Privatization and productivity in West Africa: the role of culture, trust, and ownership

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Abstract: This article addresses the cultural side of privatization in a Francophone West African country. An ethnographic study of productivity constructs was conducted to identify management issues that are likely to influence new economic policies and models of organizational behavior. The findings suggest that theories of cultural relativism explain, only in part, the difficulties in introducing new practices. Not only are cultures relative, but they are also competitive, even within the same regional and national settings. Such opposition and can negatively impact organizational transformation and new productivity goals. In this study, the solidarity of family and village bonds competed with company cultures for the trust and psychological ownership needed to support new entrepreneurial behaviors from abroad. Two European owned companies are discussed that have successfully introduced foreign models by taking all of these factors into account.

Keywords: Privatization, Organizational culture, West Africa, Ethnographic study, Psychological ownership, Organizational Trust, Cross-cultural management.

1 INTRODUCTION

Located in Francophone West Africa, the Cote d’Ivoire (Ivory Coast) like many of its African neighbors is in a period of profound economic transition as it moves toward a more capitalistic and market-driven economy. This decade has seen much of the African continent undertake various structural adjustment programs to reverse the economic decline of the 1980’s, accelerate growth, and attract desperately needed foreign capital. However, creating the infrastructures and manpower needed to support new productivity models and international competition has been a complicated and often arduous task.
The reasoning behind privatization is that companies will become more productive if they are forced to survive on their own. Without state support, organizations and their employees will show more initiative, drive, and accountability. A review of ABI Inform and PsycLit databases indicates that the study of privatization in Africa, in general, and West Africa, in particular, is in its infancy. What data are available imply that the introduction of new management models is required in nations like the Cote d'Ivoire to promote entrepreneurial behavior. Yet, prescriptions for privatization appear to be generic and do not take into account the importance of local cultures.

Research on the cross-cultural transfer of management models has traditionally taken into account theories of cultural relativity (e.g., Hofstede, 1980, [17], 1984, [18]; Laurent, 1986, [24]) which suggest that foreign models tend to fail because they are not compatible with local values and norms. My findings confirm the importance of cultural differences in explaining the difficulty in using Western models and practices to promote productivity in newly privatized companies. My work also suggests that theories of cultural relativity may be incomplete. An equally important issue may be the constraining effect of cultural ties to one's village on employees' sense of trust and psychological ownership in their work and organizations.

In Africa, in general, and in Cote d'Ivoire, one must respect the cultural heritage of the village and its hold on its members. Bonds this strong can culturally compete for and counter the loyalty needed to turn companies around. Research on trust and psychological ownership suggests that more than financial equity is required for employees to exhibit the social capital and extrarole behavior needed for anticipated productivity. These issues are rooted in the competitive power of village traditions and solidarity.

How people define and use vocabulary greatly shapes their thoughts and actions. I chose to explore the construct of productivity because my informants used this nomenclature as the reason for privatizing companies. Productivity issues were additionally highlighted in the mission statement of the country's national committee on privatization (Brou, 1997, [4]). In studying how my informants used the term productivity, I was also able to examine what beliefs and practices they thought would act as enablers and barriers to improved productivity in newly privatized companies. Similarly, I wanted to theoretically unearth the roots of productivity assumptions and how they are shaped and reinforced by Pan African cultural beliefs, in general, and by village solidarity, in particular. As patterns emerged from the data, I saw an additional need to explore issues of organizational trust and psychological ownership.

This article begins with a presentation of the study's theoretical frame and setting followed by a description of the focus questions and methodology. Categorical findings are reported and discussed in the context of beliefs about work and their ties to village customs and practices. I shall conclude with implications for theory development that offer examples from two "best practices" companies, whose financial ownership is over 50 percent European.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMES

All cultures operate from conceptual prototypes by creating belief systems to filter expectations for appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Meaning-making is reflected in the often unconscious rules that guide decision-making, values, perceptions, or how people make sense of organizational realities (Bruner, 1990, [5]; Hamill, 1990, [14]; Triandis, 1990, [46]).

2-1 Work Cultures, Entrepreneurial Behavior, and Societal Differences

Business cultures are clearly influenced by societal cultures (Hofstede, 1980, [17]). This premise is tied to the theory of cultural relativity. As the organizational study of cross-cultural work differences has evolved, this research has progressed by separating work beliefs from work practices. Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, and Sanders (1990, [22]) clearly made this distinction. Their work along with that of Adler (1986, [1]) and Laurent (1986, [24]) suggested that
professional and organizational beliefs are shaped by one's nationality while the application, in
the form of practices, of one's work is more a function of a given organization. In particular, data
from Hofstede et al. indicated that beliefs about work are shaped during our childhood and are
determined by family and societal referents. Given the early influence of kinship and community
values, it follows that these belief systems retain a great deal of power, especially in soci-
eties, such as the Cote d'Ivoire where early ties play strong roles throughout one's lifetime.

There is growing evidence that certain work behaviors such as entrepreneurial are also
subject to cultural differences (Mueller & Thomas, 1997, [29]; Yanouzas & Viega, 1997,[50]).
These researchers link entrepreneurial behavior to risk taking and innovation. Mueller and
Thomas used Hofstede's (1980, [18]) cultural dimensions instrument to study the entrepre-
naurial orientation of university students in 9 countries that were located in Asia, North
America, and Europe. He found that individuals from nations that scored higher on individu-
alismand masculinity were predisposed to be more entrepreneurial than others do other cultural
configurations. Yanouzas and Viega's research led to the construction of an instrument that
replaced Hofstede's masculinity variable with the dimension of entreprenurialism. In addition
to finding cross-country differences in entrepreneurial behavior, they found that a willingness to
take risks was more closely tied to this dimension than one's ability or willingness to be inno-

These data suggested that societal beliefs could profoundly influence workplace culture, in
general and entrepreneurial behavior, in particular. Furthermore, societal assumptions may be a
more powerful determinant of productivity expectations and the perceived kinds of entrepre-
neural behaviors required to achieve this construct than the norms of any given industry or orga-
nization.

2-2 Productivity as a Cultural Construct

How cultures define their vocabulary is a very important key to understanding how their
members conceptualize and categorize experience. This type of analysis uses the informants'
vocabulary to determine an "emic" or insiders' perspective on how concepts are defined and to
identify resulting beliefs and behavioral patterns.

The cultural study of how people reason looks at how classifications are formed, what kind
of strategies are used in forming concepts, and what rules are followed in solving problems
(Price-Williams, 1980, [34]; Sackmann, 1991, [36]). Spradley (1979, [40]) called this “concept
attainment” and suggested that reasoning is embedded in attribution theory. The anthropological
context of attribution theory concerns the process by which members of a given culture interpret
the cause of an individual's behavior, especially in performance situations (Kelley, 1967, [30];
Sillars, 1980, [39]). Furthermore, attribution theory attempts to explain the interpersonal
conflicts that occur when one's expectations and beliefs conflict with culturally foreign stimuli
(Hansen, 1995, [12]).

Researchers have studied the context of how terms are concretely and abstractly used in both
societal and organizational (e.g. Hofstede, 1984, [20]; Martin, 1993, [26]; Sackmann, 1991,
[36]) cultures. Hofstede found, for example, that the term human resource development was
defined differently in different countries. Martin found that different organizations developed
different definitions for what constituted competence. Sackmann similarly found that organizations
had their own definitions for the concepts of change and innovation. As different cultures
employ terms in different ways it follows that the notion of productivity is culturally sensitive.
Thus, privatization has often caused managers and employees to adopt not only new models, but
also new cultural definitions of productivity (Sztum, 1997, [43]; Woods, 1995, [49]).

2-3 Trust and Social Capital

Trust, too, is culturally bound and represents a common set of ethical norms that are habitu-
ally associated with the virtues of truth-telling, dependability and loyalty. Fukuyama's (1995)
theory of trust suggests that these qualities are crucial to the smooth functioning and advancement of a national economy as well as for a given business. High-trust societies and organizations are advantageous because they are more easier to manage and they are more cost-effective. Conversely, distrustful cultures are associated with higher costs because of the supervisory personnel, legal contracts and other provisions needed to monitor behavior and ensure honest cooperation. High-trust cultures are also more innovative because they foster the emergence of what Fukuyama calls "social capital." Social capital occurs when a wide variety of social relationships are permitted to emerge. These groupings are synergistic and not afraid to reject tradition if it will lead to new ideas and more effective problem-solving approaches.

Fukuyama notes that virtually all economic endeavors start out as family businesses; that is businesses that are both owned and managed by families. However, family management does not always play a positive role in promoting economic growth. Organizational bonds based on kinship leads to a strong distrust of outsiders. Such cultures foster a kind of insider/outside mentality which counters the emergence of trust and social capital. Societies that have very strong families but relatively weak bonds of trust among people unrelated to one another will tend to be dominated by family run businesses. My findings suggest that this characteristic, in the form of ethnic clans, describes the vast majority of Ivorian private and newly privatized businesses. Thus, Cote d'Ivoire and its organizations can be depicted as low-trust cultures that possess little social capital.

2-4 Extrarole Behavior and Psychological Ownership

The notion of extrarole behavior is important in newly privatized companies in order to break the cycle of conformity, compliance, and apathy which is characteristic of nonentrepreneurial work cultures. Questions about what will cause employees to go the extra mile and assume more responsibility as well what will cause employees to remain loyal and defend the company in hard times are tied to emerging literature on psychological ownership.

Pierce, Van Dyne, and Cummings (1992, [32]) defined psychological ownership as a state where the employee feels as though the target of ownership or a piece of that target is theirs. This sense of ownership can cause employees to demonstrate extrarole behavior (Vandewalle, Van Dyne & Kostova, 1995, [48]). This research complements study on organizational commitment (e.g., Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979, [30]; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986, [31]) and builds on research on financial ownership and profit sharing (e.g., Buchko, 1992, [6]; Florkowski, 1987, [9]) by theoretically suggesting that financial ownership or legal status as owner or nonowner alone can not positively influence extrarole behavior and in turn influence a firm's productivity, quality, turnover, and absenteeism (Pierce, Rubenfeld, & Morgan 1991, [33]; Pierce et al., 1992, [33]).

Pierce et al. (1991, [33]) hypothesized that psychological ownership in organizations occurs when the following are present: 1) meaningful equity possession in the form of employee stock option plans (ESOP) or cooperatives, 2) full access to information about the company's health and market strategies, and 3) influence in the forms of shared decision-making and participative management. Inherent in this model is managerial philosophical commitment that fosters the legitimacy of these ownership expectations. In addition, managers must provide employees the necessary training to deal with information and shared decision-making responsibilities. In Cote d'Ivoire, the sharing of equity and access to information are aspects of this model that characterize village solidarity. However, strict hierarchies prohibit shared decision-making and management. In business and industry, I found little evidence of any of the three factors needed to support psychological ownership.
3 THE SETTING

An important aspect of ethnographic research is the recognition that settings shape the context of cultural meaning making. In Cote d'Ivoire, it is important to understand business development in the context of its political and economic history. Meanwhile, employee behaviors are best understood by a thick description of social ties. In Cote d'Ivoire, one's village is where social bonding begins and where beliefs about work and relationships are learned and reinforced. Because village culture plays an important role in influencing belief systems, I shall begin with a brief overview of the political and economic background followed by a description of the village as a cultural setting.

3-1 The Political and Economic Background

With one of the largest land areas (approximately 300,000 kilometers (KM) and population (approximately 13 million), the Cote d'Ivoire has natural and human resources that have been critical to past regional growth. Since independence, this country has enjoyed approximately 35 years of relative political harmony, peace with its neighbors, and good relations with its former European colonizer. For the first 30 years of its national history, the country's government was characterized by single-party control that reconciled diversity among its five key ethnic groups and 60 major tribes. Huge state-controlled corporations dominated the economy and made fortunes for its political elite. However, in the early 1980's, prosperity from its two major exports, coffee and cocoa, declined. High population growth rates coupled with a crash in international market demand for key agricultural products caused a serious depression. A decade later, the country implemented structural reforms and began to aggressively privatize their state owned companies. It was hoped that economic change would make companies profitable again and attract large amounts of foreign capital to newly created and existing private enterprise.

Cote d'Ivoire's governmental commission for privatization has identified 60 companies to be privatized (Brou, 1997, [4]). To date, 37 companies have been sold. Investment formulas vary from company to company. The government typically retains an average of 10 per cent of the shares to ensure "the interest of the people." Approximately two per cent of a company's stock is required by law to be made available to employees in the form of profit sharing and stock options. The remainder is sold to local and foreign investors. An important aspect of the privatization movement is its heavy dependence on foreign capital as local funding is weak.

3-2 The Village as a Cultural Referent

Ivorian enterprise is situated in urban areas with the vast majority of companies located in Abidjan, a city with a growing population of over three million. I chose to introduce the social setting of the village, earlier in this article, as a state of mind in order to emphasize its importance in all aspects of work and personal life. Although Ivorian managers and their employees live and work, for the most part, in a city, they often return both physically and metaphorically to their village of origin. I wish to point out that the informants in my study used the term village to describe the community where their most immediate kin lived. Their references to the village were also used in a symbolic sense as they described the importance of kinship ties in the form of family, tribe, and ethnic relations.

My own experience, in conducting the research reported in this article, will illustrate this phenomenon. As I gathered data for this study, I was often told that, "Every Ivorian has a village." This response was designed to help me understand the draw of the village on workers in urban companies. I became intrigued by the "power" of the village because of comments such as the following: "Jacques is in the village. I don't know when he will be back."

An informant would shrug as his body language told me that this was normal behavior. I learned that planning, for example, was difficult and that efficiency was often compromised because deadlines were hard to meet. Quality, too, was a problem as mistakes were allowed to
slip through the system because of employees' inattention or absenteeism. In short, work could be interrupted at any time with a call saying that there was a funeral in so and so's village. Interestingly enough, the name of the village was never mentioned and the amount of time they would be gone was never known. It was as though the village existed as almost a state of mind, known only to insiders, where one disappeared for indefinite periods of time....

In Cote d'Ivoire, there are five major ethnic groups and over 60 recognized tribal clans, each with its own tribal language. Historically, ethnic and tribal alliances have preceded allegiance to a nation state. In pre-colonial times, these ethnic groups were a part of a large West African empire that tended to bind ethnic groups under one hegemony while governance was decentralized.

Cote d'Ivoire was created as a nation state by the French, in the 1880's. Its boundaries reflected more the political balance of power between colonial rivals than the process of ethnic consolidation that characterized earlier times. For example, the Akan ethnicity was split between Ghana and SouthEastern Cote d'Ivoire. In addition, antagonistic tribes were often thrown together. As a result, political boundaries were mostly ignored as ethnic groups retreated into the relative security and familiarity of their "own kind."

The French created a highly controlled public administration that relied on local compliance to provide resources for Mother France. As one informant said: "We were subtly taught that we were there to support the French.” Another informant said: "We were taught that our traditions and values were inferior to those of the French."

Thus, modern Ivorians inherited a hybrid system of centralized governance superimposed on traditional and conflicting values that were tied to ethnicity. Independence represented a transfer of political power and riches accumulated during the colonial period. An unrealistic expectation was created of a centralized government that would redistribute wealth and raise everyone's standard of living. Similarly, a sense of entitlement arose in the mind of the average citizen. However, entitlement expectations did not lead to a psychological transfer of loyalty to Cote d'Ivoire as a nation state as the central government evolved into a place for ethnic groups to vie for control. Thus, one's sense of loyalty and identity continued to remain centered on one's ethnic ties and contributed to feelings of apathy for the central government. It is this kind of passive mentality that still characterizes the lack of responsibility that the average government worker has towards his work for the state. An informant said: "If it belongs to the state, it belongs to no one."

As a result government resources were viewed as fair game for building ethnic bases of political and economic power. This phenomenon continues today. At all levels of government, for example, I heard colleagues and informants describe their promotional opportunities in relation to the absence or presence of their ethnic ties to key decision-makers.

Former President Houphouet-Boigny was Cote d'Ivoire's founding father and 30-year president. His use of power reflected the importance of kinship ties. One of his first challenges was the creation of a nation, an unnatural concept given the legacy of the French and the country's own internal ethnic discord. As president, his concentric center of influence emanated from his own family, the Akoue, and his ethnic group, the Akan. Overnight, Houphouet-Boigny became a mythical hero who had peacefully imposed his will upon the French by establishing Cote d'Ivoire as an independent nation ideologically based on a social welfare economy. He encouraged the participation of all ethnic clans and promoted the intermarriage between ethnic groups. Nevertheless Cote d'Ivoire was, in essence, a one party system and his own kin were the favored elite. While Houphouet-Boigny did achieve peace among the diverse ethnic and tribal groups in Cote d'Ivoire, he did not succeed in causing a solid national identity to take hold. It was the Ivorian's sense of solidarity to his village that continued to define his sense of loyalty.
3-3  Pan African Village Beliefs

Certain characteristics are considered true for African groups (Benet, 1970, [2]; Hofstede, 1980, [17]; Khorza, 1993, [23]; Lessem, 1993, [25]; Triandis, 1995, [46]). In general, they are consensual; nurturing predisposed to high gaps in power distance and appears to be less anxious about the future than other cultural groups. For these reasons, African cultures tend to share wealth and discuss decisions of importance as a community. They also tend to be hierarchical and less likely to question authority, and deviate from the norm.

These beliefs impact what Benet called the economic psychology of Africans. His work indicated that the only riches are those that can be shared with the community. Lessem's research in South Africa, for example, illustrated this premise by describing profit motives as the following: "Profit is a vote of confidence given by an individual's society for services rendered to it. The more a communal person is willing to give and share, the more respected one becomes" (p. 36). Informants in my study confirmed this axiom. I was told that: "To be African is to assist."

Benet's theory of economic psychology also implied that wealth should be visible to the community. Therefore, the economic emphasis is on image and the display of income rather than on capital reinvestment and savings. One of my informants confirmed this finding with the following illustration: "When an Ivorian invests, he buys himself a car to drive to the village.” Another of my informants gave an example through the following story: "One day Mohammed borrowed money from the company to make a down payment at a local store on a refrigerator. Once bought, he sold it on the sidewalk for a quarter of the sale price. Why, because he did not want the refrigerator, he wanted the cash to give to someone in the village or to buy a nice suit of clothes to wear when he went home to the village. In the meantime, he forgot that he was in debt for the original price of the refrigerator."

Benet's research also emphasized the importance of participation in village activities and rituals such as funerals. Time for village socializing is both ritualistic and symbolic. Funerals for example are highly symbolic of the tribal respect and deference that constitute the central premise of family obligation. As the extended family concept is the norm, family affiliation is large and tends to include an entire village. Failure to attend a family funeral is cause for social rejection. An informant illustrated the power of family and funeral obligations in Cote d’Ivoire through the following story: "A high ranking Minister recently died and was refused burial in his native village. No one from his tribe or family came to his funeral. He was ostracized because he did not take care of his community once he became a great person nor did he attend village funerals. He was too busy. And so he was forgotten and he lost his village. Now he has no family to join in heaven."

Having the leisure time to spend time in the village is critical to the solidarity of village life. Several informants in my study confirmed this point as they rejected aspects of American and Japanese management models. One informant said: "Americans believe that time is money. We don't believe that." Another informant said: "The Japanese work constantly. We can not do that."

3-4  Similarities and Differences in Cote d'Ivoire

My informants talked a lot about kinship ties as determinants similarity of and difference in Cote d'Ivoire. In discussing the importance of kinship ties, I would like to point out that my informants used the terms ethnicity, tribe, family, and village interchangeably. The kinship ties that may be the most powerful in Ivorian enterprise were thought to be the ethnicity of the Akan who are often own or lead large traditionally structured companies. The ethnic group that was thought to be the most different was the Dioula who tended to dominate small commerce and the informal economy. These two groups almost equal in size and are the largest in terms of population of the five key ethnic groups. For this reason, I shall compare the characteristics of these two groups.
The Akan. While the Akan are considered important for two reasons. First, their members live in the industrialized southeastern part of the country. This is where Abidjan, the country's economic capital is located. Second, former President Houphouet-Boigny, was Akan. Informants in a member check focus group said: "Akans are like kings. They rule politically and economically."

In Toungara's (1990, [45]) study of the Akan, productivity was defined as "good for the collective whole." Wealth was to be shared and "brothers and sisters" were responsible for providing for the less able in their families, tribes, and ethnic group. In essence, a kind of social welfare state prevailed in the Akan village. For Africans, in general, and the Akan, in particular, Toungara found that peace and harmony were prerequisite to village's ability to be productive. Productivity was defined as attending to food and shelter needs. The power and responsibility for assuring peace rested with the Chief. He acted as a father figure for his tribe that consisted of concentric circles of influence. As a paternalistic ruler, decision-making and control rested with the Chief and his council of elders. Final decision-making authority rested with the Chief. His used his power to reduce or eliminate dissention through oaths of allegiance and through the use of pardons. The chief was also responsible for negotiating peace with foreign tribes and nationalities. Thus, a large power distance existed between rulers and followers while small power distances existed among equals within the community. Within a given village, differences were based on age, close family ties to the chief, or being designated as a village elder. One informant confirmed the importance of these differences within the traditional community hierarchy with the following observation: "A Ph.D. does not have the right to talk in the village if he is not at the right point in the hierarchy." Finally the notion of hierarchy among families as a kind of natural social order was expressed with the following common African saying: "There are "big" people, that is people with status and power, in the world because "small" people exist."

Prosperity was defined as the "culture of portioning." An Akan informant explained the following: "Portioning means that you share by simply giving to others in your family. You support them without requiring them to do anything for this money."

The burden of family obligations was discussed as highly taxing for individuals on all organizational levels. Workers were expected to regularly contribute to their village’s income and they were expected to maintain a certain image when returning home by displaying expensive cars and clothes. Moreover, they were expected to make contributions each time they returned home for a funeral or a marriage. Not only were such recorded expectations expensive, but they were often hard to anticipate. At a recent regional conference, held in Abidjan, on the problem of intellectual brain drain, many expatriates said that one reason they preferred to live abroad was because it was easier to control and anticipate financial obligations to their villages. As an example, one expatriate, who typically returns to his village every four to five years said that he generally too between three and five thousand dollars to pay for his “back death dues.” Ivorians, from all five ethnic groups, return to their village at least once a month. Many return once a week.

Likewise, informants told me that village dependencies countered risk-taking behaviors. The exception is the Dioula. An Akan informant said the following: "If you fail, you are blamed for your mistakes and risks, because it lets the village down – and the village is dependent on you."

The Dioula. The importance of peace and hierarchy also shape the belief systems of the Dioula. However, the Dioula form an interesting contrast because they believe themselves to be more entrepreneurial than the other four ethnic groups. Both Dioula and non-Dioula informants, in my study confirmed this tendency. The informants said that Dioula entrepreneurialism was governed by their "taste for risk." In exploring their risk-taking behavior, I learned that entrepreneurship and the concept of prosperity were influenced in the following way: We are not afraid of taking risks. Our faith (The Dioula are Muslim.) teaches us that God, rather than man, has the power to provide the opportunity to achieve. If you have problems, don't make a drama out of it. Tough times are only meant to test you. If you show God that you are willing to keep
trying during the tough times, he will reward you with more prosperity than before. There is no real sense of failure. It is God's will." The Dioula emphasized that entrepreneurship is based on risk. Because they are not afraid of risk, they believe that they are more capable, than the other ethnic groups, of becoming entrepreneurial.

Religion plays a part in how the Dioula view risk. As Muslims they view God as a benevolent controller of their fate. About 40 per cent of the Cote d'Ivoire is Muslim while another 25 to 30 per cent of the population are Christian. The Akan are Christian. Remaining Ivorians are atheist or adhere to local African religions which also highly deterministic. The Dioula and Akan are the two ethnic groups that are clearly aligned with either the Muslim or Christian faith. The other three ethnic groups are not as clearly dominated by a given religious tradition. In Cote d'Ivoire, religious tolerance is both an espoused and an enacted practice.

It is this concept of risk that tends to differentiate the Dioula from other Ivorians. Additionally, the Dioula vary in how they support their village. When a Dioula does well, he motivates the other members of his village to succeed. He uses his prosperity to contribute back to the group, not as a hand out, but in the form of capital which will help another family member "get started." Moreover, I was told that the Dioula are more individualistic.

In part, differences between the Dioula and other ethnic groups in Cote d'Ivoire appear to support Triandis' (1990, [47]) argument that collective societies promote passive behaviors that are at odds with the aggressive and risk-taking behaviors typically found in more individualistic cultures. While the Dioula may be more entrepreneurial and their handling of shared wealth is different from other groups, their concept of ethnic solidarity and its implications for trust and psychological ownership in the protection and the defense of one's family and village is just as strong.

An important corollary to Benet's (1970, [2]) findings is that economic success in itself does not lead to upward social mobility. In fact, if achieved outside of the group, it may even lead to social ostracism. This finding is in concert with data from my study about the behavioral expectations of all of Cote d'Ivoire's ethnic groups.

4 DATA COLLECTION

I collected data from senior and mid-level managers. My decision to focus on the socially rooted cultural frames of management was theoretically grounded in the cultural power of organizational leaders (Schein, 1985, 1990, [37]). I thus felt that it was important to understand the concept of productivity and its workplace implications from the perspective of those that would guide and influence reform efforts. I first conducted interviews in state owned organizations to gain a baseline for organizational reform. I then collected data in newly privatized companies to gain a sense of the problems they were encountering during their transition. Finally, I collected data from companies that were already private to see if there was a difference in the perspectives of companies who had never experienced state ownership. A description of the informants, data gathering and analysis techniques follow.

4-1 Sampling

The theory-driven sample (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, [10]; Strauss and Corbin, 1990, [42]) consisted of 90 intensive ethnographic interviews (Spradley, 1979, [40]) with senior and mid-level managers. Interviews were conducted in the private, transitioning, and state sectors. Private companies were those who had been private for five years or more. Transitioning companies were those that had sold within the last five years. State owned organizations were those that would not be sold as part of the privatization movement. Senior level managers were at the chief executive officer (CEO) or chief operating officer (COO) level whereas mid-level managers were drawn from three functional areas: human resources, marketing, and finance.
4-2  Focus Questions

Key informants suggested that the desire to privatize was framed by the need for enterprise to be more productive. The informants indicated that greater productivity would lead to greater profitability and hence a better economy. For this reason, I decided to link the study’s questions to how the informants defined and used productivity constructs. These issues led to the following focus questions:

1. How do informants define organizational and individual productivity?
2. What do the informants see as necessary organizational that support and individual behaviors needed to reach their definitions of productivity?
3. How do informants define constraints to productive behavior?

It is important to note that these focus questions did not constitute testable hypotheses. Instead, they guided and helped focus my exploration of cultural assumptions.

I or another American or an Ivorian researcher individually interviewed all informants in French. An American and an Ivorian jointly conducted a quarter of the interviews. Procedurally, the informants were asked to define their own concept of productivity in terms of their organization and their employees. Informants were then asked to describe both current and ideal management practices and employee development models. Finally, informants were asked to describe organizational constraints, individual behaviors, and societal values that could impede productive work behavior. Asking informants to tell one or more stories to illustrate their points additionally captured illustrations and examples. Stories as cultural artifacts have been shown to be powerful illustrations of belief systems (Boje, 1991, [3]; Hansen and Kahnweiler, 1993, [13]; Martin, 1982, [27]).

4-3  Gathering the data

The data were collected over a three-year period, which consisted of meetings with key informants and government officials in December, 1994, interviews from December 1995 through March 1996, and the confirmation of identified patterns in March and April of 1997. Interviewing lasted until theoretical saturation of the data had occurred (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, [10]).

Reviewing government reports on privatization and university and continuing education curricula triangulated interview data. Additional data analyzed in this study included interviews with individuals who had worked in all three organizational sectors and included private consultants who regularly provided development seminars, students who had recently completed internships, and with university and faculty who remained in contact with their alumni. Observation also occurred at company sponsored continuing education sessions, professional human resource association meetings, and workshops on economic development and privatization that were sponsored by external funding agencies or by the Ivorian government. Finally, a log was kept of my data collection experiences. I also logged my own dealings with government officials to triangulate public sector behaviors related to communication, decision-making, and general management that were reported by my informants.

4-4  Categorical Development

All interview data were recorded, transcribed and coded (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, [42]). Categorical development followed procedures for open and axial coding. Selective coding was then used to identify categorical links. Using the constant comparison method (Miles and Huberman, 1984, [31]), these links led to data convergence in the form of emergent themes. I documented my thinking by the process of memoing (Strauss, 1987, [41]), that is, recording my ideas on index cards to capture the connections between the data. The cards were shifted around to check the relationship of codes, to see if codes were separate or a property or phase of another
code. Once the data were more stable, they were entered and the codes were managed by using NUD.IST software. Efforts to ensure internal validity involved the triangulation of the data analysis through an American-Ivorian team of multiple analysts (Tammivaara and Enright, 1986, [44]). Two teams independently listened to tapes, reviewed transcripts, and reviewed coding schemes and emerging patterns. Findings and emergent themes were additionally confirmed via key informants and member checks in each of the three organizational sectors.

5 THE FINDINGS

Sackmann's (1991, [36]) four-component framework of cultural knowledge provided a typology for analyzing the findings. The first level reports how the informants define their goals and criteria for productive organizations and employees. These definitions do not, however, indicate that they are typically achieved. Level two explains what organizations currently do to ensure productivity while level three reports what can be done to improve these measures. This study's data in levels two and three concern, for the most part, management style. Level four describes informant assumptions that underlie the first three knowledge levels.

5-1 Level One: Dictionary Knowledge: The "what is"

The informants defined organizational productivity in terms of business objectives and profit margins. They saw productive organizations as those that were internationally competitive, achieved optimal use of their employees, and produced quality customer-focused products in a timely manner. Productive employees were technically competent, independent problem-solvers, and able to do their work with little supervision. Such employees made few mistakes and completed their work on time. Regarding these points, one informant said: "A productive employee is responsible for his own work. He solves problems independently and monitors the quality of his own actions." Several informants in both the private and transitioning sectors said: "It is hard to find the right kind of employee. I look for people who have never worked in the public sector. I need people with energy and creativity."

Concerning the definition of a good manager, the following comments were noted: A good manager is like a father. He must create a family climate. He must be firm, but also flexible." Comments were divided as to whether the role of management was mostly to provide structure or to deal with people. These comments are illustrative: "The role of the manager is to coordinate and control the standards. "Management is moving beyond administration. It is about working with men."

5-2 Level Two: Directionary Knowledge. The "how"

These findings identify formal and unwritten rules for how roles and tasks are carried out. Data from this level also includes rules for relationships and processes associated with change. Informants primarily focused on employee behaviors in describing procedures for ensuring productivity.

To ensure cost-effective quality products in a timely manner, the informants explained that current work cultures often required the micro-management of employees. This attention to detail and lack of shared decision making was necessary to compensate for employees' disinterest or inability to think independently and take responsibility for their work. An informant said: "Everyday one must intervene (as a manager) for things to advance." Another informant additionally commented: "As soon as you let go, everything can fall apart."

The informants often distrusted their employees' technical expertise. They explained that hiring and promotional decisions were influenced by nepotism (in the form of family or ethnic ties) or by one's credentials in the form of degrees (that is, the level of one's educational training as opposed to its technical relevancy to their work) and association with high profile projects.
Informants also explained that it was often hard to effectively manage their overhead costs because of employee mistakes and because they often employed more personnel than needed to complete a job. Informants also reported difficulties associated with performance accountability and dependability. Managers, especially in the transitioning and state sectors, were unable to effectively sanction employees for inappropriate behavior because of long administrative delays. Unexpected absenteeism due to family funerals or other problems were uniformly cited in all three organizational sectors. Concern for corruption and graft of various kinds was also expressed about employees with financial responsibilities. In fact, financial rewards were reported by all informants to be the greatest motivator or sanction on all organizational levels. Finally, it was suggested that change was hard to implement and often yielded confusing results. One informant said: "You know, both the managers and the employees will smile and agree to be different - but nothing will really change."

5-3  Level Three: Recipe Knowledge. The "should"

Recipe knowledge consists of remedies for improving ways to carry out roles and tasks. Informants from both senior and mid-level management positions and in all organizational sectors indicated that current micro-management approaches were time consuming and costly. Instead, they suggested that managers should practice a more open and participative style of management. An informant said: "Managers must be willing to listen to their employees." Another informant echoed this thought: "We must ask people how we can improve the process."

Another said the following: "Employees feel empowered when they are consulted and informed. It is important for them to feel recognized." Moreover, informants from all sectors and on all levels of management uniformly said: "We must make it possible for our employees to assume greater responsibility for their work and greater involvement in the decision-making process." In talking about the ideal employee, an informant said: I want us to develop curiosity in people. I want people who will not take no for an answer. Those who will not be stopped by the traditional hierarchy." Thus greater employee responsibility was strongly seen as a way to creatively and efficiently foster the philosophies of organizational learning and continuous improvement. Likewise, the informants said that employees should be better informed about the relationship of their work to the business objectives or the public mission of their organization. Moreover, managers should be able to clearly define and communicate work criteria and purposes. An informant said: "Managers must be able assess their employees’ comprehension and competency levels so that expectations can be explained in a way the employees will understand."

The informants additionally called for better quality control measures and greater adherence to these processes. As they discussed accountability issues, they indicated that managers should be willing to take risks with their employees and permit them more independence. Likewise, employees should be directly answerable and rewarded accordingly for the consequences of their actions. The issue of sanctioning emerged often in the data. An informant said: "Managers must not be afraid to sanction, and employees must believe that their behavior has consequences." Another informant said:

"You must sanction if the employee is not doing well. You can not be sentimental, and you must not worry if people think that you are not a nice person." Finally, an informant said the following: "Rules must be communicated along with sanctions. If not, people will do whatever they want... nothing will get done." The informants also said that promotions and bonuses should be based on performance and not credentials or nepotism.

5-4  Level Four: Axiomatic Knowledge. The "why"

Data from this level of analysis reports attempts by the informants to justify current practices and behavioral expectations. The informants additionally tried to explain why their desired
"recipes" for organizational improvement were difficult to attain. The informants qualified their explanations in this section by indicating that espoused organizational goals and practices did not always reflect the enacted managerial and employee actions that they recounted in level two of this analysis. They reported that organizations in all three sectors commonly had standard procedures for administrative and operational processes as well as objective criteria for organizational and employee performance. However, the operational use of these standards was habitually diluted or sabotaged by assumptions about work and interpersonal relationships that were rooted in village and tribal traditions. These beliefs, while often unconscious, nevertheless influenced work behaviors on all levels in both foreign and locally owned organizations.

The data fell into six categories, which consisted of beliefs about solidarity and kinship ties, entitlement and obligation, uncertainty and a lack of control, hierarchy, image and harmony. I will begin with a discussion of solidarity and kinship ties. In essence, this theme drives the other five.

**Figure 1: The importance of solidarity and kinship**

Solidarity and Kinship Ties. The informants gave many examples concerning the importance of family and community ties and their interference in everyday and business life. This kind of solidarity was an important consideration on all socio-economic levels. An informant said: "Many worries plague a manager in the workplace. He may wear many hats. For example, he may be his village's Chief, its financial advisor, and the Chief of his own family." Not only did individuals fret about the needs of their kin while on the job, but they were expected to actively support these ties through favoritism in decision making and job opportunities. Moreover, jobs were often unnecessarily created in order to provide employment for a "kinsman" in need. In such situations, the concept of solidarity was more important than efficient workflows, lean organizational structures, and low profit margins. An informant said: "Managers are obligated to hire their relatives in order to have a means of giving them money on a regular basis."

The informants indicated that such fealties not only nurtured community bonds, but, also fostered territoriality, distrust, and divisiveness among different ethnic groups in all organizations. Because of these solidarity ties, objective decision-making, information sharing, teamwork, participative management, and performance based promotion and hiring criteria were often impeded by tribal and ethnic loyalties. An informant gave the following example to illustrate the power of kinship ties: "I know a case of a CEO in the next building who would shake in his shoes every time he entered his own building. Why? Because the doorman was a close relative of the chairman of the board. " Finally, the informants noted that the downsizing that often accompanied the privatization of a company was complicated by family dependencies. An informant said: "When you fire someone, you fire a village."

Obligation and Entitlement. The informants often related accountability and sanctioning problems to village expectations. An informant said: "In the village, all mistakes are forgiven and forgotten as long as a person respects his elders and takes care of his village and family obligations (ceremonial and financial). He, too, will be cared for in time of need."

As the private sector is still relatively young, most informants had spent their professional careers performing in accordance with government conventions. Thus, they tended to reference negative workplace behavior with practices that they did not like in state-owned companies. Informants uniformly used the term "entitlement" when speaking about government enterprise. The following informant's comment suggested that government norms reflected many village
traditions: "In government organizations, it takes too long to sanction employees. A manager must complete a lot of paperwork and his request must go through a series of advisory councils, like in the village. It can take several months before a manager has permission to leverage a sanction. By that time, everyone has forgotten the problem - especially the employee... and so the problem continues."

It is not surprising that informants, regardless of their ethnic background, described village attitudes toward work as passive. The Dioula were the exception. The informants from the other ethnic groups explained that this inertia was sustained by a government policy of state subsidies and by a dependence on financial support from family members who lived and worked in cities such as Abidjan. The practice of entitlement, thus, did little to encourage individuals as children in their villages and also later as adults as managers or employees in private or public sector companies to surpass performance expectations and practice entrepreneurial behaviors. In this regard, the concept of entitlement worked two ways. It supported passive behavior while reinforcing one's concept of obligation to village and family. As discussed earlier in this article, this interdependence discouraged behaviors associated with innovation and risk. With regard to the concept of risk, an informant offered this comment: "How can you take risks when your salary supports the whole village?"

The politics of entitlement and tribal obligation embedded in reward systems did not encourage competition and the belief in upward mobility based on one's organizational loyalty or high performance. Likewise, entitlement and obligation beliefs did not encourage innovation. Another informant said: "Compliance is hiring one's relatives." Again, the Dioula were the exception. While they believed in a "higher being" that controlled their destiny, and while they favored their kin in hiring decisions, they did not engage their relatives unless they were willing to take risks, be innovative, and perform competently.

Uncertainty and Lack of Control. This category concerned the lack of planning in organizations. The informants said that little planning took place because they did not know how to plan and because they did not believe that they were able to make plans that they could carry out. There was a particularly great concern for the lack of strategic planning in Ivorian organizations. The informants linked their lack of expertise to their upbringing and explained that they had little formal or informal opportunity to learn the critical inquiry, reflection and problem-solving skills needed to create strategic plans. Child rearing and educational practices were discussed. As children, they were taught to never question their elders. They explained that all levels of education, including university training, were heavily influenced by French instructional methods. This mode of teaching was highly didactic and tended to promote passive learning. In such cases, the teacher was the expert and the student was the passive recipient of new knowledge. Therefore, they learned theory without application or critique. These points were confirmed by faculty from the National University.

The informants related their inability to develop and control plans to their inability to predict the needs of their families. One informant said the following: "Africans do not plan beyond today. They wait until things get really bad - then they do something. There is no point in being proactive. There are too many pressures (family) beyond their control." In addition, a certain skepticism emerged in the data regarding the power of individual accomplishment. An informant said: "Many people believe that if they succeed, it is their destiny."

A sense of helplessness about their ability to plan promoted reactive and short-term thinking. This approach affected companies in several ways. It curtailed their use of current and future resources and diminished their ability to anticipate market demand. The lack of strategy and planning also affected their reinvestment strategies. This premise was illustrated by the following informant story: "Let's take a fellow who is in the business of selling bonbons. He buys a box for 500 francs and then sells them for 700 francs yielding a profit of 200 francs. He uses 100 francs to pay for his personal and operating expenses. He now has a little extra in his pocket. Before he knows it, someone from his family asks for 20 francs, another asks for 10 and so on... and soon he has no francs to reinvest in his business... and so, he is out of business. He
simply can not resist the demands of his family. Now generalize this tendency to the running of a large business. What this man does not realize is that if he does not sometimes say no to his family, he will not have a business. Without a business, he can not continue to respond to the needs of his family...." (Note that the term francs refer to the Central African Franc.) Also discussed was the lack of clear communication and information sharing needed to devise and monitor plans. The informants indicated that managers often did not explain the relationship between given performance needs and the companies business objectives. The informants indicated that a lack of faith in their own skills caused many managers to distance themselves from their subordinates. This lack of control and confidence in managerial competence were outcomes of subjective hiring and promotional methods. Bias in personnel decisions was heavily subject to family pressures to favor kin and ethnic relations.

Hierarchy. An attempt to explain directive, paternalistic management styles caused informants to return to how they were raised and educated. At school and especially in the village, informants were expected to show respect for the authority accorded to one's elders. The term "little or big brother," for example, was typically used to informally illustrate a hierarchy of family or tribal relationships among individuals working in the same company. An informant indicated that conversations initiated by junior members of the tribe often began as: "I know that you are my big brother but...." This informant explained that such beginnings were akin to expressions of deference such as "with all due respect..." Informants explained that these ties complicated work relations especially between young managers and older subordinates. Moreover, they explained that the scope of these relationships was large. The concept of a brother or sister was not limited to one's immediate family. These familial terms could refer to an entire village or ethnic group as there is no word for niece, nephew, or cousin in many tribal languages.

Image. The need to display wealth and impress one's kin is another form of obligation which created an additional financial burden for the Ivorian. The informants reported that salaries, in general, were low. This trend coupled with recent currency devaluations and an overall recession in the national economy made village monetary contributions very expensive. Low salaries also contributed to motivational problems. One informant illustrated the problem with the following common saying: "A small salary equals small work." I was uniformly told that Ivorians were motivated by money. Key informants who reviewed my data told me that most Ivorians were too low on Maslow's hierarchy to be inspired by the challenge and fulfillment of one's job. Such desires were true of young Ivorians who were new to the workplace. However, the longer one worked, the greater were one's family responsibilities. As these image and financial obligations rose so did the need for more money. However, these obligations seldom keep pace with salary increases causing graft and other forms of financial corruption to become the norm. One informant expressed this tendency: "If your hand is not in the till, people will think that you are an extraterrestrial." Another informant said: "A respected boss is one with a lot of money - but no one asks where it came from."

Harmony. Finally, informants reported that it was hard to objectively address the conflict that often accompanied problems in quality control, in the identification of change needs, and the implementation of new strategies. In addition to the complexity of familial ties, the informants revealed that Africans do not like to give critical feedback and that they shy away from disharmony. An informant said: "Africans are warm. They must find warmth and harmony in the workplace." Another informant said: "An Ivorian prefers to hide in his pain. He does not like to be aggressive like the Cameroonian or the Senegalese." Informants again referred to the importance of image and the need to avoid embarrassing themselves or others. This, too, complicated the sanctioning of inappropriate behavior. In this context, this difficulty was explained in several ways. One informant said the following: "Africans do not like conflict. They also do not like to be the bearers of ill tidings." Another concluded: "After all, what if the facts are beyond man's control, what if it is not the person's fault...."
6 DISCUSSION

Data from the four levels of cultural knowledge about productivity yielded emerging patterns of informant expectations about current and desired organizational behavior.

Level one dictionary data suggested that the informants defined organizational and employee productivity as quality products produced on time by the least number of required employees who can solve their own problems and be responsible for the excellence of their own work. However, informant data from level two, the directionary level, suggested that managers micro-manage their employees as they attempted to ensure these productivity goals. Micro-management was necessary because managers did not trust their employees’ technical skills and their attitudes concerning accountability and responsibility. Yet, recipe data indicated an undercurrent of tension and disconnect between levels one and two of this categorical analysis. Both senior and mid-level manager informants suggested that employees should be empowered and organizations should be fostering the principles of organizational learning. Data from level four, the axiomatic level, explained cultural differences in workplace behaviors. Equally powerful was the ability of data from this level to uncover sources of distrust and a lack of psychological ownership.

It is significant that the concerns about organizational and employee development were linked to attitudinal issues and not to the lack of technical competency. For this reason it is not surprising that differences in functional responsibilities did not emerge. Differences based on position were seen in the concreteness of examples. Senior level managers tended to be more conceptual and talked more in societal terms. The concept of privatization as an economic policy designed to impact the country’s society was conveyed in their speech. Mid-level managers tended to focus more on the need for their individual company or section to be more profitable. These managers, for example, described productivity measures as per unit of work whereas senior level informants talked in terms of overall output production.

Finally, it is notable that the patterns were common to all three organizational sectors. Even the private sector wished to be “more private.” They defined “being private” as being more entrepreneurial and efficient. In part, such comments may have reflected the small size of this sector. Prior to privatization, only about 20 per cent of business and industry were privately owned. Such comments may also have reflected the power of village culture in the workplace, regardless of the sector. Finally, it is also noteworthy that the public sector wished to incorporate what they saw as "private sector" attitudes and practices into their own work settings. The greatest anxiety was noted in the transitioning sector. As one informant said: "It is like throwing a 30 year-old child out of its home and telling it that it has five years to figure out how to survive on its own. This can be very frightening. Changing behaviors this embedded is very hard."

7 IMPLICATIONS

The data reported in this study emphasized the human side of work. Thus, the informants believed that productivity would be most effectively enhanced through a change in their own work behaviors, rather than through massive equipment or financial acquisitions. While the data from levels one and three of my analysis indicated that the informants had been exposed to management theories from more Western and industrialized nations, data from levels two and four suggested an apparent lack of application.

7-1 Productivity and Privatization

The desire to privatize, westernize, and capitalize is very strong. This aspiration was especially ardent among senior and mid-level managers, many of whom have been educated by Europeans both locally and abroad and who now act as cultural translators for foreign investors. However, despite 70 years of French colonial rule plus almost another 40 years of trade and
political and military support from France, this country has not, nor is it likely to change its
cultural core values and its basic class structure or diminish its family and village loyalties. These cultural frames are strongly embedded.

Cultural Differences in Work Behavior. Human behavior is greatly shaped by one's cultural beliefs. Cultural beliefs are not necessarily rational. They are grounded in values, i.e. pan African assumptions, in general, and the six categorial themes that emerged from level four of my cultural knowledge analysis, that were learned and developed as early as one's childhood. In this country, these beliefs are additionally reinforced by the constant sense of village solidarity that shapes employees' personal and professional lives.

Furthermore, work beliefs and organizational practices are not synonymous. Beliefs refer to what employees deem to be appropriate and inappropriate behaviors and attitudes. Conversely, practices signify procedures and protocols required by a given organization. Work beliefs tend to be a more powerful motivator of behavior than formally stated organizational requirements. It thus follows that a change in management and organizational behavior models can be supported or hindered by the perceived similarity between current and new cultural expectations (Hansen and Brooks, 1994, [12]; Rogers, 1982, [35]).

Distrust and Lack of Social Capital. These data suggested that managers felt that they have little control over the hiring, firing, and rewarding of those who work for them due to kinship affiliations and the importance placed on credentials. To compensate, managers in my study tended to micro-manage which increased the cost of doing business. In addition, low salaries and family obligations such as funerals and the like were burdening employees to the point of corruption and drove up overhead expenses when workers were absent.

This sense of village solidarity interfered with the Ivorian's sense of organizational trust in both private and public sectors. Informants in my study suggested that even in the most productive companies, positions of seniority were held by members of the same ethnic clan making it common for kinship to take precedence over matters of competence. Trust was, thus, confined to the ethnic insiders which limited a companies social capital. This finding was consistent with Henry's (1991, [15], 1995, [16]) research in Cameroonian and Ivorian companies and Sztum's (1997, [43]) work in Senegal. Sztum called this phenomenon a concern for "social" profit rather than "financial" profit. Africans, in these studies and in my research, placed more value on family relationships than on financial gains.

The emphasis on kinship in Cote d'Ivoire has many of the same characteristics of family owned and run businesses in more developed nations such as those found in the United States or Western Europe. However, in these countries, family businesses are typically small companies. In the Cote d'Ivoire this type of management is characteristic of all business and may be an important constraint to economic and organizational advancement.

Psychological Ownership. My findings also indicated that employees often felt alienated from their work organizations. Equity, information, and decision-making tended to be limited to the kinsman who owned and ran a given organization. The informants uniformly spoke about the need for open communication systems, participative management, and opportunities to reward good performance through better salaries, profit-sharing, and promotions. Similarly, a long history of state management of business and industry has distanced Ivorians from a sense of personal investment in the business goals of their organization. A tradition of government entitlement has also fostered paternalistic work cultures similar to that of the village where infractions among kinsmen were easily pardoned and forgotten. Clearly, these practices have not encouraged a transfer of one's sense of loyalty to the work place from the village. The lack of psychological ownership in one's work organization tends to complicate and impede issues of trust, and drive on behalf of the organization. Similarly, this lack of connection will interfere with interest in and the initiative to try new theories from foreign partners who bring in needed capital to support newly privatized companies. These conclusions led me to develop a model of structural adaptation to issues of cultural variation, trust, and ownership (note figure 2).
7-2 Best Practices Organizations

African management research conducted by the World Bank (Dia, 1996, [7]) suggested that organizations that have successfully introduced foreign models into existing systems are those who have built upon existing cultural frames. Such practices support the theory of cultural relativity. In addition, I found that these companies introduced practices that encouraged theories of trust and psychological ownership.

Data from two "best practices" companies were included in my study. A leading utility company was typically cited, in this country, as a best practices organization by researchers and development experts. As part of the original sample reported in this study, I interviewed and observed in this company. Data from the same study uncovered a second company, a hotel that encouraged many of the same practices. In both organizations, over 50 per cent of the company were financially owned by European investors. In describing how these best practices companies developed practices that were consistent with local cultural frames, I shall refer to the six categories of beliefs that emerged from the axiomatic data contained in level four of the cultural knowledge findings about productivity. In doing so, I shall illustrate how these companies encouraged trust and psychological ownership by incorporating these beliefs into their management policies.

Organizational Trust. To promote solidarity ties, employees were inspired to think of their company as their village or community and the CEO as their Chief. Operations were decentralized and management layers were reduced by half. Managers were encouraged to delegate while maintaining the myth of hierarchy culturally needed to ensure the cooperation of older employees.

Managers were trained to improve their employee counseling skills in order to provide the kind of nurturing and harmonious atmosphere culturally found in village societies. To encourage risk-taking and innovative behavior, performance evaluations emphasized indicators of behavioral change rather than specific outcomes. Such approaches to behavioral change were not only more harmonious, but they also preserved one's sense of image as evidence of change which was easier to produce than one's performance tied to a given set objectives, production quotas, or quality standards.
To discourage subjective decision-making tied to entitlement expectations and kinship ties, promotion and salaries were tied to performance. Sanctioning protocols were made consistent. Such procedures permitted managers to avoid burdensome obligations and requests for favors from friends and family without appearing disloyal or unfriendly. Henry's (1991, [15]) case study of a Cameroonian company named Star also found that structure and standardized procedures were well-received by employees. These procedures decreased worker anxiety by reducing ambiguous decisions based on ethnic favoritism. Moreover, individuals felt proud and recognized for their contribution to creating the standards.

Downsizing permitted an increase in salary for those who remained, and employee benefit plans were modeled after village social welfare systems. Higher salaries supported employees’ need for image and obligation to support their home village. Not only were benefits improved, but also employees were systematically asked to contribute to a disaster fund (a kind of solidarity safety net) that gave employees "in need" financial help and increased their sense of control in responding to unpredictable family needs. Moreover, village rites, such as community meetings to exchange information or a council of elders to hear grievances, rule on matters of employee assistance or impropriety, and advise the tribe's leader, were incorporated into organizational practices. Thus, organizational issues and problems on all levels were viewed in the same way one would collectively view threats to village security and solidarity needs. Likewise, work control was enhanced as employees were encouraged to work in cross-functional teams and act as back ups for colleagues who must be absent due to family illnesses and funerals.

Moreover, company savings systems and better benefits encouraged greater employee loyalty and focus on their work by reducing the financial strain associated with the uncertainty of unforeseen family and tribal obligations. Likewise, employee theft dramatically dropped.

In the hotel, efforts to ensure a collective spirit, were based on the importance of group solidarity and trust, and decreased political infighting by prohibiting questions or discussion about an employee's kinship background. Any comment along these lines was grounds for immediate dismissal. This company was managed by a foreign general manager. The utility company, on the other hand, was directed by a foreign educated Ivorian president. Key informants told me that all top executives, in this company, were kinsmen.

Psychological Ownership. Given the ability of the village to promote psychological ownership, it would appear that organizations would experience greater success by building solidarity bridges between the village and the company, which would complement rather than compete with village culture. In time, one's sense of psychological ownership and solidarity could, at a minimum, be oriented equally as much towards the company as to the village. This was the strategy of the "best practices" companies described in my study. In essence, that is what these companies did to encourage the kind of psychological ownership that promotes extrarole behavior needed to break nonentrepreneurial behaviors learned under the regime of state ownership. They took the most positive aspect of village culture.

These companies promoted meaningful equity through profit sharing plans and by ensuring that employees were truly rewarded and recognized for their performance rather than their solidarity and kinship ties. This gave all employees, an equal chance at meaningful equity and reduced the uncertainty and lack of control associated with kinship favoritism. Equal reward opportunities at work were similar to how wealth is equally shared within the solidarity of the village. An exception may have been executive positions at the utility company. However, informants told me that this kinship group typically selected their chiefs on the basis of competence rather than parentage. Therefore, despite some ethnic favoritism for the very top positions, there was a strong attempt, within their own ethnic ranks, to model the importance of good performance. Moreover, an increase in salary, benefits, and disaster funds reduced the financial strain associated with supporting the village, a psychological strain that often interfered with an employees' sense of personal control, honesty, and attention to work.

In both companies, the CEO actively practiced and modeled, for his managers, an open door policy. Like a village chief, both CEO's wanted employees at all levels to see them available to
hear their problems and deal with issues through the company. This new availability provided an unprecedented access to information, which was reinforced by monthly newsletters, round-tables, and lunches with top management. This practice also countered the former hierarchy of information access. The utility company installed computers at all employee workstations where information was circulated and employees communicated regularly through e-mail. Decisions of great concern such as restructuring at the utility company and union negotiations at the hotel were issues for community debate and dialogue. Not only were employees now have great access to information, their self image was enhanced through the recognition of their contributions to the conversation. This kind of exchange mirrored how village discussions are used to advise the chief on matters of great concern. A final aspect of promoting ownership through access to information was reflected in the use of cross-functional teams at both companies. Once the favoritism of kinship ties was eliminated from the work atmosphere, teamwork and, in particular, cross-functional teamwork served to enhance work flow controls, communication, and harmony by dealing with problems in an open and proactive manner before they became difficult and contentious to address. This work technique was especially useful in reflecting the kind of sharing of work roles and responsibilities that one typically found in, the village. However, these companies improved on the village's approach by clearly defining members' roles. In the village, my informants told me, functions were not as clearly defined, resulting in an ambiguity that permitted villagers to avoid accountability and psychological ownership of their work.

In addition to the use of work teams, shared decision-making and participative management were fostered through delayering of management. Managerial hierarchies were well evolved in most companies. One informant told me that there were 19 levels of management in his company of 500 employees. Operations were decentralized and managers were encouraged to delegate. Village governance was typically hierarchical. Therefore, the role of the villagers, as described in the discussion of key decisions, was more consultative than one of parity in the decision-making process. Another reflection of village traditions was the hotel's council of elders that met to hear employee problems and grievances.

As these companies philosophically fostered trust and legitimized the rights of psychological ownership, they nurtured their employees' social capital and extrarole ability to deal with new responsibilities through expanded employee training programs in technical expertise and interpersonal behavior and through management development training to improve delegation and counseling skills. The utility company literally created a campus for their design and delivery of their training activities.

The utility's training program became a model for all of West Africa and regularly accepted participants from neighboring countries. The hotel company held numerous continuous training programs on site and typically sent managers to their company's training campus in France for additional training. They imitated the nurturing atmosphere of the village by encouraging employees to think of the CEO and their managers as father figures who were concerned with work as well as family problems. At the same time, they actively discouraged ethnic favoritism and fragmentation. Structure was provided through standardized procedures and processes, and performance evaluations emphasized behavior change rather than specific productivity outcomes.

Both companies substantially improved their profitability within five years and successfully survived the recent devaluation of the regional currency. An important corollary to their success was the recognition that a small number of people would be unwilling or unable to adopt new behaviors, no matter how culturally compatible they were with present beliefs. This premise is consistent with diffusion research (Rogers, 1982, [35]). Thus, early on each company gave "dissenters," who were unable to pledge allegiance to the new village and its chief, attractive severance plans.
8 CONCLUSIONS

The findings from this study clearly contribute to the theory of cultural relativity. At the same time, these data suggest that a sensitivity to cultural differences is not enough to introduce new management models and encourage new entrepreneurial behaviors in newly privatized countries in Africa, in general, and in Cote d'Ivoire, in particular. Privatization of business and industry in itself is not enough to promote the kind of trust and ownership that will encourage the extrarole behavior required for organizations and employees to become more productive. Ownership must be more than financial. It must also be psychological.

Critical to an understanding of change in Cote d'Ivoire is an appreciation for the hold that village culture has on individuals thus creating a kind of cultural competition for one’s trust and sense of psychological ownership. Village culture supports two out of three criteria associated with psychological ownership. What village traditions do not encourage is participative management and shared decision-making. This is where Ivorian companies can perhaps counter the competitive culture of the village. The best practices companies cited in this study did attempt to address this issue through delegation tactics and a delayering of their management. As organizations respond to employees' need for cultural relativity and in particular, trust and psychological ownership, additional challenges will arise.

New Challenges

One of the most critical and daunting challenges, in the transformation toward more productive organizations, will be the move from a subjective work environment to one where objectivity genuinely rules decision-making. Unbiased work environments are essential to rid organizations of the distrust that counters the bonding necessary for psychological ownership. The use of procedure manuals, effective sanctioning measures, clear and consistent guidelines for hiring and promotion, and the communication of pertinent information may aide in this transition. Likewise, the initial use of expatriates to assure accountability can contribute to workplace cultures that are less biased and chaotic. Henry's (1995, [16]) essay on foreign experts in Africa suggested that expatriates were required for their expertise, as much as, they were needed for their neutrality. He suggested that only the expatriate could ensure quality control and objective decision-making as their judgment was not colored by solidarity ties.

Inherent in this structure is the danger that organizational members’ potential for creativity may suffer. Creativity is needed for organizations to be innovative and dynamic enough to sustain growth and their competitive edge. However, as Etounga-Manguelle's (1989, [8]) treatise on Ivorian culture noted, creativity is not easy to promote. He surmised that village traditions culturally dissuade this kind of energy by admonishing critical reflection and questioning among the young. Moreover, village responsibilities, with exception of the Dioula, often discourage risk taking.

As a concluding remark, informants in this study, talked about village ties in terms of generational differences. The younger one is the less likely they are to be dominated by village ties. This is notable as 50 percent of the Ivorian population is less than 20 years old. Many children of urban workers (both on the professional and non-professional levels) were not born in the village and thus only know the parent's community as weekend visitors. There is also a lessened tendency for children, in particular those from professional families, to learn the village language. Nevertheless, most of my informants believed that it will require one to two more generations of urban living before the cultural ties to the village are no longer in competition with those of one's work organization.

9 REFERENCES


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The role of culture, trust, and ownership

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