

# EXPLORATORY STUDY OF CREATIVE CLIMATE: A CASE FROM SELECTED COLOMBIAN COMPANIES AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT\*

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## ABSTRACT

This paper identifies organizational characteristics that help or obstruct creativity at the workplace in order to establish the existence of relevant or distinctive concepts of organizational climate in Colombia. To that aim, a questionnaire was designed including indicators taken from existing relevant literature. The questionnaire was applied to 52 CEO's, managers, supervisors, and first line employees in eight Colombia-based firms and to nine people from other companies. Data obtained was analyzed according to the grounded theory method and results proved to be in line with those cited in literature concerning categories such as reaction speed, leadership style, trustworthiness, answers to social, political and cultural conditions, freedom, dynamism, room for ideas, resources, synergy, trustworthiness strengthening); other categories need revision (support) and yet other are plainly different (envy and jealousy, belonging, deliberated creativity, standards on influence management, fairness). Data suggest a new survey is due.

**Key words:** Innovative behavior, industrial psychology, capacity building, resistance to change.

## RESUMEN

***Estudio exploratorio del clima creativo: el caso de algunas compañías colombianas seleccionadas y sus implicaciones para el desarrollo organizacional***

Este estudio identifica en las organizaciones las características que ayudan o entorpecen la creatividad en el lugar de trabajo, con el fin de establecer si existen conceptos relevantes o distintivos del clima organizacional en Colombia. Para ello se elaboró un cuestionario con indicadores obtenidos en la revisión de la literatura sobre el tema. El formulario se aplicó a 52 directores ejecutivos, gerentes, supervisores y empleados de primera línea de ocho empresas establecidas en Colombia, y a otros nueve que no pertenecen a las empresas estudiadas. Para el análisis de la información obtenida se utilizó el *grounded theory method*, usado en el análisis de métodos cualitativos. El análisis mostró similitudes en categorías que son frecuentemente citadas en la literatura (velocidad de reacción, estilo de liderazgo, confiabilidad, respuestas a condiciones sociales político-culturales, libertad, dinamismo, espacio para ideas, recursos, sinergia, fortalecimiento de confianza); otras, citadas en la literatura, que necesitan revisión (apoyo), y algunas más que son distintas (envidia y celos, pertenencia, creatividad deliberada, normas del manejo de influencia, equidad). Los datos sugieren que se impone el desarrollo de una nueva medición.

**Palabras clave:** comportamiento innovador, psicología industrial, construcción de capacidad, resistencia al cambio.

It is all too easy for someone from one culture to impose his or her own cultural viewpoint to explain behavior in other cultures (Valencia, 2000). This imposition is labeled “pseudo-ethics” and it happens whenever a construct or a concept’s universalism is assumed (Hofstede, 2001). Universal constructs may cause researchers to overlook key aspects of events they desire to study relative to a target culture (Davidson, Jaccard, Triandis, Morales & Díaz-Guerrero, 1976).

Consequently, Roberts (1970) presciently recommended that research initiatives be directed toward understanding the causes of behaviors in organizations in a single culture, then developing middle-level theories to guide explorations. Zaidi (1979) stated that cross-cultural psychology has placed a great deal of emphasis on applying instruments constructed in developed countries. However, it has not done much to fuel the development of measurements sensitive to distinctive cultural and personality dynamics (Zaidi, 1979). Particularly, the cultural nuances employed to interpret the data are given too little attention. In the field of creative climate, this oversight appears to continue today. There appears to be no published study applying a qualitative investigation, such as semi-structured interviews, as a precursor to constructing a Spanish measurement of creative climate. Either most of the measurements were translated in to Spanish from English or their theoretical constructs were extracted from a review of the literature. Brislin (1986) argued that there is no reason to believe that items that possess good factor structures will assess the phenomena as experienced by the targeted culture.

More than ever, as the pace of globalization intensifies, managers will increasingly be faced with a variety of national values that are sure to influence the transferability of management systems (Schneider, 1988) from Western to Latin American cultures. Such circumstances call for managers to navigate people through periods of tremendous change earmarked by confusion and never-ending shifts in the environment. Yet nebulous environments also create opportunities for creativity (Bridges, 1991). Hence, the ability to be creative becomes critical if a company going global wants to ensure its survival in target countries. Consequently, there exists a growing demand to adapt training, interventions, and assessments to suit international audiences.

The only Spanish measurements of creative climate that exist are Reyes and Zambrano (1991), who developed a measurement called ICOI: Instrumento para medir la cultura organizacional innovadora (Innovative Organizational Culture Instrument). They prepared their measurement using a literature review. The other measurement is the Situational Outlook Questionnaire (SOQ), which was translated into Spanish from English (Isaksen, 1999). The English SOQ was translated from the original Swedish CCQ (Isaksen, et al. 1999). Ekvall, Avrvonen, and Waldenström-Lindblad’s (1983) work, in developing the CCQ, initially used a literature review and semi-structured interviews to formulate its categories (Burnside, Amabile & Grysiewicz, 1988). Although they do not have a Spanish version of their measurement, Amabile and Grysiewicz (1989) developed KEYS by combining a qualitative with a quantitative study.

The qualitative study employed content analysis to identify factors extracted from interviews with members of an R&D department. The quantitative component consisted of co-researchers appraising organizational innovation. The data were then used to test the psychometric properties of KEYS. The Burnside et al. (1988), and Ekvall et al. (1983) studies generated an extensive amount of information. Given the exploratory nature of this study, the semi-structured interviews were more appropriate.

It appeared that they were among the few researchers who directly asked a sample through semi-structured interviews what helps and hinders workplace creativity, instead of relying on a review of the literature, a translation, or their experience. In the Burnside et al. (1988) study, R&D personnel were used because they represented an area customarily charged with “being creative”. In this study, R&D people could not be used because R&D departments are few in Colombia, because of a paucity of resources (Global Competitiveness Report, 2001-2002); therefore, using sample from R&D would not be representative of the population. The other methodologies, such as literature reviews or translations of established questionnaires were not attractive, because they did not address whether a qualitative study per se would produce distinct factors if a researcher were to ask a sample from another country.

This study was designed to explore factors that help and hinder workplace creativity, to determine if there are any concepts unique to a Colombian sample that merit

inclusion in a climate questionnaire. This is important because there is a need to assure users of a measure went that its theoretical constructs are meaningful to and representative of their target culture. This is also important because researchers are likely to disseminate information that misrepresents and inadequately understands groups from other cultures (Valencia, 2000). Consequently, this study is a first step towards constructing a sensitive measure by including preliminary findings of the qualitative data.

## 1. Sample

### 1.1 *The Region*

This study recruited companies located in the cities of Pereira, Dosquebradas, and Buga, which are in western Colombia in the foothills of the Central Range. Pereira and Dosquebradas are market centers for coffee, livestock, sugarcane, fruit, cocoa, and corn. In manufacturing, these cities produce food products, textiles, cigars, and paper. Pereira has a population of approximately 500,000 while Dosquebradas has 190,000. Buga is a market center for cotton, soy, corn, coffee, sugarcane, plantains, beans, potatoes, yucca, and cocoa. Buga has a population of 114,300. The country of Colombia was chosen because of the first author’s familiarity with its people, history, customs, politics, and his numerous travel experiences. Bloom and Padilla (1979) have recommended that same-ethnicity interviewers should conduct the research work when involving personal contact, to enhance the quality of the data and the rates of participation.

## 1.2 *Organizational Characteristics*

In selecting the organizations, two criteria were used. The companies recruited were national companies of 150 or more employees. A company such as American Airlines would not be useful, since it is headquartered in the United States and this is likely to influence its corporate and operational cultures at its international service stations. Table 1 displays a breakdown of sample frequencies by level and by other demographic data.

One company is a manufacturer of electrical transformers headquartered in the city of Pereira. Another company is a sugar refinery. It is headquartered in Buga. The next company is a provider of groceries, medical, and recreational services to employees of client companies and the public. It is headquartered in Pereira. Markets vary depending on the service. National law requires regional clients to provide a fixed budget line for the company's services to cover benefits for client employees. Another company is a fast food restaurant chain specializing in fried chicken. It is headquartered in Dosquebradas. The next company is a national bank. This bank is headquartered in Medellín. However, interviewees are employed at its regional office in Pereira. The next company is a poultry processing facility. This organization also manages chicken farms. It is headquartered in Pereira. Another company is a telecommunications company run by the Colombian government (This company was liquidated in June, 2000 soon after the interviews were completed). However, interviewees were employed at its regional office in Pereira and not at its headquarters facilities in Bogotá. The next company is a utility

provider headquartered in Pereira. The local government runs it.

Jorgensen, Hafsi, and Kiggundu (1986) developed an organizational scheme to indicate organizations commonly found in developing countries. They are governmental and state —owned organizations, family-owned organizations, industrial, and multinational subsidiaries. The organizations that were involved in this study represented each group according to the Jorgensen et al. (1986) taxonomy. The national bank makes up the multinational group with branches in the United States, Panama, and the Cayman Islands. The telecommunications and utility providers make up the governmental and stated owned group. The restaurant chain makes up the family-owned company group; the chicken processing company, the grocery conglomerate and the electrical transformer manufacturer make up the industrial group. The sugar refinery falls outside of this taxonomy and represents the agricultural industry.

## 1.3 *Participant Characteristics*

Fifty-two participants from eight companies participated in this study. The remaining sample (n=9) were acquaintances and personal contacts in Colombia. The interviewees were divided into three dissimilar kinds of informants to form a data triangulation (Arksey, & Knight, 1999): informants from targeted companies (n=52), university professors (n=5), and employees from non-targeted companies (n=4). The non-targeted company sample consisted of one business consultant, a director of a business idea incubator, a front-line worker employed by a

Table 1  
Sample Demographics

	Manuf. electric. transf.	Sugar refinery	Groceries, medical, & recreational services	Fast food restaurant chain	National bank	Food processing	Telecom	Utility provider	Other	Total
Site	HDQ	HDQ	HDQ	HDQ	B/R	HDQ	B/R	HDQ		
No. of employed	150	1,100	1,300	1,200	2,500	860	6,500	180		
Market share	72%	6.26%	-	-	12%	30%	-	-		
Directors	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	1	5
Managers	2	3	4	3	2	2	3	2	0	21
Supervisors	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	4	0	9
Front-line	2	3	1	3	2	2	4	1	2	20
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6
Totals	4	6	5	10	6	6	8	7	9	61

Source: Own elaboration.

\* Note: HDQ refers to headquarters.

B/R refers to branch or regional office.

yogurt and other dairy products manufacturer, and a front-line worker employed by a textile manufacturing company. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested using these types of contacts to enrich cultural perspectives, to check soundness of some of interviewee's comments (*e.g.*, low salaries and no profit sharing discourage creativity), and 'validate' the data (Arksey, & Knight, 1999). The data were collected between July and October of 2002.

Table 2 shows the frequencies for each division. The participants were from several functional areas of business. In general, participants between the ages of 30 and 49 accounted for 65.5% of the sample, while 14.8% were 29 years old or younger. The sex of the interviewees was 72% male and 27.9% female.

Table 2  
Areas of Business

Area	Frequency	Percent
Analyst	1	1.6
Consulting	2	3.3
Customer Service	11	18.0
Engineering	1	1.6
Finance	6	9.8
Human Resources	5	8.3
Information Systems	3	4.9
Inventory/Stock	2	3.3
Maintenance	4	6.6
Marketing	1	1.6
Operations	15	24.6
Planning	1	1.6
Product development	2	3.3
Sales	2	3.3
University Staff	5	8.2

Source: Own elaboration.

The educational profile shows that 69% of the participants had bachelor's degrees, while 36.1% had high school diplomas. Approximately 93% of the participants were Roman Catholic. Most participants worked in either customer services (18%) or operations (24.6%). Morse (2000) considers 30 to 60 interviews appropriate for semi-structured interviews.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Materials

The participant interview packet contained an introductory letter, which explained the study, the interviewee rights to refuse participation, researcher's background, examples of creativity—the purpose of the examples was to overcome any implicit theory of creativity as typically seen as innovative or radical creativity (Puccio & Chimento, 2001), and actual interview questions.

### 2.2 Recruiting Procedures

Companies were recruited by an associate and a member of the Asociación Nacional de Industriales (ANDI) [National Association of Industries] in Colombia. The researcher explained the research and gave the criteria for selecting participating organizations to the associate and the ANDI member. All conversations were mostly in Spanish. The researcher is of Colombian descent and speaks Spanish with above average fluency.

### 2.3 Conducting Interviews

In this study, individual interviews were chosen so as not to compromise privacy

and confidentiality. The researcher determined that individual interviews would more likely reduce participant anxiety, arising from fear of repercussions perceived from the possible disclosure of sensitive material; namely, work climate factors that hinder creativity. A critical incident technique was used to identify behaviors and factors that contribute to the success or failure of individuals and organizations in specific situations (Andersson & Nilsson, 1964). The researcher asked for their own personal examples of creativity. Their examples did not have to be ones they directly experienced; they could include an event experienced by a co-worker. The primary questions were taken and adapted from Amabile and Gyskiewicz (1988) and were as follows:

What was the creative event, idea, product or process?

What was the circumstance?

What made the difference between this and other, uncreative events?

Who in the company facilitated this creative act?

How did they facilitate the creative act?

What characteristics or abilities of the people involved contributed to the creativity of the event?

What things in the company facilitated the creative act?

How did these things facilitate the creative act?

Were any obstacles in the work environment overcome in the process?

Who in the company hindered this creative act?

How did they hinder the creative act?

What things in the company hindered the creative act?

How did these things hinder the creative act?

## 2.4 *Transcribing and Translating*

After each interview, the audiotapes were transcribed. The transcripts also distinguished when the researcher paraphrased or eliminated sections and contained notes of observations and researcher reactions to the interviewee. These were marked by placing the paraphrase, the observation, or the indication of an eliminated section in brackets. Transcribers were instructed to provide a verbatim transcript of interviews. The researcher then translated the audiotape transcripts into English from Spanish. Due to time and material costs, a direct translation method was used rather than a back-translation approach. The Spanish transcript consisted of 332 pages. However, a Colombian university professor assisted in checking portions of what the researcher understood from the interview recordings.

## 2.5 *Coding the Data*

*Logbook.* After each interview, entries were made in a logbook to highlight key points, learning, hunches, and immediate thoughts as a way to prevent data overload and facilitate coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The contents of the logbook were not included in the coding process. A number was also assigned to each interviewee and entered in the logbook. Audio-cassettes were numbered with the same number assigned to the interviewee. The side tabs of each cassette were removed to prevent the taping over of recorded interviews. The date and the time of the interview were logged prior to the start of each interview.



*Computer Aided Analysis.* QSR NVivo 1.2 software was used to code and cluster responses of participants (Richards, 2000). Specifically, this program handles text with ability to edit, visually code, and link computer documents as they are created and filtered. It also stores files, locates them, and sorts them. The program can sort and display data in much the same way as numerical data are handled.

*Coding.* After the completion of the transcriptions and translations, the coding phase began using a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory is an interpretative approach to studying qualitative data. In essence, the theory is grounded in the data that emerged from this study. For example, categories of creative climate derived from other cultures should not be assumed universally applicable to Colombia. Perhaps some categories may be identified that are special to Latin American cultures. Since the categories may be partially undetermined, a grounded theory approach was most appropriate.

Grounded theory begins with researchers “immersing” themselves in the transcripts and other documents to identify important themes (Abrahamson, 1983). Grounded theory involves examining data, whereby researchers immerse themselves in the text to discover themes and concepts that appear important to the creators of each comment (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Berg, 2001). To that end, a narrative coding process was used and will now be described here.

*First Level Analysis.* This step involved reading the transcript, one sentence at a time, and coding key concepts or themes, so that

codes could be transformed later into major categorical labels (Berg, 2001). This process involves affixing codes to a word, a sentence, a paragraph or a story (Creswell, 1998). Some codes were created using words taken directly from the transcripts. Other codes were created using words taken from a literature review of creative climate and Latin American culture conducted by the researcher. Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to this process as open coding.

Strauss and Corbin (1994) argued that qualitative researchers who conduct grounded theory methodology should preclude themselves from initiating a literature review prior to data collection. By not avoiding such a literature review, a researcher jeopardizes the emergent theory from being grounded in the data. On the other hand, Hutchinson (1993) and Cutcliffe (2000) argued that a literature review should precede data analysis because it can help cover the gaps in the literature and support the study’s rationale. LeVasseur (2003) added that researchers couldn’t control the tacit knowledge they bring to the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) claimed that tacit knowledge is necessary for initiating an inductive data analysis process. Morse (2002) suggested that researchers could work inductively and still build on what is already known.

The researchers took the position of the latter arguments. The first author’s master’s degree in the study of creative leadership and change and his master’s thesis, which examined the reliability and factor structure of the climate for innovation questionnaire, comprised tacit knowledge. In addition, he has tacit knowledge acquired from seven years of traveling throughout Latin America delivering

organizational and leadership development initiatives. To support his rationale for this study, he completed a review of cultural dimensions. However, the narrative coding did not start until five months later, which suggests the review was not fresh in his mind and consequently would reduce bias. Miles and Huberman (1994) advised researchers to create a start list of codes prior to fieldwork as a means to empower and expedite analysis. A start list of codes was limited to tacit knowledge involving creativity and not cultural dimensions relating to Latin America. Narratives that were responses to a general question such as, "How are ideas treated at this company?" received codes preceded by a CF or CH depending on whether it was a facilitator (CF) or a hindrance (CH) to creativity.

*Second Level Analysis.* After completing the first level of analysis, codes were aggregated into subcategories. This process involved constantly comparing and analyzing codes, sentences, and paragraphs, and then determining a name for each subcategory that emerged from the comparison. Often at this level, thought was given to frequency of responses. This same process was utilized to shape subordinate categories. Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe this process as axial coding. At this level, codes were expanded to add clarity, and in other cases, they were reduced to separate two distinct concepts in one sentence. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that coding is a process consisting of iterative cycles that remain open and flexible until analysis has run its course, when categories are saturated and a sufficient number of "regularities" have become salient.

*Third Level Analysis.* Subordinate and subcategories were then aggregated into major

categories that formed the theoretical dimensions. Three levels of assessments were conducted to determine reliability. At the first level, three university professors (2 of these experts were advisors and the other an independent third person), experts in the field of creativity, assisted the researcher in examining the categories. These experts were also the researcher's thesis advisors. As cited in Angen (2000), Morse (1994) argued that peer groups are essential for assessing the persuasiveness of the researcher's coding and categorization. They made frequent and comprehensive examinations of the coded narratives. These examinations took place from June, 2003 to July, 2004. They worked in concert with the researcher constantly to question his decisions and make recommendations. Sandelowski believes that, "Knowledge in qualitative inquiry often is said to come from deep immersion with data, profound commitment to purpose, and prolonged engagement with research participants, none of which characterizes the outside expert's typical activities on a project" (1998, p. 467) However, one inside expert often conferred with outside experts on qualitative analysis to preclude favoring substance and relevance of method.

At the second level, the percent of agreements was calculated. Fourteen judges, all graduates or current graduate students at/ from the International Center for Studies in Creativity at the State University of New York, Buffalo, sorted narratives into major categories. Since the sorting process at this stage of scale development is a cognitive process requiring intellectual ability, the researchers deemed the utilization of graduate

students as appropriate (Schriesheim & Hinken, 1990). Therefore, the researchers did not view intellectual ability as a cultural issue that would yield dissimilar results.

A proportionate stratified sampling of 20% was used to select narratives (n = 147) from 16 categories. Sixteen categories were divided into two sets (8 categories each) to prevent fatigue. Rather than randomly dividing them, the researchers intuitively grouped them by categories that could potentially be associated with each other. They felt this division would provide a more stringent test of the narratives. Set A consisted of SPCC, Trust, Leadership Style, Freedom, Self-confidence Building, Idea Support, Socio-emotional Support, Influence Management Norms, Belonging and ‘Other’. Set B consisted of Resources, Responsiveness, Synergy, Dynamism, Idea Time, Financial Support, Organized Creativity, Envy, Sense of Equity and ‘Other’. Seven judges independently sorted the narratives (n = 67) from Set A’s categories into Set A’s nine category definitions: eight categories including an “Other” category. Another seven judges repeated the

procedure for Set B’s narratives (n = 80) and its nine category definitions. Narratives from six subcategories and five subordinate categories were not included in the n = 147 sample, due to their very low frequency of occurrence, less than 10 mentions.

Because percent of agreements do not take into consideration the probability of chance agreement between judges (Rust & Cooil, 1994; Perreault & Leigh, 1989; Grayson, 2001), another measure of reliability called the Proportional Reduction Loss (PRL) was calculated to assess inter-judge agreements. This is the third level of assessment. PRL’s also account for the loss in confidence attributed to poor decisions by the judges; e.g., judges that are systematically wrong in their agreement (Rust & Cooil, 1994; Perreault & Leigh, 1989). Specifically, PRL’s were calculated for each category using the procedures below, recommended by Cooil (personal communication, July 12, 2004); small examples are provided to show the reader how the authors calculated the reliability coefficients:

**Procedure 1:**  $PRL_1 = [“Pmode” - (1/K)] / [1 - (1/K)]$

where “Pmode” = {proportion of times the modal judgment of 3 experts/graduates is the same as category chosen by researchers}.

<i>J1</i>	<i>J2</i>	<i>J3</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>Researcher</i>	<i>Match</i>	
<i>Trust</i>	<i>Trust</i>	<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Trust</i>	<i>Trust</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>K = 8 (8 Categories from which to sort narratives)</i>
<i>Trust</i>	<i>Trust</i>	<i>Trust</i>	<i>Trust</i>	<i>Trust</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>J = 3 (Number of judges)</i>
<i>Trust</i>	<i>Trust</i>	<i>Trust</i>	<i>Trust</i>	<i>Trust</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Modal (mode) = the sort that occurs the most often</i>
<i>Synergy</i>	<i>Freedom</i>	<i>Trust</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Trust</i>	<i>1/3</i>	<i>Pmode = .555</i>
<i>Inf. Mgt.</i>	<i>Inf. Mgt.</i>	<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Inf. Mgt.</i>	<i>Trust</i>	<i>0</i>	
<i>Other</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Trust</i>	<i>0</i>	

$P_{mode} = (1+1+1+1/3+ 0+0) / 6$   
 6 = total number of decisions (sorts) each judge made.  
 $P_{mode} = .555$

$PRL_1 = .555 - (1/8) / 1 - (1/8)$   
 $PRL_1 = .555 - .125 / 1 - .125$   
 $PRL_1 = .430 / .875$   
 $PRL_1 = .491$

**Procedure 2:**

J1	J2	J3	(J1&J2)	(J1&J3)	(J2&J3)	Match	% Agree	PRL <sub>2</sub>
Dynamism	Other	Dynamism	N	Y	N	1/3	.333	
Envy	Envy	Sense of E.	Y	N	N	1/3	.333	
Dynamism	Other	Dynamism	N	Y	N	1/3	.333	
Dynamism	Dynamism	Dynamism	Y	Y	Y	3/3	1	
								.81*

$.333+.333+.333+1 / 4 = .499$   
 $.499 = PRL_2 .81$

For procedure 2, the authors of this article also referred to the Rust and Cooil (1994) journal article to determine the PRL<sub>2</sub>. Based on Rust and Cooil’s (1994) tables with three judges and eight categories, the PRL is .81.

Procedure 1 assumes that the joint choice of the researchers is correct and the reliability estimate is based on that assumption. The “Pmode” is the proportion of times the judgment of expert/graduates is the same as the category chosen by researchers. K is the number of categories (n =8) the expert/graduates used to sort the narratives. Procedure 2 does not rely on this assumption and omits data from the researcher (Cooil, personal communication, July 12, 2004). In other words, PRL<sub>2</sub> is the proportion of times the modal judgment of 3 experts/graduates is the same *without the researchers*. Procedure 2 first includes calculating the proportion of agreement among the judges. The proportion of agreement is the total number

of pairwise agreements divided by the total *possible* number of pairwise agreements. Second, the PRL is obtained by using tables developed by Rust and Cooil (1994). The tables are based on decision theory and mathematical formulation to model internal consistency and interjudge agreement. Because the statistical formulation is cumbersome, Rust and Cooil and (1994) provide tables. Table 3 displays the PRL<sub>1</sub> and PRL<sub>2</sub> reliabilities.

The two procedures, as described above, complement each other, and thus by presenting both reliabilities, the weaknesses of each are addressed (Cooil, personal communication, July 16, 2004). For example, by relying on the assumption that researchers are correct in their sort of the narratives, the researchers run the risk of including biased data—the researchers are assumed to have an advantage because they administered a comprehensive and frequent ex-

Table 3  
Narrative Sort Coefficients

	PRL <sub>1</sub>	PRL <sub>2</sub>
Set A		
SPCC	1.00	1.00
Trust	0.99	0.77
Leadership Style	0.99	0.77
Freedom	1.00	1.00
Self-Confidence	0.99	1.00
Building	0.99	0.56
Idea Support	0.99	0.84
Influence Management	0.99	0.81
Belonging	0.88	0.05
Socio-Emotional Support		
Set B		
Synergy	1.00	1.00
Resources	0.99	0.73
Dynamism	0.97	1.00
Idea Time	0.83	1.00
Financial Support	1.00	1.00
Organized Creativity	0.97	0.70
Envy/Jealousy	1.00	0.77
Sense of Equity	1.00	1.00
Responsiveness	0.97	0.81

Source: Own elaboration.

amination of the coded narratives; the judges, however, were not given that opportunity. On the other hand, by assuming the researchers are potentially not correct, their comprehensive and frequent examination of the coded data is discounted.

To interpret the results shown in Table 4, the authors used Nunnally's (1978) minimum standard of .70 for exploratory work (Rust & Cooil, 1994). Therefore all PRL scores that exceeded .70 were deemed acceptable. The Mode PRL<sub>2</sub> scores for the Socio-emotional Support and Idea Support subcategories were below .70. Further ins-

pection of the sorted narratives revealed that participants viewed Idea Support and Socio-emotional Support as similar ( $n = 13$ ). Consequently, the Socio-emotional subordinate categories were merged with the Idea Support subcategory. These were the only subcategories that did not meet the .70 or above target. Once this merger was made, the results supported the content validity of all major and subcategories.

### 3. Results

The grounded theory method identified twenty categories from 606,852 coded narratives and comprised approximately 75% of the text. The un-coded narratives either were not related to creative climate, did not contain a meaningful unit of information, or were related to creative climate but did not appear frequently enough to form a category: Betrayal (1), Peer Disrespect (1), Antagonistic Behavior (1), Dislike of Writing and Elaborating Ideas (1), Debate (1), Repetition of Mistakes (1), Patience (1), Anarchist Behavior (1), White Lies (2), Too Sensitive (2), Conflict (2), Integrity (3), Ethics (3), Self awareness (3), Tactfulness (3), Negative Union Mentality (3), Excuses (3), Bad Temperament (3) Poor Social Conscience (4), and Job Security (4).

Table 4 shows a frequency count of comments made by the 55 respondents. Their narratives were organized by major categories, subcategories, and in some cases, subordinate categories that were developed from ideas and expressions raised in the narratives. In some cases, subordinate categories were linked under subcategories to better delineate and fully understand the category.

Table 4  
**Total Interviewee Comments Using Major Categories, Subcategories, Subordinate Categories, and Subordinate Subordinate Categories**

Category	Total # Responses	Category	Total # Responses	Category	Total # Responses
<b>FREQUENTLY CITED CATEGORIES</b>		<b>ENHANCEMENT CATEGORIES</b>		<b>DISTINCT CATEGORIES</b>	
<i>Resources</i>	125	<i>Support</i>	203	<i>Organized Creativity</i>	104
▪ Training & Development	62	▪ Idea Support	163	▪ Testing and Analysis	46
▪ Money	19	○ Listening	42	▪ Deliberate Creative Process	30
▪ Access to Information Equipment	15	○ Idea Support	39	▪ Suggestion Systems	14
▪ Improvisation (from few resources)	10	○ Recognition	20	▪ Committees	10
▪ Knowledge Management	8	○ Criticism	16	▪ Promote Creativity	4
▪ Facilities	7	○ Encouragement	15		
	4	○ Blame	10		
		○ Idea Feedback	8		
		○ Follow Through	8		
		○ Ridicule	5		
<i>Responses to Societal, Political, and Cultural Conditions (SPCC)</i>	55				
▪ External Bureaucracy	24	▪ Financial Support	40	<i>Influence Management Norms</i>	36
▪ Economic Conditions	16	○ Support for Well-being	21		
▪ Social Capital	7	○ Instrumental Support	19	<i>Belonging</i>	28
▪ Educational System	5	▪ Prizes and Awards (7)		<i>Envy/Jealousy</i>	25
▪ Historical Roots	3	▪ Monetary (6)		<i>Self-serving of Equity</i>	13
		▪ Food Vouchers (4)		▪ Self-serving Decisions	7
		▪ Promotions (2)		▪ Particularism (Favoritism)	6

Cont. table 4

Category	Total # Responses	Category	Total # Responses	Category	Total # Responses
<i>Trust</i>	32				
<i>Responsiveness</i>	29				
<i>Leadership Style</i>	28				
<i>Freedom</i>	26				
Autonomy	18				
Risk-taking	8				
<i>Synergy</i>	24				
<i>Dynamism</i>	18				
<i>Idea Time</i>	18				
<i>Self-Confidence-Building</i>	17				

Source: Own elaboration.

Headings

Major Categories: Underlined headings

Subcategories: ■

Subordinate Categories: o

Subordinate Subordinate Categories: o ■

The major categories are ordered here based on three viewpoints: categories frequently cited in Western creative climate literature (Responsiveness, Leadership Style, Synergy, Trust, Responses to Societal Political Cultural Conditions, Freedom, Dynamism, Idea Time, Resources, Self-Confidence Building); categories that are frequently cited in Western creative climate literature but need an expansion of the accepted definition in the literature (Support); and categories that are distinct (Envy/Jealousy, Belonging, Organized Creativity, Influence Management Norms, Sense of Equity).

#### 4. Categories Frequently Cited in Creative Climate Literature

In this section, categories frequently cited in the creative climate literature will be listed. Each category will be accompanied by a definition and some examples from the Colombian narratives representing the category.<sup>1</sup>

##### 4.1 Resources

This category includes the training, money, technology, facilities, equipment, and information that are readily available for organizational members to use or access as a means to develop ideas (Amabile, 1996). When resources are scarce, budgets are tight and cost-cutting initiatives are prevalent and constant. Here are some Colombian examples of how Resources were mentioned:

*Training resource example.* “We also do not have the training. To receive training, each

<sup>1</sup> Because of a space limitation, evidence to support each category by way of examples found in creative climate, creativity and culture literature were not provided.

person has to reach into his own pockets. However, there is no time for school. There is no time and no money.”

*Monetary resource example.* “Investment in our country is limited because of external debt. In the United States, the investment rate in technology is 20%. Here, the last investment in technology was three years ago. The same applies at the national level.”

*Improvisational creativity example* (from a lack of money). “Instead of buying and importing from the exterior, we produce things here. We made fryers. The ones from the U.S. are too costly. It costs too much to buy and operate electrical equipment. Our maintenance group built gas fryers. Initially, our fryers at our sales points were electrical. We converted them to gas. It is cheaper.”

##### 4.2 Responses to Societal, Political, and Cultural Conditions (SPCC)

This category involves the responses to events that are relatively outside the control of the organization that discourage or encourage creativity and influence the organization’s ability to invest in the development of ideas (Amabile, 1996). Examples of such events consist of an economic crisis, government imposed regulations, crime, global competition, deterioration in community trust, a civil war, or a natural disaster. When organizations do not respond constructively to a crisis or a situation, there exists a sense of uncertainty and a sort of paralysis. Ideas are not progressive and instead are generated for survival purposes. When the opposite is true, people are motivated and challenged by the



circumstances. They look for ways to reinvent themselves. Here are some examples of how Responses to Societal, Political, Cultural Conditions were mentioned by respondents:

*External bureaucracy example.* “I think the structure and the relationship serves as an aspect that does not help. The government intervenes to regulate money. If we have a grand idea, the government may hamper the idea because they have regulations that make things difficult. Everything is oriented towards providing service that the government regulates. The government can limit us.”

*Economic condition example.* “During extreme external situations, it obligates a person to definitely change all of his paradigms. One saw himself under a great crisis that started in the year 1999. Here, there was a big earthquake.”

*Social capital example.* “Therefore, in some way, that climate of tolerance, that climate of polarization of political ideas, that climate of violence that exists outside of companies in society, reaches companies and also influences the possibility of creativity.”

According to the World Health Organization (1998), social capital represents, “the degree of social cohesion which exists in communities.” Social capital also refers to established social processes; namely, networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam, 1993).

### 4.3 Trust

This category includes the perception that people in the organization are trustworthy.

They can be counted on to display consistent integrity and honest behavior. There is a faith in the organization that people have the skills, honesty, character, and abilities to complete work functions. Where trust is low, people do not delegate. People do not accept added responsibilities. Promises are not kept. Ekvall (1987) reported trust in his measurement. Isaksen, Lauer, Ekvall, and Britz (2000-2001) detailed trust/openness as a dimension reported in the Situational Outlook Questionnaire. They define trust as the emotional safety in relationships that allows for mutual respect, sharing of credit, openness and frankness. Here are some examples of how Trust was mentioned:

“When people trust their managers and when the managers trust their staff, that I believe helps to create a creative climate because I feel free and I feel that I am valued and I feel that what I do is useful to the organization.”

“Trust goes down. When people say, ‘Let us work with the minimum effort’, it is because the company says one thing and does another.”

### 4.4 Responsiveness

This category involves the organizational capacity to respond quickly to the ideas of its members. The organization actively expedites the processing of ideas; many measures are taken to assure that an idea is implemented as soon as possible. In unresponsive environments, organizational centralization, bureaucracy, visionless politics and endless paperwork slows the progressing of ideas (Amabile, 1996). Here are some examples of how Responsiveness was mentioned in the study:

“We waited two years to receive feedback on this idea.”

“Ideas get stuck because they have to pass through many steps.”

#### 4.5 Leadership Style

The manner in which leaders exercise their power. People feel honored and respected. People submit ideas, opinions, or spot problems without fear of being disparaged. Leadership is not conducive to creativity when power and fear are used as instruments to force people to achieve compliance (Lee, 1997). People are coerced. People are made to feel inferior, insecure about their jobs, and bad about themselves. They are also threatened, humiliated, and bullied. Here are some mentions of Leadership Style:

“Things need to be this way and that is it, period. If someone were to question, then you get, ‘I am the boss. I am the one who gives the orders around here.’ We had suggestions, but we feared to share them.”

“We have a society that is ‘facilista’. In other words, we want things the easy way. Managers do not want people to question them or to point things out that are wrong. That complicates things. They like the compliments. They liked to be stroked. They do not like the criticism. If one were to point out the wrong things, or question, they would deliberately make things difficult for you.”

#### 4.6 Freedom

This category involves a non-restrictive workplace that allows employees to experiment with and apply new ideas. People have

the freedom and the autonomy to generate ideas, develop them, and take risks on their own without organizational interruptions to control procedures and results. People feel free to be themselves without constraints. Where freedom and autonomy are non-existent, people are not able to make choices or decisions on their own, and as a result feel apprehension when considering moving outside the established boundaries (Isaksen, Lauer, Ekvall & Britz, 2000-2001). Here are examples of how Freedom was mentioned in this study:

*Autonomy.* “I do not have to consult a higher level to seek authorization. I have the influence in my area.”

“I think people need the freedom to say things, to offer ideas and to talk to people without fear of repercussions.”

*Risk-taking.* “There is this image that if someone takes on responsibility for the idea, then that translates into risk.”

#### 4.7 Synergy

This category involves the collaboration and unity that exists when people work together to merge insights from different perspectives to achieve common goals (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). People value and make the best use of the unique strengths and abilities that each member brings to the team (Covey, 1989). There exists a high degree of collaboration. Where teamwork does not exist, people block each other. They reject diversity. People focus on the weaknesses of others. Commitment is low. Hard feelings prevail between team members. Here are some examples of how Synergy was mentioned:

“Plus, it helped to take advantage of the differences in the group, to take advantage of the complementary abilities and capacities of each group member of the committee.”

“We are very participative in projects. Just because it is my project, it does not mean people will not participate. We work very much in teams.”

#### **4.8 Dynamism**

This category involves the extent to which people are involved in various, interesting and meaningful projects. They jump from one completed task to another with continued fervor, commitment, persistence and intensity. Constant changes in processes and procedures keep the pace fast and exciting (Isaksen et al., 2000-2001). People in a low energy organization become apathetic and even defend routine. Others become bored and complacent. Repetitiveness prevails in the organization. Here is an example of how Dynamism (the lack of it) was mentioned:

“But through my optical lens, [the job] is incipient. It exists, but hardly; it is a job that is pachydermic.”

“When they see things in this manner, their ideas will go beyond the immediate. I think that the number of ideas is less for an employee who has been working for the company for years doing the same job function without any deviation, than for an employee who has had a variety of experiences.”

#### **4.9 Idea Time**

This category involves the time provided for people to generate, submit or develop their

ideas (Isaksen, Lauer, Ekvall & Britz, 2000-2001). Time is provided on a regular basis for employee groups to sit down with their boss or among themselves to discuss proposals and brainstorm ideas to improve the job, product, service, or process. Where time is insufficient, there is no opportunity to reflect because the emphasis is on mass production and volume. People are stressed because the pressure to produce is constant. There is no breathing room. Here are examples of how Idea Time was mentioned in the narratives:

“I think there should be [opportunities] where one can take his time to think, ‘What is this? What can I improve? What could be good?’ As I said earlier, we have meetings two times a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 7am to 8am. Almost all of the time at these meetings is for that [purpose], to come up with and develop ideas.”

#### **4.10 Self-confidence Building**

This category involves the extent to which the organization deliberately bolsters a sense of security and self-confidence in its employees so that they easily submit ideas and express their opinions. When the organization consistently, strategically, and consciously implements programs such as training, “town meetings”, and interventions to address self-esteem concerns, confidence is high, people value their own experiences, strengths and abilities (Pierce, Gardner, Cummings & Dunham, 1989). They display little fear in receiving feedback. They are optimistic and resilient. When the organization offers little to combat self-esteem concerns, people constrain themselves from pushing or expressing their

own views and ideas (Osborn, 1953; Williams, 2002). When their ideas are met with objections, they take it personally. They feel criticized. They are easily intimidated and sensitive towards rejection. Here are examples of how Self-confidence Building was mentioned.

“Sometimes it helps to give the person some tranquility, security, and to help him understand that his idea is good even if he does not think so.”

“I was mad at myself for not sharing [the idea]. [It was from a] feeling of inferiority toward the upper levels, timidity.”

### **5. A Category that is Frequently Cited in the Creative Climate Literature but Needs Enhancements of the Accepted Definition**

In this section, a category frequently cited in creative climate literature but in need of enhancement of the accepted definition will be listed. The category definition and some examples from Colombian narratives representing the category will be given.

#### **5.1 Support**

This category involves the manner in which ideas are treated and people are cared for. Ideas typically receive constructive feedback and follow-through. Progress reports are provided and are part of an ongoing process to respond to ideas. People perceive emotional backing of their ideas, such as recognition, encouragement, and no ridicule. People also perceive that their company cares for their well-being when financial support

is provided. People receive prizes, awards, money, food and transportation assistance, or student loans. Where support is lacking, people are reluctant to listen to ideas. Suggestions are met with criticism, blame, ridicule, indifference, and lack of follow-through. When the company does not care for the well-being of its employees, people become distracted and instead of thinking about workplace ideas, are worried about how they are going to provide for themselves and their families. Here are some examples of how support was mentioned:

*Recognition support example.* “We publish the idea on bulletin boards as a way to recognize the person.”

*Idea support example.* “The boss gave me the approval to acquire and to install the software.”

*Instrumental support example.* “We used to struggle to get assistance for buying our own house. When [he] arrived, that stopped. Many people now have homes and are grateful to [him]. I received a high school diploma, based on his plans. For the most part, this company has always had good management.”

*Follow-through (lack of support) example.* “If they cannot apply the idea, then they should tell you. They should have a good argument for turning the idea down.”

### **6. Categories that are Distinct**

In this section, categories that are mentioned in the creative climate literature, but are not found in published creative climate

measurements will be listed. Each category will be accompanied by a definition and some examples of narratives that represent the category.

### **6.1 Organized Creativity**

This category includes the actual small group structures, analytical and testing systems, and processes (e.g., brainstorming sessions, total quality management, committees, suggestion boxes) used by the organization to involve its members in sharing and/or developing ideas (Osborn, 1963; Basadur, 1987). Where arrangements for managing ideas are not clear, ideas are not channeled and instead are lost or placed on hold. People are frustrated and argumentative, and give up submitting more ideas. A feeling of, "What's the use anyway?" prevails in the organization. Here are some examples of how organized creativity was mentioned:

*Suggestion systems example.* "We have forms that we fill out. We describe the idea and its benefits and then it gets submitted to the suggestion system."

*Deliberate creative process.* "We conduct round robin discussions and share ideas of what we do at our branches. The executives facilitate the meetings. We discuss the ideas and if there are some that are successful, we all apply them in our own branches."

### **6.2 Influence Management Norms**

This category includes the prevailing organizational custom, explicit or implicit, of accepting only people who can sell ideas to

those who have the power to implement them. People are expected to speak about the impact of the idea in a convincing manner. People who are eager and persistent are given more attention. The organization accepts people who address objections. In the poor application of influence management, the organization easily dismisses people who do not articulate the value an idea can potentially bring to the organization. Sometimes ideas are accepted more on the persuasiveness of their advocate than on their value to the organization. People do not actively defend their own ideas. Ideas that are otherwise good ideas get lost because the person submitting the idea was not an effective idea advocate. Here are examples of Influence Management Norms:

"We convinced them it was worth the investment. We sold it as a need."

"We had to show them the gains and the cost savings. I shared with them the results of our surveys and observations."

### **6.3 Belonging**

This category involves the meaningful sense of social connection and the interpersonal bond one feels with other organizational members (Maslow, 1971; Schutz, 1994). There is a sense of inclusiveness that people feel; they know their coworkers and can identify them by name and by their interests. People are included in matters of importance to the company. People relate to one another at work. They feel important. They feel they can identify with their group. In the opposite case, people feel excluded. There is a sense that people are viewed as worthless

and insignificant or viewed as numbers. Here are examples of how belonging was mentioned in this study:

“That sense of belonging is important because it is an issue of giving and taking. It is a reciprocal relationship.”

“The employees here have a great sense of belonging. They have a sense of ownership. They say, ‘It is great to work here and it feels like this company is ours’

“...that sense of identity that exists among the people that work in the company [helps] because when one is connected with them, [then we] all acquire an orientation to proceed on the same pathway.”

#### **6.4 Envy/Jealousy**

This category involves the extent to which people feel resentment, envy, jealousy, or disadvantage because of the good fortune of others (Vai-Lam, 1995). People compare their power structures, economic well-being, or status with others. If a person introduces an innovation or an idea that improves his or her standing, there is a likelihood of retaliation, sabotage, stealing of ideas, or taking pleasure in the setback of the innovator (in contrast to conflict, which presupposes mutual awareness of overt type behaviors and in contrast to a sense of inequity, which presupposes a socially justified perception). Where envy and jealousy are minimal, people display sincere gratitude, generosity, and admiration for the success of others. Here are some examples of how Envy/Jealousy was mentioned:

“They do not want to lose power: ‘If I allow this person to think and do more than I, there is envy’.”

“I think there was a sense of envy that we had done it and not they. It is part of our Latin American culture, to subjugate.”

“I think this person did not want me to shine and resented the thought of my getting credit for the work and the results. And I believe that this person demonstrated this by pushing other agenda items to undermine this project.”

#### **6.5 Sense of Equity**

This category involves the psychological state of perceived fairness concerning business procedures and decisions (Lemons & Jones, 2001; Charness & Haruvy, 2000). What one puts into a job reasonably equates to what one gets out of it. What one puts forth consists of hard work, loyalty, effort, determination, tolerance or commitment. What one gets back for his/her effort includes the expected pay increase, training and development, promotion, added responsibility, praise, or travel. People experience a high level of job satisfaction. They spot problems and offer remedial solutions. People view business decisions and procedures as just. When fairness is not perceived, people indirectly dispute the unfairness of business decisions and procedures by withholding ideas, complaining, or doing only what is expected of them (in contrast to invidious behaviors that are viewed as socially invalid or unjustified). They view decisions as self-serving. Favoritism prevails in the organization. Here are examples of Sense of Equity:

*Particularism example.* “The company has placed, from my point of view, a series of people in positions without their having the requisites, instead of giving the opportunity to other people, who could perform well and who could obtain new experience.”

*Self-serving decisions example.* “It is personal interests related to money that they place above moral principles. People are motivated here by their personal interests. It seems each time they get more and more resistant to change.”

## 7. Discussion

This study supports Brislin’s (1986) argument that one cannot assume that items that possess good factor structures will assess the phenomena as experienced by the targeted culture. What is valued in one culture may not be valued in another. The cost of believing otherwise could be great. For example, researchers are likely to disseminate information that misrepresents and inadequately understands groups from other cultures (Valencia, 2000). They also can misdiagnose how variables such as family structure, gender, age, religion, level of affluence, and cultural values affect workplace dynamics; e.g., interventions that rely on open confrontation can result in group member embarrassment and perceived insult.

Child (1981) explained that cultural gaps have a propensity to close on macro-level issues when organizational technologies such as Total Quality Management (TQM) are shared throughout the world, but the unique differences such as organizational behavior widen the gaps at the micro-level.

Table 5 compares and highlights some unique differences that could potentially block the successful implementation of organizational technologies at the micro-level. As a way to display these differences, the Colombian categories that emerged from this study and the dimensions of a developed in the west (United States), questionnaire called the Situational Outlook Questionnaire™ (SOQ), are compared. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars observed that national cultures are not arbitrarily dissimilar from one another, but “instead are *mirror images* of one another’s values, reversals of order and sequence of looking and learning” (2000, p. 1). The comparison in Table 5 appears to support Hampden and Trompenaars. The SOQ was translated and designed to assess perceptions of the character of life within the organization in relation to a creative climate (Isaksen et al., 2000-2001). Only a few examples of organizational climate differences and its impact on organizational development interventions are explained here.

Although Idea Support is not a dissimilar concept to the SOQ, in Colombian organizations, idea time may be limited as a direct result of production demands. Support for this assertion was found in the number of negative comments made by participants in the study. Per person, Idea Time was mentioned 0.3 times per manager, 0.1 comments were positive and 0.2 negative. Front-line workers mentioned this category 0.8 times. Positive comments were mentioned 0.2 times while negative comments were 0.6 per worker.<sup>2</sup> Also, it appears that limited R&D

<sup>2</sup> Because of space limitations, comments per person were listed only for the Idea Support category.

Table 5  
**Comparison of Colombian and SOQ Categories**

SOQ Categories	Colombian Categories from this Study
Idea Time (Large R&D budgets; Capital Intensive Focus)	No Time (Little to on R&D Budgets; Labor Intensive)
Playfulness/Humor (Informality) Conflict (Overt Behavior)	Responsiveness--Bureaucracy (Formality) Envy/Jealousy (Covert Behavior)
Idea Support (Intrinsic Motivation, Task oriented)	Socio-emotional & Financial Support (Extrinsic Motivation, Relationship Oriented)
Debates (Individualism)	Synergy (Collectivism)
Risk-taking (Low Uncertainty Avoidance)	Routine/Status quo (High Uncertainty Avoidance)
Challenge & Involvement (Task Oriented Approaches)	Belonging (Relationship Oriented Approaches)
Freedom (Minimal control, Low Power Distance)	Autocratic Leadership Style (Maximum Control; High Power Distance)
Trust in People and System (Universalism)	Sense of Equity: Trust in Certain People and Systems (Particularism)
Openness (Slack Resources creates divergence)	Influence Mgt. Norms (Lack of Resources creates convergence)

Sources: *SOQ Categories*: Isaksen, Lauer, Ekvall, and Britz (2000-2001), and *Colombian Categories from this study and Words in Parenthesis*: Own elaboration.

investment in Colombia creates a labor-intensive focus. This suggests that R&D resources in Western cultures are readily available compared to Colombia, to produce innovations that make companies more nimble and expeditious. Colombian companies therefore have to struggle to compete in a global arena because they are operating with equipment and facilities that are not as modern. Resources are also limited because they are injected elsewhere. For example, Colombia's Gross National Product (National Wealth) was \$88 billion in 2000. Almost \$10 Billion per year of its national wealth is directly committed to the cost of fighting violence. Indirectly, there are other costs that involve lower foreign investment, limited job opportunities, ransoms paid to kidnappers

and extortionists, and operating costs consequential to property damage and theft (Rossiasco, 2001). Such conditions limit the availability of goods and deprive societies of the resources essential for continued growth, infrastructure investment, and research and development. One would expect that under such circumstances, Colombian organizations would be likely to demonstrate improvisational creativity. Sull (2003), for example, provides a mini case on how three businesses in developing countries overcame a lack of resources to excel in creativity and innovation; namely, by becoming intimate with customers and consequently learning how to solve problems without depending on new science, innovating around technology, and searching outside the country for



great ideas. Western consultants in this context might be more effective if they targeted how organizational climates influence improvisational creativity, should surplus resources be unavailable.

Latin American organizations are more likely to be traditional, formal, autocratic, rigid, and be managed by personnel with little tolerance for mistakes (Rodríguez Estrada & Escobar Borrero, 1996; Weiss, 1993). Consequently, creativity and programs such as quality circles are more likely to be seen as a challenge to the status quo, as revolutionary and dangerous (Rodríguez Estrada & Escobar Borrero, 1996; Weiss, 1993). This may also suggest why play and humor did not emerge in this study. Play and humor may be a concept that is less meaningful and valuable for societies that stress formality and power relations. Although humor and joy plays a major role in a work setting in Latin American companies, it is not common for it to be used *while at work*, especially at the lower levels of the organization. The point is that humor and comedy can be perceived as insubordinate, especially when used to relax the hierarchy (Westwood, 2004). Consultants should not brusquely change the corporate culture but instead find a gradual approach by first selling the advantages of using humor and then pilot-testing creativity techniques that foster humor with idea generation groups.

Although the concept of Freedom is not contradictory to the SOQ, its prevalence is seen when comparing collectivistic and individualistic societies. Collectivistic societies stress loyalty more than individualistic socie-

ties, and as a result members of collectivistic societies are less likely to succeed in obtaining information necessary for innovation. As one participant mentioned, “Why put myself at risk? Why answer questions that may expose me? Instead, I will just sit here in my comfortable chair doing my job. But I chose to come because I found it important to share with you information to help you with your work (referring to this study)”. In high power-distance societies, the granting of autonomy or self-direction may be viewed as threatening (Hofstede, 2001; Weiss, 1993). Front-line employees may view freedom as too risky. Consultants may need to persuade upper level managers concerning the benefits of granting autonomy. A gradual or partial granting of autonomy is likely to meet better receptivity than complete autonomy. Next, more upfront time building emotional safety nets for managers and front-line employees must be invested, so that small successes result and embarrassing occurrences are minimized.

Colombians have a low tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity, and in effect, its societal members will apply social and structural processes as a way to moderate its dynamics (Hofstede, 2001). One would expect that if Colombian organizations have a low tolerance for ambiguity, then they would be more likely to formalize their idea generation/development activities. In this study, for example, a company that manufactures transformers required employees to research and draft blue prints prior to submitting an idea. The sugar refinery employs a system that assigns an analyst to each person submitting a promising idea. The fast food chain, the services organization, the telecommunications company,

and the national bank all mentioned having an establishment committee system to screen ideas. In essence, few ideas were submitted in raw form. Assuming that managers conform, they in turn would have a tendency to block ideas that challenge the status quo, unless the idea's benefits have been thoroughly outlined and researched. Consultants can perhaps conduct a workforce needs assessment on its ability to research and influence others, using their research data. Another assessment can include the organization's readiness to receive front-line sales presentations. Regardless of the intervention, the process has to be one that does not produce a greater sense of uncertainty and unpredictability. Some values of Western organizational development practices are based on openness and frankness, whereby it is better to disclose true feelings than to circumvent them; *e.g.*, a confrontational meeting (Jaeger, 1996). An open and candid approach raises the specter of uncertainty and unpredictability. It can violate the boundaries of hierarchy (Jaeger, 1996). Questionnaires, such as a measurement of creative climate, can generate sensitive data. This too can raise the same specter. Ultimately, sensitive data requires that people discuss it and address it in a group setting, in order for information sharing, priority setting, group action planning, and follow-up to occur (Jaeger, 1996). Consultants can increase their effectiveness under such circumstances in two ways. Jaeger (1996) recommends creating questionnaires that generate data in a manner that each problem can be defined and discussed without disturbing the power structure. The other way is through third party peacemaking similar to the processes used to mediate international disputes. Hence, the consultant

would "shuttle" between the hierarchal levels to discuss the issues at arm's length, at least at first (Jaeger, 1996). The premise here is to provide the groups with a face-saving method and help the consultant build trust.

In a collectivistic society such as Colombia, its members' prime responsibility is for their fellow human beings (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000). In such a society, the emphasis is placed on cooperation, social concern, altruism, and close ties to individuals (Hofstede, 2001). Support for these assertions are indicated by the number of mentions (Belonging:  $n = 28$ ; Synergy:  $n = 24$ ; Financial Support:  $n = 40$ ). Although Idea Support is not a dissimilar concept to those in the SOQ, in Colombia it is different when the accepted definition of Idea Support is not expanded to include financial support; namely, support for the well-being of others and instrumental support. The United States, however, is considered to be an individualistic society, in which competition, self-reliance, personal growth and fulfillment are emphasized. One would expect that employees in a collectivistic society are more likely to stress close interpersonal relationships as a contributing factor towards workplace creativity. The flipside to this strength is the group's disinclination to accept outside group members that do not think or fit the same demographic profile as the group (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000). A consultant might better serve the company if he/she scoured for the best practices of diversity capitalization within the company and then found ways to dissect and germinate the practices. A positive approach circumvents threatening the power structure found in high power-distance cultures, which involves the degree of in-

equality that is expected and accepted by people, especially by those less powerful (Hofstede, 2001). Where inequality or high power-distance exists, society places more weight on things such as wealth, prestige, and power; namely, protecting power and combating any perceived threat to the power structure. According to Hofstede (2001), Colombia is a high power-distance culture where front-line workers are more likely to behave accordingly to maintain the status quo, because risk-taking behavior, in effect, may threaten the more powerful individual striving to maintain or increase his or her power-distance.

In Latin America, one is hard pressed to find an employer that exercises and provides equal opportunities for employees or potential candidates. One can have important technical talents, yet be passed up for opportunities because of bonds of familiarity and trustworthiness that other candidates can provide. As Recht and Wilderom (1998) state, promotion and selection processes stem from the particularism that is inherent in collectivistic (clannish attitudes) cultures. The particularism-universalism continuum, as shown in Table 6, involves the pressure that society applies to treat all people according to a general standard (universalism), or according to some personal attribute or relationship (Recht & Wilderom, 1998). A consultant can improve his or her chances of employing a social process such as TQM by accommodating the local culture. Upon reflecting on their own experience in Latin America, Osland, De Franco, and Osland (1999) recommended selecting respected informal leaders and letting them select and head teams, provided they select diversely skilled team members. The leaders chose

team members with whom they already had a trusting and loyal relationship.

The suggestions recommended in this article do not circumvent the important characteristics required to successfully compete in a new and emerging global business environment. Bentley (2002) listed these characteristics as: new approaches to exercising power and authority; successful process of empowerment at all levels; faster cycle time strong demands for faster decision making and faster and more successful follow-up; strong commitment to customer satisfaction; high levels of organizational flexibility and adaptability; willingness to embrace change; and successful development and utilization of diverse talents and abilities (p. 41). In essence, Table 5 points out that differences or mirror images exist, and therefore, how consultants intervene to change organizations in Colombia should differ from the approaches taken in Britain or in the United States. There are formidable reasons why aspects of creative climate are sometimes misunderstood and unappreciated. Many U.S. born change agents can make cross-cultural mistakes. They may not fully comprehend the needs, wants, and capacities of employees to adopt the latest North American or European initiatives. They may not be clear on the communication of reasons for and the nature of the initiative. They may not explain how the change is relevant and how it will affect the employee. They may be scornful of the employee's behavior and their social climate because it is different and because it is perceived as backward (Zaltman & Duncan, 1977; Dávila L. de Guevara, 2000; American Psychological Association, 2003). Adler (2002) similarly

cautioned that negative effects of cross-cultural miscommunications stem from people who do not put forth the effort to understand cultural assumptions, who do not apply cultural self-awareness, and who believe that everyone is more like their own character than they truly are. As Gibson warned, "Consultants who ignore cultural differences could find their consultation to be ineffective, inefficient, or even worse, insulting to the client." (1998, p. 61)

## Conclusion

Latin American countries such as Colombia should not be misjudged for lacking innovative capacity. Herbig and Dunphy argued that, "These talents are available in any society, but *whether or not they are mobilized is very much culturally determined (their italics!)*" (1998, p. 16). The level of innovation that is generated in a culture is relative to the degree of support that is provided for entrepreneurial initiatives within that culture (Herbig & Dunphy 1998). What is needed is a culturally sensitive approach to initiating change. As in the case of questionnaire design, Marin and Marin argued:

...it is important to reiterate here that the development of culturally appropriate instruments, as well as of culturally appropriate procedures, research protocols, and interventions implies going beyond a simple translation or adaptation. In this sense, it is not enough to obtain a good translation of an instrument. It is also insufficient to ask members of an ethnic group to review and edit an instrument that was previously available to make it more appropriate or acceptable to respondents. (1991, p. 66)

These findings indicate five things in relation to this study. First, theoretical structures can vary across groups. Second, there are aspects of creative climate in Colombia that need to be understood and appreciated to facilitate the transfer of management systems such as Creative Problem Solving, TQM, or strategic planning effectively. Third, a translation of a creative climate questionnaire would have missed important helps and hindrances to workplace creativity, and instead would have included factors like playfulness, achievement, and challenge at the expense of exploring factors like belonging, envy/jealousy, leadership style (autocratic), support for the well-being of others, and self-confidence building that seem important in the case of Colombia. Fourth, people and organizations in developing countries have to stop assuming that because the behavioral science was "Made in America", it therefore must be good for them. It might be that "Made in Colombia" is more appropriate and effective. Fifth, the data in this study suggest there is enough here to merit the construction of a new and more culturally sensitive measurement system.

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