

# CULTURAL DYNAMICS IN MANAGING PEOPLE

**Alka Gupta  
Amrik Singh Sudan &  
Ekta Verma**

## **B**ACKGROUND

Business environments are changing at a very fast rate owing to (i) Globalisation in the system of production and distribution of goods and services (ii) Liberalisation and Pluralism in international trade and investment (iii) Innovation in production, communication and information technology (iv) Tapping of new markets under severe competition (v) Transformation in the composition of work force and (vi) New set of expectations by employees, proprietors, creditors and consumers. The pace of change in macro environments has further been accelerated by discoveries in bio-technology and new materials and composites which have changed not only the economics of production by the very dynamics of production and distribution.

The survival and growth of every business in the wake of such environmental changes depend on efficiency with which it manages its human resource because man is the most critical factor in the management of every type of organisation ranging from the production of goods to the performance of service like Banking, Insurance or Consultancy. This will also require the organisations to be equally dynamic with clear vision and perception. They will have to develop a new net work culture of commitment and enterprise, managing people according to their attitudinal characteristics rather than following the customary techniques of human resource management, shifting from the routinised method to strategic management techniques of organisations and also to evolve an organisational structure capable of fulfilling legitimate aspirations of employees operating at different levels.

In the light of the above facts, this paper discusses the following issues which have a direct bearing on managing people effectively to achieve the desired organisational goals.

- a. *Man: the Critical Factor*
- b. Components of Culture
- c. Culture and Institutional Frame work
- d. Culture and Individul Behaviour
- e. Attitudinal Characteristics and Cultural Differences.

## **Man: The Critical Factor**

Development is the function of man and capital. Among these two variables, man is the most critical factor. Man's behaviour depends by and large on his personality development which is cast in the mould of sociopolitical and technological environments. His attitudinal characteristics,

---

value system and perception duly insulated with social beliefs and customs give rise to social ethos and other components of culture which are reflected in his institutional framework and power structure.

The focal point of management of every organisation is MAN – the first three letters of the word MANAGEMENT. The word management comprising ten letters which mean one; one may be stated as perfect on the top, flawless, absolute or the ultimate. Without entering into metaphysical or spiritual interpretation, the basic objective of management is to achieve perfection by removing deficiency in man and his environments. The remaining seven letters connoting (i) authority (ii) government (iii) environment (iv) material (v) ethics (vi) nation and society and (vii) time are the satellites of the epicentre man which though deriving power from the epicentre by revolving around it, also emanates radiation in the process to influence the centre. In this manner, it is the man who influences these components and in turn gets influenced by the satellites revolving round him (Gupta 1997).

Man is the centre-nerve of the organisation and society. Principles, practices and techniques of management help man to be as perfect as possible by making up deficiencies so as to reduce the burden of wastage in human and material resources in realising his objective.

Man lives with others, to achieve his objective he requires authority to guide and direct the actions of others and to structure relationship in such a manner that each one accomplishes his object without impinging on others' rights and privileges besides making motivational dynamics apparent and meaningful. Authority is the source of both ambivalence and conflict. Equity in distribution forges unity but the reversal thereof causes conflict in organisation and society.

Man and government are interdependent; the behaviour of government is determined by the will of its people and people's conduct is regulated by the writ of the government. If man's behaviour and conduct are less deviant, government's plans and policies will be more humane and dynamic. The governments regulatory and developmental role should reflect the thinking of its people, there should exist harmony between policy formulation by the government and policy implementation by the people (Gupta 1997).

## **Components of Culture**

Cultural dynamics will discuss the role of culture in personality development, socialisation of culture and the role of culture in individual and social behaviour.

"Culture or civilisation, taken in its wide ethnographic sense is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morale, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (International Encyclopaedia of Social Services 1968)."

Widely accepted definition of culture has been given by A.L. Krockar and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952) in the following words:

"Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups including her embodiments in artifacts, the essential case of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture system, may on the one hand, to be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action."

Radcliffe Brown (1952) talks of culture which is acquired by contact from people and things as books, works of art etc.

---

Culture, the component of environment engraves an indelible mark on personality development of man. Behaviour of people is determined by their cultures which are manifested in terms of ideologies, values and social roles. In the same manner a number of research studies suggest that sociocultural beliefs have a profound influence on the organisations. Consequently the organisations have to adopt to the social beliefs and values. Those leaders and organisations which are capable of manipulating according to sociological environments will prove to be more receptive to field personnel and better equipped to realise organisational objective with efficiency. Weber points out the nature and significance of culture by equating it with sea. In fact, culture dictates “dos” and “don’t dos”. For instance kissing is socially acceptable in American Society but it is not permissible in many cultures of the east. It is the culture which develops the traits of independence, aggression, competitiveness and cooperation. These attributes determine the behaviour pattern of individuals in organisations.

Culture becomes social ethos through the writ of the family and society in which he lives. It is known as a process of socialisation. It is the socialisation process which indoctrinates the individuals with cultural dynamics which in turn dictates the pattern of behaviour. The family, social groups and other social forces-all contribute to socialisation of culture which gives direction to behaviour as individual and in a group (Gupta 1997).

An example of Hofstede’s (1980) study of cultural dimensions of a few countries may be summarised in Table 1.

In spite of cultural differences among different societies, they may be classified into different clusters as identified by Simcha Ronen and Oded Shenkar. Most countries have been clustered under nine heads. They are:

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. Nordic         | Incorporating Scandinavian countries  |
| 2. Germanic       | Comprising Austria, Germany and Switzerland                                       |
| 3. Anglo American | United States, U.K., Canada, New Zealand, Ireland, South Africa                   |
| 4. Latin European | Consisting of France, Belgium, Italy, Spain and Portugal.                         |
| 5. Latin American | Peru, Chile, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela and Argentina.                           |
| 6. Far Eastern    | Malaysia, Singapore, Hongkong, Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and South Vietnam |
| 7. Arabian        | Bahrain, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia.             |
| 8. Near Eastern   | Comprising Turkey, Iran, Greece.  |
| 9. Independents   | Consisting of some remaining countries like Brazil, Japan, India and Israel.      |

The list is not exhaustive nor the clustering of countries under different cultures a complete exercise as it excludes some of the major cultural groups like Mongolia and/or confusions cultures which constitute a sizeable portion of the world population.

Organisational cultures are cast in mould of sociopolitical country. Consequently, with change in sociopolitical or even economic environments the composition of organisational culture undergoes change. For instance with the decline and fall of communism in former Soviet Union and East

---

**Table 1**

S.No.	Country	Individualism Collectivism	Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance	Quality of Life
1.	Australia	Individual	Small	Moderate	Strong
2.	Canada	Individual	Small	Low	Moderate
3.	England	Individual	Small	Moderate	Strong
4.	France	Individual	Large	High	Weak
5.	Greece	Collective	Large	High	Moderate
6.	Italy	Individual	Moderate	High	Strong
7.	Japan	Collective	Moderate	High	Strong
8.	Mexico	Collective	Large	High	Strong
9.	Singapore	Collective	Large	Low	Moderate
10.	United States	Individual	Small	Low	Strong
11.	Sweden	Individual	Small	Low	Weak
12.	Venezuela	Collective	Large	High	Strong

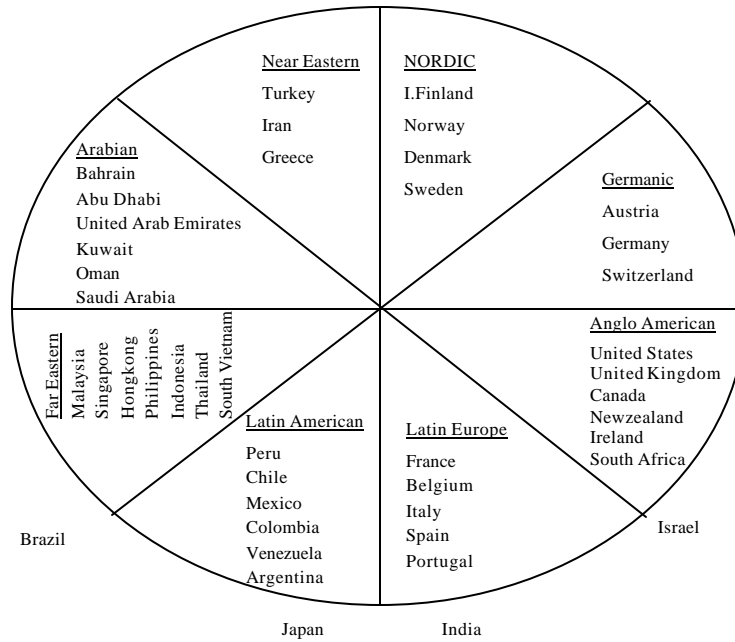


Fig.: Country Chart

**Source: Simcha Ronen and Oded Shanker:**

**Clustering countries on attitudinal dimensions: A Review and Synthesis-Academy of Mgt. Review-July 1985, P:49 quoted in Fred**

European countries the organisational culture in these countries is emerging in a new shape and design. Similarly, the process of economic development and greater interaction with Anglo-American block, Japan and Korea are moving closer to Anglo-American cluster. This is reflected in the attitude and behaviour of Japanese consumer which is being carried to work places. This is quite frustrating (Barbara Buell 1990). Such transformation is enervating the basic premise of commitment and devotion to work by neglecting work to private convenience or, job like haircut during working hours (Kenichi Ohmae).

### **Culture and Institutional Framework**

The institutional framework in a social system is founded on ideologies, values, beliefs and social roles which are the components of cultural dynamics. A number of research studies suggest that sociocultural beliefs have a profound influence on the organisation operating in the society. The organisations which conform to social environment are better equipped to realise social objectives. Hence Weber equates nature and significance of culture to sea. It is the culture which develops the traits of Independence, aggression, competitiveness and cooperation (Gupta 1997).

These attributes determine the pattern of individual behaviour in an organisation. Paul C. Nystrom and William G. Starback (et. al.) summarised the studies in the following words (Paul).

“Employees from cultures that emphasise independence are likely to be most comfortable with personnel policies and organisational structures that allow to act as individuals, autonomously and with little dependence on others. By contrast employees from cultures that emphasise conformity will be more satisfied if the social environments of the organisation is highly structured. Employees from cultures where independence is valued would find agreeable those job environments in which interdependence is required for successful performance.”

Culture becomes social ethos through the writ of the family and the society known as process of socialisation (Sawyer and Levine 1966). It is the process which indoctrinates individuals with cultural dynamics which in turn dictates the pattern of behaviour. The family, social groups and other social forces-all contribute to socialisation of culture which gives direction to individual and group behaviour.

Studies on cultural socialisation reveal interesting results. Sawyer and Levin (1966) depict contrast in agricultural-pastoral and hunting-fishing cultures. They identified nine factors (Dawson 1973) for variation in cultural characteristics. Similar studies have been made by Dawson (1973) and Berry (1976). Hunting cultures socialise children to behave independently and self-reliantly: their personalities are reticent – and they do not conform to social norms in experiments testing such behaviour (Berry 1967). Hunting culture depicts “frozen effect” whereas – “children in agricultural cultures are taught to value the company of others and rewards are dispensed to those who conform and obey.”

A number of other studies on cultural socialisation reveal contrasting results. Kohn study (Kohn Melvil L.) reveals that in United States and Italy children belonging to upper class are taught creativity and independence and lower class obedience and conformity. In this way children belonging to lower class are socialised for positions as subordinates and followers of the upper class for professional and business success.

### **Culture and Individual and Social Behaviour**

The socialisation of culture radiates social ethos to insulate individual and social behaviour. Man's behaviour gets attuned to the attributes and values around him. Consequently, a sharp difference is noticeable in the behaviour patterns of people living in different areas. For instance,

---

people brought up in western culture develop traits of independence, autonomy, a materialistic and pragmatic outlook of much less emotional attachment to organisation in which they work. Conversely, people brought up in orient culture are found to be dependent, obedient, emotionally committed to organisation and the work place etc. The basic reason for this difference is the personality development in a given cultural environment which determines behaviour of man.

A number of studies have revealed different set of preferences by people brought up in different sociocultural environments. Turner and Lawrence depicted difference in workers behaviour owing to urban and rural backgrounds. This was further supported by the study of Blood and Hulin. Other studies completed by Hackman and Lawler, Schuler (1973), Shepard (Shepard Jon M.) and Stone and Porter (1975) also subscribe though partially to this view point.

### **Attitudinal Characteristics and Cultural Differences: A Micro Study**

A micro study was undertaken by the author to ascertain the difference in attitudinal characteristics according to cultures in India. Teachers having practically the same standing were drawn from four cultural groups of India. They were: (1) Punjabi; (2) Dogri; (3) Kashmiri and (4) Hindustani or Hindi speaking. They were selected on random basis from amongst the University and College teachers. Eleven attitudinal characteristics were identified. They are: (i) autonomy/independence; (ii) aggressiveness; (iii) emotional attachment to organisation; (iv) competitiveness; (v) respect to authority; (vi) corporate culture (vii) tolerance for dissent; (viii) team work; (ix) sharing authority; (x) role of ethics and (xi) socialisation of organisational goals. The results as given in the tables have been obtained on the basis of the respondents responses recorded on Likert Scale.

Table 2 shows that out of the total scoring of 1217 of P group, the share of attitudinal characteristics varied between the minimum to 7.08% and the maximum of 11.09%. Scoring of some of the characteristics was below average of the group. Among them mention may be made of sharing authority, role of ethics, socialisation or organisation goals, emotional attachment organisation etc.

The compositional pattern of D group has been entirely different. It varied between the minimum of 7.81% of emotional attachment to organisation and the maximum of 11.38% of the corporate culture as given in table under reference. Likewise the compositional pattern of K group has not been significantly different to other three groups. It fluctuated between the minimum of 7.37% (sharing of authority) and the maximum of 11.20% (respect to authority) H group is also not different from the rest of the groups with corporate culture occupying the first rank and aggressiveness the last rank.

The characteristics and their ranking according to scores of respondents on Likert Scale in different cultural groups are given in Table 2 and 3.

The compositional analysis of attitudinal characteristics shows that the proportion of different characteristics of P group varies between the minimum of 7.08% (as already pointed out) pertaining to "sharing authority" and the maximum of 11.9% pertaining to autonomy and independence. Other dominant characteristics of P group are (i) autonomy/independence and (ii) aggressiveness. Both these characteristics occupy the first two ranks in order of importance to distinguish this group from other three groups.

People belonging to D group, though intermingling with P group also having very soft borders have maintained their identity. Among them corporate culture and respect to authority are the two dominant characteristics. These two characteristics have inculcated in them a greater sense of discipline ideally suited to defence and other such jobs.

---

**Table 2: Scores of Attitudinal Characteristics According to Culture**

Characteristics	P Group		D Group		K Group		II Group		Total Group	
	S	%	S	%	S	%	S	%	S	%
Autonomy/Independence	135	11.09	120	8.92	127	9.75	100	7.83	477	9.28
Aggressiveness	128	10.53	116	8.62	117	8.98	90	7.05	433	8.42
Emotional Attachment to Org.	104	8.54	105	7.81	92	7.86	125	9.78	398	7.74
Competitiveness	116	9.53	114	8.48	118	9.05	110	8.61	433	8.42
Respect to Authority	112	9.20	152	11.32	146	11.20	122	9.55	575	11.18
Corporate Culture	125	10.27	153	11.38	135	10.36	159	12.45	595	11.57
Tolerance of dissent	110	9.03	121	9.00	140	10.74	117	9.16	470	9.14
Team work	102	8.38	130	9.67	127	9.75	125	9.79	487	9.47
Sharing authority	86	7.08	97	7.20	96	7.37	90	7.05	367	7.14
Role of Ethics	98	8.05	123	9.14	100	7.67	130	10.18	473	9.20
Socialisation of Organisational goals	101	8.30	114	8.48	105	8.06	109	8.55	434	8.44
Total	1217	100.00	1345	100.00	1303	100.00	1277	100.00	5142	100.00
Average	111		122		118		116		117	
χ <sup>2</sup> value	23.44		0.45		11.14		19.04			
	Sig.		Insig.		Insig.		Sig.			

**S. Scoring on Likert Scale**

**Table 3: Team and Scores and Ranks According to Culture**

S.No. Characteristics	P		D		K		H		Total	
	M	R	M	R	M	R	M	R	M	R
1. Autonomy/ Independence	3.38	I	3.00	VI	3.18	IV	2.50	VII	3.02	V
2. Aggressiveness	3.20	II	2.90	VII	2.93	VI	2.25	VIII	2.82	VII
3. Emotional Attachment to Organisation	2.60	VII	2.63	IX	2.30	X	3.13	III	2.67	IX
4. Competitiveness	2.90	IV	2.85	VII	2.95	V	2.75	VI	2.86	VI
5. Respect to authority	2.80	V	3.80	II	3.65	I	3.05		3.33	II
6. Corporate culture	3.13	III	3.83	I	3.38	III	3.98	I	3.58	I
7. Tolerance for Dissent	2.75	VI	3.03	V	3.50	II	2.93	V	3.05	III
8. Team work	2.55	VIII	3.25	III	3.18	IV	3.13	III	3.03	IV
9. Sharing authority	2.15	XI	2.43	X	2.40	IX	2.25	VIII	2.31	X
10. Role of Ethics	2.45	X	3.08	IV	2.50	VIII	3.25	II	2.82	VII
11. Socialisation of Organisational goals	2.53	IX	2.85	VIII	2.63	VII	2.73	VII	2.69	VIII
12. Average									2.93	

M = Mean

R = Rank

Kashmiri psyche is by and large submissive, law abiding, God fearing due to the influence of centuries of old cultures. Before Islam it was considered as an ideal place, free from all pollution in the extreme north of India for self-realisation and attainment of highest values of spiritualism. No fundamental change in the psyche of the people was noticeable even after the spread of Islam except the mode of worship. People continued to be tolerant, God-fearing and helpful: they continued to respect their earlier Gods and goddesses and also the saints and sages like the newer ones. Adoption of Islam proved to be problem-free in the wake of their faith in the basic ideals of tolerance and universal brotherhood propagated by Islam. This is evident from their Hindu surnames. How can an average Kashmiri be militant where respect to authority accounts for the highest proportion of 11.20% of the total scoring of this group of people? Likewise retaliation and reaction cannot be the characteristics of Kashmiri culture where tolerance for dissent occupies the second important rank in order of importance. Other important characteristic is the corporate culture. All these three components constitute more than 32% of the total scoring of people belonging to this group.

Since Kashmiris and Dogras have lived together for centuries, there exists the closest degree of affinity between the two cultures. Both have a very high degree of respect to authority and profound faith in corporate culture.



The Hindustani culture or Hindi speaking flourishing in the hinter lands of rivers Ganga and Jamuna has the highest regard for corporate culture (12.45%) followed by the role of ethics (10.18%). Other attitudinal characteristics in order of importance are emotional attachment to organisations, respect to authority and tolerance for dissent.

These four cultural groups representing by and large more than 50 per cent of total population of the country shows that basically an Indian is respectful to authority with an unbinding faith in corporate culture owing to their traditional institution of joint family system. Other significant components of attitudinal characteristics of an Indian is the team work, tolerance for dissent and the role of ethics. It is the impact of spiritualism that has inculcated in him his characteristic of attaching so much importance to proper conduct of man classified as “role of ethics”.

The study shows that corporate culture occupies first rank at least in three out of the four groups covered under study. Even in the P group its ranking is as high as third in order of importance. Corporate culture is the continuation of joint family system of Indian social system. In the family which is the first place of education, he is taught since childhood to be respectful to elders, obey their commands and look after them. It is a sustaining rather than divisive feature of Indian social ethos.

All the four cultures being part of the Indian culture are connected with each other which is evident from the values of different cultures given in Table 4.

**Table 4: Inter-Culture Relationship R Values**

<b>Culture</b>	<b>K</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>P</b>
P	0.97	0.76	0.99	–
K	–	0.91	0.92	0.97
D	0.91	–	0.89	0.76
H	0.92	0.89	–	0.99

At the micro level while dealing with the people belonging to P culture, the manager shall have to evolve a system of delegation of authority, participative management and a wider authority base to suit the requirements of this culture.

The X<sup>2</sup> values at 5% level of significance and at 10 degree of freedom are significant in P and H groups and insignificant in D and K groups. The study of Indian culture shows that only four attitudinal characteristics viz., (i) corporate culture; (ii) respect to authority; (iii) tolerance for dissent and (iv) team work are prominent components of Indian social ethos. On this basis the institutional framework having limited centralised authority, taller organisational structure i.e. more subordinates under one superior and greater propensity to command responsiveness are the main features of an average Indian. Consequently the decentralised power structure and wider span of control may not be appropriate premises of institutional frame work both at macro and micro levels. In this scenario, the western type of democracy is not suited to Indian culture and psyche; similarly at the micro level, the institutions of delegation of authority, wider span of control and participative management which have been the sources of power to European or American organisations may not be successful in Indian conditions. It is the wrong choice in favour of democratic form of government which is responsible for most of the wrong decisions; the mismanagement of development that we have talked is the manifestation of all wrong decisions by the people and the party in power to woo people so as to win support of the people elections (Gupta 1997).

In conclusion, it may be stated that in the management, where the focal point is the man, culture becomes the most important variable of human behaviour. His perception, attitude and the value system are cast in the mould of cultural dynamics. No system can transform easily the indelible cultural influences as it is so deep-seated in his personality composition that any behavioural modification with the known reinforcements or intervention techniques is not possible within the standard paradigm of development.

Components of culture in the form of social beliefs, customs, values etc germinating attitudinal characteristics resulting in a set of behaviour should not be perceived as barriers but pay off for effective and efficient policies and programmes of management of development. These policies and programmes instead of standardising them may be so designed that they are complementary to social ethos of that society.

This study may be helpful to take rational and pragmatic decisions regarding the institutional framework and power structure at macro and micro levels. At macro level, decision could be taken regarding the form of government; whether the democratic form of government based on decentralised power structure or other forms based on centralised power base will be more suitable to the people; likewise the entire network of institutional framework at the macro level requires restructuring to provide stability, harmony and efficiency. At the micro level, the manager shall have to take vital decisions to ensure organisational effectiveness; instead of following the traditional style of managing his people and organisations, he will have to redesign his programmes and policies which are in conformity with the attitudinal characteristics of people operating at different levels in that organisation.

The institutional framework and the power structure founded on the premises of cultural dynamics will eliminate most of the ills of mismanagement of development and ensure effective and efficient management of the system both at macro and micro levels.

## References

- Barbara Buell (1990). *Japan's Silent Majority Starts to Mumble*, *Business Week*, April 23, p.52.
- Berry John W. (1967). *Independence and Conformity in Subsistence level Societies*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol.7, p.415-418.
- Berry John W. (1976). *Human Ecology and Cognitive Style*, Beverly Hills Cal, Sage/Halsted.
- Dawson John L.M. (1973). *Effects of Ecology and Subjective Culture on Individual traditional modern attitude change and achievement motivation and potential for economic development in the Japanese and Eskimo Societies*, *International Journal of Psychology*, 8, p.215-225.
- For details refer to Paul H. Mussen op.cit. p.65.
- G. Hofstede (1980). *Motivation, Leadership and Organisation: Do American Theories Apply Abroad*, *Organisational Dynamics*, Summer, p.42-43.
- Gupta, N.S. (1997). *Organisation Theory and Behaviour*, p.212-213.
- Gupta N.S. (1997). *Organisation Theory and Behaviour*, p.564-565.
- Gupta, N.S. (1997). *Organisation Theory and Behaviour*, p.575-576.
- Gupta, N.S. (1997). *Organisation Theory and Behaviour*, p.578-581.
- Ibid*, p.560.
- Ibid*, p.562-563.
- (1968). *International Encyclopaedia of Social Services Vol.3*, Macmillan & Free Press, p.527.
- Kenichi Ohmae *Japan Role in World Economy*, *California Management Review*.
- Kohn Melvil L. *Class and Conformity Homewoods*, 111 Dossey.
- Krober, A.L. and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952). *Culture a Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, *Harvard University Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology papers*, Vol.47, No.1, p.181.
-

Paul, C. Nystrom and William, G.S. (et al) op.cit., p.352.

Radcliffe Brown, A.R. (1952). Structures and Functions in Primitive Society Essays and Addresses, Cohent & West, Glencoe, III Free Press, London, p.4-5.

Sawyer Jack and Levine Robert R. (1966). Cultural Dimensions: Factors Analysis of the World Ethnographic Sample American Anthropologist, Vol.68, p.708-731.

Schuler Randal, (1973). Worker Background and Job Satisfaction Comment, Industrial and Labour Relations Review, 26, p.851-853.

Shepard Jon M. Functional Specialisation Alienation and Job Satisfaction, Industrial and Labour Relations Review, 23, p.207-219.

Stone, E.F. and Porter L.W. (1975). Job Characteristics and Job Attitudes – A multivariate Study Journal of Applied Psychology, p.57-64.

---