND FUTURE RESEARCH

1.   Facilitating Cultural Change

Earlier in this thesis, I stated my intent to be descriptive and analytical regarding the organizational culture of the historic and modern Air Commandos. The next step in this process is for AFSOC leadership to determine if a culture change is something the command will pursue. Culture change is not an easy endeavor, but future students, scholars, or consultants could write a prescriptive work detailing the changes that should be implemented. It will also require future iterations of the OCAI-CP to determine if implemented change mechanisms are effective.

There are also other assessments designed to map leadership skills in individuals to determine if those individuals are the right agents to facilitate culture change. One interesting aspect to this is that research indicates the highest-performing leaders in an organization typically have developed skills allowing them to operate effectively within all four quadrants of organizational culture.[110] This assessment was based on peer, subordinate, and superior's ratings of the individuals. The implication of this is that, while leadership styles may need to adapt somewhat, individual leadership changes may not be necessary.

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[108] USSOCOM, "SOF Truths."

[109] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture, 48–49.*

[110] Cameron and Quinn, 47.

2.   Other Areas of Future Research

The data set used in this research will be made available on request through HQ AFSOC A9 or through the Naval Postgraduate School. If others wish to use this data set, there are other analysis within the various demographics that could be performed. While the data set is congruent and symmetrical, there were slight variations among certain demographic groups that could benefit from future research.

Next, this methodology has received a great deal of attention from the business world but relatively little interest from the military. Future research could include applying this methodology to other SOF components to look for similarities and differences in organizational culture types. Finally, this research was limited to the Operations groups, Special Tactics community, and 492 Special Operations Wing. Therefore, while this research can illuminate organizational culture within the targeted units, it is not comprehensive for all of AFSOC by design. This research intended to gain insight into organizational culture within the AFSOC operations community given that, as a whole, they are likely fully indoctrinated into AFSOC. Expanding this methodology to include all support personnel in AFSOC could yield considerable insight into the effectiveness of indoctrination processes within the command and shed light on any cultural differences from those personnel in the Operations Groups, Maintenance Groups, Support Groups, and Medical Groups.

C.   CONCLUSION

To conclude, this research has illuminated cultural issues within AFSOC that may affect command effectiveness in the future. There is no doubt the service members of AFSOC are doing great things in the current fight. However, maintaining a Market dominant culture may not create the greatest effectiveness as AFSOC continues to look at addressing the future operation environment. Even though my own experiences are that the fighting spirit of the historic Air Commandos lives on in the modern Air Commandos, it seems apparent that the days of "to hell with the paperwork; get out there and fight" are

gone.[111] The commitments and requirements of the modern Air Commandos require a different organizational culture to manage the large and diverse enterprise that is AFSOC. However, this does not imply the current organizational culture is perfect, as this research suggests it is necessary to adjust to maximize effectiveness, innovation, and resiliency in the force for the future fight.

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[111] Kelly, *From a Dark Sky,* 15.

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APPENDIX

1. Dominant Characteristics	Now	Preferred
A. The organization is a very personal place. It is like an extended family. People seem to share a lot of themselves.		
B. The organization is a very dynamic and entrepreneurial place. People are willing to stick their necks out and take risks.		
C. The organization is very results-oriented. A major concern is with getting the job done. People are very competitive and achievement-oriented.		
D. The organization is a very controlled and structured place. Formal procedures generally govern what people do.		
Total	100	100

Figure 6.   Dominant Characteristics[112]

2. Organizational Leadership	Now	Preferred
A. The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify mentoring, facilitating, or nurturing.		
B. The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify entrepreneurship, innovation, and risk taking.		
C. The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify a no-nonsense, aggressive, results-oriented focus.		
D. The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify coordinating, organizing, or smooth-running efficiency		
Total	100	100

Figure 7.   Organizational Leadership

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[112] The figures in this appendix are taken from: Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture:26-28*

3. Management of Employees	Now	Preferred
A. The management style in the organization is characterized by teamwork, consensus, and participation.		
B. The management style in the organization is characterized by individual risk taking, innovation, freedom, and uniqueness.		
C. The management style in the organization is characterized by hard-driving competitiveness, high demands, and achievement.		
D. The management style in the organization is characterized by security of employment, conformity, predictability, and stability in relationships.		
Total	100	100

Figure 8.   Management of Employees

4. Organization Glue	Now	Preferred
A. The glue that holds the organization together is loyalty and mutual trust. Commitment to this organization runs high.		
B. The glue that holds the organization together is commitment to innovation and development. There is an emphasis on being on the cutting edge.		
C. The glue that holds the organization together is the emphasis on achievement and goal accomplishment.		
D. The glue that holds the organization together is the formal rules and policies. Maintaining a smooth-running organization is important.		
Total	100	100

Figure 9.   Organization Glue

5. Strategic Emphasis	Now	Preferred
A. The organization emphasizes human development. High trust, openness, and participation persist.		
B. The organization emphasizes acquiring new resources and creating new challenges. Trying new things and prospecting for opportunities are valued.		
C. The organization emphasizes competitive actions and achievement. Hitting stretch targets and winning in the marketplace are dominant.		
D. The organization emphasizes permanence and stability. Efficiency, control, and smooth operations are important.		
Total	100	100

Figure 10.   Strategic Emphasis

4. Organization Glue	Now	Preferred
A. The glue that holds the organization together is loyalty and mutual trust. Commitment to this organization runs high.		
B. The glue that holds the organization together is commitment to innovation and development. There is an emphasis on being on the cutting edge.		
C. The glue that holds the organization together is the emphasis on achievement and goal accomplishment.		
D. The glue that holds the organization together is the formal rules and policies. Maintaining a smooth-running organization is important.		
Total	100	100

Figure 11.   Criteria of Success

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