

The influence of organizational culture on job satisfaction and intention to leave

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ABSTRACT

This investigation examined the impact of organizational culture on job satisfaction and intention to leave the organization through a survey of fitness staff. Organizational culture is commonly known as the values, beliefs and basic assumptions that help guide and coordinate member behaviour. The Cultural Index for Fitness Organizations (CIFO) was developed to measure organizational culture in the fitness industry specifically. Exploratory factor analysis revealed eight factors that represent cultural dimensions common to this context: staff competency, atmosphere, connectedness, formalization, sales, service-equipment, service-programs, and organizational presence. Path analysis was used to examine the relationship among the organizational culture factors, job satisfaction and intention to leave. Results produced a partially mediated model of organizational culture that explained 14.3% of the variance in job satisfaction and 50.3% of the variance with intention to leave the organization. The findings highlight the multidimensionality of organizational culture and its complexity in the fitness industry.

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The study of individual and group behaviour has intrigued scholars for a long time. Exploring complex phenomena such as organizational culture has been an area of particular interest since the seminal work of Pettigrew (1979). Pettigrew demonstrated how the concepts of symbolism, language, and rituals can be used to analyze and understand organizational life, and reveal the rich tapestry of meaning around every day tasks and objectives in the workplace. Hofstede (1980) encouraged management scholars to engage in cross-cultural studies of work-related values to further understand the function of organizational culture from a more global viewpoint. Shortly after, Peters and Waterman (1982) extolled the virtues of studying organizational culture and its influence on company performance. The result of these noteworthy works and others (e.g., Deal & Kennedy, 1999; Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg, & Martin, 1985; Martin, 1992; Schein, 1985) have created an area of organizational theory considered by many to be among the most important concepts for management scholars to comprehend (Alvesson, 2002).

The reported effects of organizational culture on individual attitudes and behaviour as well as overall company performance are what make the phenomenon an attractive area of study. It is contended that organizational culture acts as a system of social control and can influence employees' attitudes and behaviour through the values and beliefs operating in a company (Flynn & Chatman, 2001; Kusluvan & Karamustafa, 2003). Organizational culture has been shown to have a direct influence on staff satisfaction and commitment (e.g., Johnson & McIntyre, 1998; Lok & Crawford, 1999; Lund, 2003; Silverthorne, 2004) and turnover intention (e.g., Egan, Yang, & Bartlett, 2004; MacIntosh & Doherty, 2005; Sheridan, 1992). It

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has also been shown to influence aspects of organizational performance in terms of increased employee involvement, adaptability, positive labor relations, sustained competitive advantage, and sport team win loss record (e.g., Carmeli & Tishler, 2004; Chan, Shaffer, & Snape, 2004; Choi & Scott, 2008; Smart & St. John, 1996; Smart & Wolfe, 2000).

In the fitness industry, satisfying and retaining personnel is an area of particular concern for management (Gerson, 1999; McCarthy, 2004). It is somewhat surprising then that the focus of research in this context has been service quality and client satisfaction (see MacIntosh & Doherty, 2007a). McShane and Steen (2009) noted that job satisfaction is “best viewed as a collection of attitudes about different aspects of the job and work context” (p. 85). According to Ferreira (1988), the degree of interaction with clients demands that fitness club staff have a positive attitude. Any dissatisfaction with the workplace is likely to manifest in resistance to management and lower levels of customer service (Townsend, 2004). Indeed, research has traced the relationship between service industry employees that are satisfied with their jobs and a satisfied consumer base (e.g., Namisivayam, 2005). Hurley (2004) made a similar case for health and fitness organizations specifically. Further, there is consistent evidence that job dissatisfaction drives employee turnover in a variety of settings (Allen, 2006; Hom & Griffeth, 1991; Hom & Kinicki, 2001; Sablinski, Lee, Mitchell, Burton, & Holtom, 2002; Tett & Meyer, 1993). McCarthy (2004) noted that high turnover rates in personnel are problematic for fitness club managers across the industry. Although specific figures on staff retention in North America are considered confidential company information, one of Canada’s largest fitness chains indicated company turnover rates between 44% for personal trainers and 79% for sales staff (Confidential, personal communication, April 14, 2008). One study in the United Kingdom reported turnover rates as high as 70% among fitness instructors across a broad sample of fitness organizations (Lloyd, 2003). Employee attrition creates the need to focus on further recruiting, hiring, and training of staff to fill the void of those leaving; proving costly to the organization in terms of both time and money (Cascio, 2000). Consequently, it is important to understand the factors associated with staff satisfaction and retention in the fitness industry. Research in a variety of settings (e.g., marketing, nursing, transportation) provides evidence to suggest that organizational culture may be a meaningful influence in this regard (e.g., Egan et al., 2004; Lok & Crawford, 1999; Lund, 2003; Silverthorne, 2004).

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of organizational culture on fitness industry staff job satisfaction and their intention to leave. Behavioural intention is one of the best methods of predicting turnover rates among staff (Egan et al., 2004; Maertz & Campion, 1998; Tett & Meyer, 1993) and thus was examined here. A sub-purpose of the current study was to develop a survey instrument to measure organizational culture in this context. It has been argued, and there is supporting evidence, that organizational culture evolves to fit industry-specific dynamics and demands (Chatman & Jehn, 1994; Colyer, 2000; Lee & Yu, 2004; Ogbonna & Harris, 2002; Smith & Shilbury, 2004; Velliquette & Rapert, 2001). Thus, industry-specific rather than universal measures of organizational culture are required to capture particular features of different environments (cf. Smith & Shilbury, 2004). A brief overview of the fitness industry is provided next to set the context for the study. This is followed by a presentation of the conceptualization of organizational culture, the theoretical framework for the study, and an overview of the measurement of organizational culture.

1. An overview of the fitness industry

In North America exercise and fitness is a multi-billion dollar service industry (McNeil, 2006). In his typology of sport services Chelladurai (2005, p. 34) classified fitness organizations in the category of “participant services,” as distinct from “spectator services.” As such, fitness organizations are characterized by their focus on meeting consumers’ pleasure and/or health and fitness needs; they provide services that meet the basic human needs for skill development, pursuit of excellence, sustenance, and/or healing or restoration (Chelladurai, 2005). The nature of a fitness club and the demands of its clients will determine its focus on one or more of these particular services. The exercise and physical activity aspects of the services provided by fitness organizations are primarily what distinguish them from other types of service organizations, such as hotels, food, banking, beverage providers, financial and tax consultants, and hospitality and tourism services. Indeed, the fitness industry is designed so that customers visit on a more frequent (e.g., several times each week) and prolonged basis than with many other service providers. The nature of the staff–client interface in fitness organizations may be another distinguishing feature, where employees interact directly with clients or club members on a regular basis (Chelladurai, 2005). This interaction can be even closer with the personal training relationship, pilates instruction and other types of fitness coaching. These characteristics may reflect some of the dynamics and demands that contribute to an industry-specific culture.

Industry information indicates that there are over 29,000 clubs operating in the United States, 4700 in Canada and 1200 in Australia (McNeil, 2006). Further, it is also estimated that 15.6% of the population in the United States, 14.6% in Canada and 9.0% in Australia are fitness club members (McNeil, 2006). The fitness industry continues to be in a period of rapid expansion in terms of club growth (Intel International Group, 2006). There are several types of organizations in operation. Intel International Group (2006) categorizes them as commercial facilities (e.g., 24 h fitness, bally total fitness), not-for-profit or charitable organizations (e.g., YMCA, JCC/YMHA, hospital-based, university), miscellaneous for-profit organizations (e.g., corporate facilities, country club, hotel), and “other” fitness organization types (e.g., military facilities, church-based). As noted earlier, one of the more critical issues facing managers of fitness organizations is the high turnover rate of personnel responsible for delivering the service to client members (McCarthy, 2004). Therefore, understanding how to satisfy and retain fitness personnel in order to successfully operate a facility is of the utmost concern and interest in this large and growing industry (Gerson, 1999; McCarthy, 2004).

2. Organizational culture

According to Lewis (2002) a universal definition of organizational culture has proven elusive, however it is generally considered to be the shared values, beliefs and assumptions that exist among employees within a company that help guide and coordinate behaviour (Schein, 1991). Organizational culture is generally accepted to be a holistic and multidimensional concept that is historically determined and socially constructed (Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990). Tyrrell (2000) explained that organizational culture is constantly being negotiated as it is an emergent property of human interaction. The values and beliefs that emerge from the ongoing negotiation and practices among group members become a source of reference for what is deemed acceptable or unacceptable in an organization in terms of right and wrong behaviour (Kusluvan & Karamustafa, 2003).

The values and beliefs that underlie organizational culture likely reflect what is most important to the founders and/or company leaders as they are responsible for the vision and purpose of the organization, and presumably exemplify and reinforce the core values and beliefs through their own behaviour (e.g., Schein, 1991; Scheres & Rhodes, 2006; Weese, 1995; Wilkins, 1983). Organizational culture is also manifested through member dialogue and behaviour as well as organizational practices (Schein, 1985). It is also represented by company artifacts, dress codes, grooming standards, ceremonies, frequently recited company stories, and how a company deals with crises, all of which reflect an organization's values, beliefs, and underlying assumptions (Beach, 2006; Dastmalchian, Lee, & Ng, 2000; Detert, Schroeder, & Mauriel, 2000; Rafaeili & Pratt, 2006; Smith & Shilbury, 2004).

2.1. Theoretical framework

Empirical studies have illustrated that members' perceptions of the nature and strength of organizational culture is a critical component of human resource management, change management, leadership, and work-related behaviours and attitudes that can impact task performance (e.g., Allen, 2006; Flynn & Chatman, 2001; Goodman & Svyantek, 1999; Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006; Lee & Yu, 2004; Lund, 2003; MacIntosh & Doherty, 2005). Although a number of studies in the sport domain have considered organizational culture, only a few have examined its further influence. In a study of provincial sport organizations in Canada, Kent and Weese (2000) found that the use of organizational culture building activities was associated with more effective organizations. Smart and Wolfe (2000) noted the important role of organizational culture in the strength and sustainable competitive advantage for the Penn State football program. Choi and Scott (2008) found that team winning percentage was associated with culture type and strength in American Triple-A baseball organizations. In a study of state sporting organizations in Australia Colyer (2000) found differences in the perceptions of organizational culture between the paid work force and volunteers, and suggested the potential impact of those differences would affect the management of the workforce. MacIntosh and Doherty (2005) found that perceived organizational culture in one company was inversely associated with fitness club staff intention to leave their organization and drew implications for the management of fitness organizations.

Of specific interest to the current study, organizational culture has been shown to play a key role in job satisfaction (Adkins & Caldwell, 2004; Johnson & McIntyre, 1998; Lund, 2003; Silverthorne, 2004) and higher retention rates among personnel (Egan et al., 2004; MacIntosh & Doherty, 2005; Sheridan, 1992). The multidimensionality of organizational culture is consistently indicated in research which has demonstrated that certain elements of culture are more meaningful to job satisfaction and intention to leave than others (e.g., Egan et al., 2004; Lund, 2003; MacIntosh & Doherty, 2005). Egan et al. (2004) examined the relationships among organizational culture, job satisfaction and turnover intention, hypothesizing that culture would influence job satisfaction and that both job satisfaction and organizational culture would impact on turnover intention. Their model was based on consistent evidence of the inverse connection between job satisfaction and turnover intention (e.g., Sablinski et al., 2002), and their interest in further examining the role of organizational culture in the interactions among those variables. Egan et al. (2004) found the strongest support for a mediated model whereby organizational culture impacted job satisfaction which significantly impacted employee turnover intention. However, they noted that the direct impact of culture on employees' turnover intention in their study may have been compromised by poor scale reliabilities (Egan et al., 2004). They recommended further examination of the relationships between culture, job satisfaction and turnover intention. Building on their work, the theoretical model of the influence of organizational culture, job satisfaction and intention to leave guiding this study is presented in Fig. 1.

2.2. Organizational culture measurement

In order to assess the impact of organizational culture on company performance indicators researchers often utilize survey instruments (Ashkanasy, Broadfoot, & Falkus, 2000; Scott, Mannion, Davies, & Marshall, 2003). Surveys have the particular advantage of replication, can be used for comparative studies, and also provide managers with a platform for profiling organizational culture and instituting and measuring further organizational culture change initiatives (Ashkanasy et al., 2000). Currently, there are a number of survey instruments that assess organizational culture (Ashkanasy et al., 2000; Scott et al., 2003). Typically, the core values of an organization are measured, as reflected in member behaviour and organizational practices; these are considered the most readily apparent and measurable forms of culture (Ashkanasy et al., 2000). The Organizational Culture Inventory (OCI) measures 12 culture styles that are purported to exist across all types of

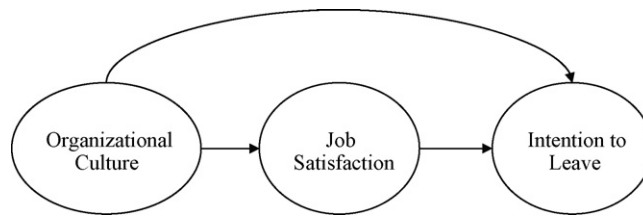


Fig. 1. Relationship between organizational culture, job satisfaction and intention to leave.

organizations (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988); the Organizational Culture Profile (OCP) measures eight generic culture dimensions (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991); the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) taps into an organization's focus on four common competing values and generates a corresponding profile of organizational culture (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). These are some of the more popular instruments that measure what are considered to be universal organizational values.

However, despite the popularity of these generic instruments, it is argued that cultural forms evolve to fit industry dynamics and demands and there can be great variation across industries (Lee & Yu, 2004). Others have also suggested that industry is a key determinant of organizational culture (Chatman & Jehn, 1994; Choi & Scott, 2008; Ogbonna & Harris, 2002; Smith & Shilbury, 2004; Velliquette & Rapert, 2001). These views are consistent with institutional theory which suggests that an industry can influence and mold organizational practices (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Lounsbury, 2001; Slack & Parent, 2006). Indeed, Smith and Shilbury concluded that organizational culture in Australian sport organizations comprised several dimensions that were unique to that setting along with several universal dimensions outlined in the literature. Further, Colyer (2000) found that the Competing Values Framework represented by the OCAI did not adequately capture the organizational culture of the sport organizations in her study. Recently, a framework of organizational culture in the fitness industry comprising several dimensions not represented by the mainstream generic instruments was derived from a qualitative study with fitness industry leaders (MacIntosh & Doherty, 2008). Thus, despite their widespread use, research indicates that generic organizational culture instruments do not appear to capture the nuances of particular industries (Chatman & Jehn, 1994; Colyer, 2000; Lee & Yu, 2004; MacIntosh & Doherty, 2008; Ogbonna & Harris, 2002; Smith & Shilbury, 2004). In keeping with the call of Smith and Shilbury and others for industry-specific scales, a survey instrument to explore the impact of organizational culture in the fitness industry was designed for this study and is described in more detail below.

3. Methods

3.1. Instrument

The Culture Index for Fitness Organizations (CIFO) was developed for this study to measure perceptions of organizational culture in the fitness industry. The CIFO was developed based on findings from previous qualitative research which uncovered 11 common core values that represent a preliminary framework of organizational culture dimensions in fitness organizations (MacIntosh & Doherty, 2008). In that study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 21 fitness company leaders and senior staff to identify values that reflect what is important and manifested through staff behaviour and organizational practices in their respective organizations. The 11 cultural dimensions include: (1) *organizational presence* (the club has a positive image and presence in the community); (2) *member success* (the club recognizes clients' achievement of fitness or health goals, such as weight loss); (3) *connectedness* (staff have a strong affiliation with the club and there is a sense of belonging for both clients and staff with the club); (4) *formalization* (the club has many rules and procedures that are standard practice to follow); (5) *creativity* (the club keeps things fresh and new for clients such as programming and equipment); (6) *sales* (sales are emphasized and rewarded by top management); (7) *organizational integrity* (the club conducts business in a reliable, honest, responsible and accountable fashion); (8) *health and fitness* (staff possess proper credentials, are knowledgeable about health and fitness, and are good role models for clients); (9) *service* (the club has clean facilities, working, available equipment and up-to-date fitness programs); (10) *work ethic* (staff display initiative and energy, are motivating, conscientious and upbeat about performing their job); and (11) *atmosphere* (the club is inviting and welcoming, with staff who are approachable). It was further determined through cross-analysis that six of the 11 dimensions appeared to be consistent with at least one of the cultural values represented in the OCP, OCI and/or OCAI organizational culture survey frameworks; namely, connectedness, formalization, work ethic, sales, organizational presence, and creativity (MacIntosh & Doherty, 2008). Thus, it was concluded that, although some overlap exists, none of these universal frameworks fully represents the multiple dimensions of organizational culture in the fitness industry that were uncovered through the qualitative investigation. Rather, a combination of universal and industry-specific dimensions of organizational culture were identified and may be expected to better tap into culture in and across fitness organizations. Nonetheless, it is important to determine whether these dimensions are perceived to exist by a wider sample of fitness industry staff.

For the current study multiple items were developed to measure the cultural dimensions in the framework. The items were then tested for clarity and content validity with assistance from a panel of both fitness industry professionals ($n = 10$)

and academics with expertise in sport management ($n = 9$) who were asked whether the items reflected the core value they were intended to represent. Items were refined according to feedback from the panel and then pilot tested with a second set of fitness industry professionals ($n = 13$) for overall readability, clarity, and flow of the instrument. Minor adjustments were made to the final survey instrument as a result of the feedback.

In total, 54 items representing the cultural dimensions were included in the survey. Participants were asked to rate on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) the extent to which they felt that the items described their fitness club/organization. Participants were further asked to indicate their gender and age, the type of club they work for (women's only, coed, not-for-profit, for-profit, fitness chain, independent, and/or other), their primary job position (management, personal trainer, fitness instructor, sales, customer service, therapist, or other), and how many years they have been working with their club/organization. This data was collected to determine whether the sample represented a cross-section of fitness industry personnel.

Job satisfaction was measured using a global indicator developed by Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh (1979) (in Fields, 2002). This measure uses three items to assess job satisfaction: (1) all in all, I am satisfied with my job; (2) in general, I don't like my job (reverse scored); and, (3) in general, I like working here. These items were scored on a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Participants were also asked questions regarding their future intention to stay with or leave their club/organization. Two of the items: (1) How often have you felt like quitting your job; and (2) How often have you felt like leaving your club/organization, were scored using the anchors of 1 (never) to 7 (often). The third item, (3) How long do you think you will stay with your club/organization, was rated on a scale using 1 (will leave very soon) to 7 (will stay forever) and was reverse scored.

3.2. Participants and procedure

The participants for the study were in attendance at a major international fitness conference and tradeshow held in Toronto, Canada. The investigators set up an 8' × 8' booth from which the survey was administered. Attendees who came by the booth were asked whether they were current employees of a Canadian fitness club/organization. If they met this criterion they were then invited to participate in the research. Participants were able to fill out the survey on-site or mail it to the investigators at a later time using a self-addressed stamped envelope that was provided. Those who completed the survey were also invited to fill out a ballot for a chance to win one of two MP3 players. Ballots with the participants' name and contact information were separated from the completed surveys in order to ensure anonymity of the data.

3.3. Data analysis

For the preliminary assessment of the factor structure of the CIFO in this study an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using varimax rotation was conducted. EFA is appropriate in the early stages of research, prior to further confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), to identify key items and eliminate weak factors (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). For scale development, DeVellis (2003) argued that EFA can provide a more rigorous test than CFA when using data from different samples (e.g., fitness industry leaders vs. fitness club staff); he noted that finding a similar factor structure without relying on "hints" that are applied with CFA can be very meaningful. Specifically, "if data from different samples of individuals on different occasions produce essentially identical factor analytic results using exploratory approaches, the likelihood of those results being a recurring quirk is quite small" (DeVellis, 2003, p. 133). Factors with an eigenvalue >1.0 were considered (Stevens, 2002). Items loading .40 or higher on a factor and that did not correlate within .10 of any other factor were retained (Stevens, 2002). Finally, items were screened to determine whether the factor on which they loaded made conceptual sense as the results of EFA should not be blindly accepted by researchers if this is not the case (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Sampling adequacy for factor analysis was examined using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin test with an acceptable value set at $>.60$ (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

To test the psychometric properties of the CIFO Cronbach alpha reliability analyses and scale intercorrelations were performed. Cronbach alpha values above .70 are considered acceptable measures of internal consistency (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Scale intercorrelations should not exceed .90 as this would suggest a problem with multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

To test the hypothesized relationships between the cultural dimensions representing organizational culture, job satisfaction, and intent to leave the job (Fig. 1) the data were further analyzed using path analysis, a structural equation modeling technique (SEM; AMOS 7.0). This technique allows for the estimation of causal relations among variables as well as mediating effects (Kline, 2005). A poor fitting model indicates that the hypothesized relationship is not supported whereas a good fitting model provides support for the validity of the hypothesized relationship. A model that fits the data is indicated, in part, by a non-significant χ^2 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Model fit was also assessed using three additional tests due to the sensitivity of sample size when using the χ^2 statistic: the normed fit index (NFI) evaluates the estimated model by comparing the χ^2 value of the model to the χ^2 value of an independent model; the comparative fit index (CFI) assesses fit relative to other models; and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) estimates the lack of fit in a model compared to a perfect saturated model (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Values $>.90$ for NFI and $.95$ for CFI are generally indicative of good fitting models and RMSEA values of .08 or less are considered adequate fit for the data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Data analysis began with testing the hypothesized model (in this case a fully recursive model where there is the same number of data

points as parameters; [Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001](#)). As necessary, model trimming was undertaken on the basis of non-significant path coefficients, conceptual merit, and model fit to find a more parsimonious model that fit the data reasonably well ([Kline, 2005](#)).

4. Results

4.1. Description of respondents

A total of 612 surveys were distributed and 432 were returned (70.6%). Of the returned surveys, 392 were completed on-site (91%) and 40 were mailed back to the investigators (9%). From the returned surveys 16 did not meet the criteria of current staff from a Canadian fitness club/organization and hence 416 surveys were useable. Of the 416 participants in the study, 327 were women (79%) and 89 were men (21%). The average age of respondents was 33 years ($SD = 9.9$) with a range of 17–60 years. The average tenure of respondents was 4.5 years ($SD = 4.0$) with a range of 6 months to 25 years. In terms of job position 156 respondents indicated that they were management (37.5%), 151 were fitness staff (i.e., personal trainers, fitness instructors; 36.3%), 82 were service staff (i.e., customer service, sales; 19.7%), and 27 indicated that they held other jobs within their club/organization (i.e., therapist, nutritionist, data entry; 6.5%). There was some overlap in the reporting of club type with many participants describing their organization according to several criteria. Overall, 77% were from a for-profit facility and 23% were from a not-for-profit club; 69% worked at a coed facility and 31% worked at a women's only fitness club; 66% were from a club that is part of a fitness chain and 34% were from independent fitness organizations.

Although data on industry personnel appears to be limited, the profile of participants suggests they were fairly representative of the population of fitness industry staff according to the variables measured. Specifically, labor force data indicate that women comprise 69% of employees in the fitness industry ([US Department of Labor, 2007](#)). Similarly, [MacIntosh and Doherty \(2005\)](#) reported that the ratio of women to men staff in the large multi-club private fitness organization they studied was 4:1. They also reported an average age of 30 years for fitness staff in that same organization ([MacIntosh & Doherty, 2005](#)). The study sample is comparable to this profile. Industry data is not available regarding the proportion of staff by different positions, however the study sample may be over-represented by those who classified themselves as “management” (37.5% of participants). This was a fairly broad category and fitness clubs/organizations, as with many organizations, are likely to have several levels of management. It may be of value to tease out such data across the industry and in future research. Participants who worked at for-profit clubs appear to be over-represented in the study, comprising 77% of the sample vs. approximately 53% of the population of clubs in the fitness industry ([Mintel International Group, 2006](#)). This may be consistent with their representation at the trade show where data were collected however a breakdown of tradeshow attendees was not available.

4.2. CIFO

The sample size was determined to be adequate for conducting an exploratory factor analysis based on the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin sampling statistic ($KMO = .94$; [Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001](#)). A principal components analysis using varimax rotation yielded 11 possible factors which had eigenvalues > 1.0 . Inspection of the rotated component matrix showed that four items loaded .40 or less while six items correlated within .10 of another factor and hence were removed from the solution. Five items were not conceptually consistent with the emergent factor on which they loaded and were also removed ([Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994](#)). This procedure led to the elimination of three factors and resulted in an eight factor solution. As will be discussed shortly, the composition of the organizational culture factors was not completely consistent with the original framework and the factors were subsequently named as follows: (1) staff competency (e.g., staff have credentials, knowledge, positive attitude), (2) atmosphere (e.g., club is welcoming, upbeat, fun), (3) connectedness (e.g., there is sense of affiliation, belonging), (4) formalization (e.g., club has policies, procedures, standards), (5) sales (e.g., sales is emphasized, rewarded), (6) service-equipment (e.g., good variety, quality, availability), (7) service-programs (programs are current, innovative, varied), and (8) organizational presence (e.g., club has long history, positive image). The factor loadings, eigenvalues, and percentages of total variance for each factor are presented in [Table 1](#).

Seven of the eight factors demonstrated acceptable levels of internal consistency (Cronbach alpha $> .70$; [Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001](#)). The acceptable core values were: staff competency ($n = 9$ items, $\alpha = .91$), atmosphere ($n = 7$ items, $\alpha = .88$), connectedness ($n = 5$ items, $\alpha = .86$), formalization ($n = 5$ items, $\alpha = .84$), sales ($n = 4$ items, $\alpha = .87$), service-equipment ($n = 3$ items, $\alpha = .83$), and service-programs ($n = 3$ items, $\alpha = .85$). The only factor not to meet the criteria was organizational presence ($n = 3$ items, $\alpha = .68$). However, since this study was exploratory in nature, and the factor had been identified in previous research ([MacIntosh & Doherty, 2008](#)) it was retained and considered with caution in further analyses. In total, 39 of the original 54 items representing the core values remained. Cronbach alpha reliability values were acceptable for job satisfaction ($n = 3$ items, $\alpha = .80$) and intention to leave the organization ($n = 3$ items, $\alpha = .81$).

Next, scale intercorrelations were used to examine the independence of the organizational culture factors (see [Table 2](#)). The values ranging from .18 to .78 indicated no problems with multicollinearity ([Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001](#)).

Table 1

Orthogonal (varimax) rotation factor loadings, eigenvalues and percentages of total variance.

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Staff competencies								
Staff have proper credentials to deliver health/fitness information	.49	.37	.15	.06	-.15	.06	.28	.07
Staff are knowledgeable about health/fitness	.67	.30	.09	.12	.02	.10	.27	.07
Staff have positive attitudes towards their responsibilities	.57	.37	.31	.06	-.13	.17	-.10	.14
Staff take responsibility for their actions	.64	.18	.32	.13	-.13	.14	-.03	.19
Staff are hard working and conscientious about their job	.71	.20	.20	.20	.05	.18	.12	.17
Staff do what they say they will do	.74	.10	.27	.15	-.09	.07	.05	.07
Staff value the role of fitness in people's lives	.58	.28	.13	.14	.09	-.03	.27	.13
Staff go above and beyond what is expected of them	.69	.14	.27	.14	.01	.12	.09	.08
Staff are good fitness role models for members	.64	.21	.08	.17	.12	.08	.23	.08
2. Atmosphere								
The club is welcoming	.09	.75	.20	.16	.03	.16	.04	.15
There is a strong sense of family/community in the club	.24	.51	.39	-.01	-.15	-.01	.02	.39
Member success (i.e., reaching goals) is very important to the club	.31	.50	.37	.24	.12	.12	.16	.16
Staff display positive and upbeat energy	.39	.66	.01	.16	.09	.07	.10	.13
The club is a fun place to work	.42	.56	.29	.07	.05	.06	.18	.05
The club is a fun place to work out	.34	.52	.29	.07	.10	.08	.36	.14
The club staff are friendly	.48	.59	.25	.14	.09	.03	.16	-.01
3. Connectedness								
The club recognizes members who have been there a long time	.22	.10	.72	.09	.05	.09	.04	.05
Staff members have a strong sense of belonging with the club	.42	.37	.56	.07	-.01	-.05	.01	.17
Staff have a strong affiliation with the club	.36	.27	.56	.15	.11	.02	.21	.04
The club recognizes member fitness/health achievements	.22	.15	.71	.20	.12	.13	.08	.03
Members have a strong sense of belonging with the club	.39	.38	.54	.10	-.02	.07	.14	.21
4. Formalization								
The club has many policies and procedures for staff to follow	.11	.13	.06	.80	.10	.06	.19	.03
The club has strict grooming standards for staff	.21	.20	.06	.62	.09	.27	-.05	.17
The club has many staff training procedures to follow	.19	.20	.19	.71	.05	.07	.09	.03
The club has strict dress standards for staff	.23	.13	.10	.64	.23	.07	.03	.18
The club has many rules and regulations for staff to follow	.14	-.02	.19	.77	.23	-.05	.19	.02
5. Sales								
Sales are a major focus of the club	-.07	.02	-.05	.16	.89	.06	-.02	-.02
Sales staff are rewarded for their performance	.05	-.04	.35	.19	.63	.12	.18	-.04
Recruiting new members is an important function in the club	.09	.13	.10	.09	.78	.03	.12	.14
The club emphasizes sales	-.03	-.02	.05	.13	.93	.06	.05	.02
6. Service-equipment								
The club has a good variety of equipment	.07	.03	.08	.08	.11	.84	.16	.12
The club has good availability of equipment	.07	.06	.14	.08	.05	.85	.09	.10
The club has good quality equipment	.21	.19	-.04	.06	.09	.71	.21	.07
7. Service-programs								
The club has up-to-date fitness programs	.26	.16	.13	.19	.17	.18	.77	.04
The club keeps things fresh and innovative for members	.25	.26	.23	.14	.01	.20	.59	.17
The club has a good variety of fitness programs	.22	.11	.14	.21	.13	.27	.71	.08
8. Organizational presence								
The club has a strong presence in the community	.06	.04	.04	.09	.05	.13	.01	.82
The club takes pride in how long it has been in business	.14	.22	.27	.26	.30	.13	.18	.43
The club has a positive image in the community	.28	.21	.11	.14	.04	.18	.17	.71
Eigenvalue	19.54	4.05	2.37	1.85	1.61	1.59	1.31	1.21
% Variance	36.03	7.50	4.40	3.41	2.98	2.95	2.43	2.22

4.3. Organizational culture, job satisfaction and intention to leave

Scale intercorrelations reported in Table 3 confirmed significant relationships between the cultural dimensions and intent to leave as well as the cultural dimensions and job satisfaction. Confirmation of these relationships is necessary to proceed with the testing of a mediated model. The original model examined the effect of the cultural dimensions on job satisfaction, the effect of job satisfaction on intention to leave, and the effect of cultural dimensions on intention to leave. The hypothesized model did not fit the data well: $\chi^2(0) = 0$, $p < .001$; NFI = 1.00; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .277. Although the fit indices (NFI, CFI) were acceptable RMSEA was problematic and χ^2 was equal to zero. This χ^2 value is expected with a fully recursive model where the “estimated parameters perfectly reproduce the sample covariance matrix, [and] χ^2 and degree of freedom are equal to zero” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001, p. 698). Tabachnick and Fidell further noted that this analysis “is uninteresting because hypotheses about adequacy of the model cannot be tested. However, hypotheses about specific paths

Table 2Intercorrelation (*r*) matrix of cultural dimensions.

Cultural dimension	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Staff competencies	–	.78*	.70*	.49*	.10	.39*	.60*	.48*
2. Atmosphere		–	.72*	.49*	.18*	.31*	.59*	.51*
3. Connectedness			–	.48*	.24*	.26*	.51*	.48*
4. Formalization				–	.36*	.27*	.48*	.46*
5. Sales					–	.18*	.28*	.28*
6. Service-equipment						–	.46*	.36*
7. Service-programs							–	.46*
8. Organizational presence								–

* $p < .01$.**Table 3**

Path coefficients of fully recursive model.

Cultural dimension	Job satisfaction	Intention to leave
Staff competencies	–.08	–.04
Atmosphere	.41**	–.03
Connectedness	.05	–.14*
Formalization	–.12*	.04
Sales	–.05	.07
Service-equipment	.04	–.02
Service-programs	.15*	–.06
Organizational presence	–.04	.02
Job satisfaction	–	–.63**

* $p < .05$.** $p < .01$.

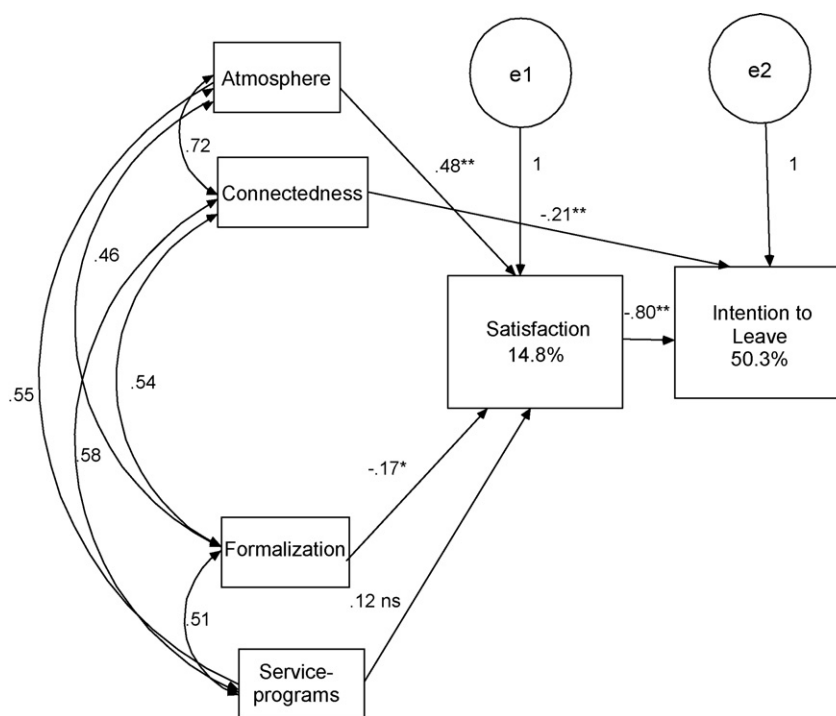
in the model can be tested" (p. 698). The results showed several significant and non-significant path coefficients (Table 3) which were the basis for model trimming.

A second model based on the elimination of non-significant path coefficients (i.e., staff competencies, sales, service-equipment, organizational presence) from the first model and the re-examination of model fit indices (Kline, 2005), resulted in a partially mediated model that fit the data well: $\chi^2 = 3.57$, $p = .472$; NFI = .99; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .033 (see Fig. 2). Three of the cultural dimensions significantly influenced job satisfaction: the first two, atmosphere and service-programs, had a positive association while the third, formalization, had a negative or inverse association with job satisfaction. The dimension of connectedness significantly and inversely influenced intention to leave. Inspection of the structural paths indicated that atmosphere ($\beta = .48$, $p < .001$) and connectedness ($\beta = -.21$, $p < .001$) held moderate to large associations with job satisfaction and intention to leave, respectively, while the association between formalization and job satisfaction ($\beta = -.17$, $p < .01$) was less strong. Service-programs ($\beta = .12$, $p > .05$) was not significantly associated with job satisfaction though it contributed to the overall model fit. Finally, job satisfaction strongly and inversely influenced intention to leave ($\beta = -.80$, $p < .001$). In all, the model explained 14.8% of the variance in job satisfaction and 50.3% of the variance with respect to intention to leave.

5. Discussion

The results of the EFA identified an eight factor structure for the CIFO with reliable factors that are relatively independent of each other. When compared to the framework of organizational culture in the fitness industry uncovered in previous research (MacIntosh & Doherty, 2008) five factors (connectedness, formalization, atmosphere, sales and organizational presence) were the same. The remaining three factors (staff competency, service-equipment, and service-programs) were variations of elements in the original framework. Specifically, the CIFO factor labeled staff competency was a composite of the original cultural dimensions of work ethic, organizational integrity, creativity, and health/fitness. These particular dimensions may be considered to be reflected in fitness personnel skills, ability, expertise, and experience. The factors of service-programs and service-equipment were split from the original cultural dimension of service, and focus more explicitly on these distinct aspects.

Four of the eight dimensions (connectedness, sales, organizational presence, and formalization) were previously identified as consistent with one or more of the cultural values represented in the universal frameworks operationalized by the OCP, OCI and/or OCAI organizational culture surveys (MacIntosh & Doherty, 2008). The remaining cultural dimensions appear to be unique to the fitness industry, lending support to the notion that organizational culture, at least in part, is industry-specific (Chatman & Jehn, 1994; Choi & Scott, 2008; Lee & Yu, 2004; Ogbonna & Harris, 2002; Smith & Shilbury, 2004; Velliquette & Rapert, 2001). These dimensions are consistent with some of the unique characteristics of fitness organizations where clients can choose to engage in exercise and physical activity services involving direct interaction with staff on a more frequent and prolonged basis (e.g., several times per week) than with many other types of service providers



Note: $\chi^2 = 3.5$, $p < .50$; NFI = .99; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .033, * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

Fig. 2. Model of organizational culture dimensions, job satisfaction and intention to leave.

(e.g., banks, hotels, tourism). With other types of service providers the interaction is typically less frequent, and/or less personal, and/or of shorter duration.

Overall, the findings suggest that these eight factors reflect the multidimensional dynamics of an industry that is committed to delivering a quality fitness service in a professional and interactive environment that is welcoming, energetic, and generates a sense of belonging to a successful organization. Although organizational culture cannot be fully depicted through survey methodology alone (Sackmann, 2001) the CIFO appears to be a good measure of organizational culture in the fitness industry. Strong psychometric properties support a factor structure that is fairly consistent with the original framework derived from interviews with fitness industry leaders and further refined with a broader cross-section of fitness staff who participated in the current study.

Consistent with previous research in a variety of settings including information technology, marketing, and nursing (Egan et al., 2004; Johnson & McIntyre, 1998; Lok & Crawford, 1999; Lund, 2003; Sheridan, 1992; Silverthorne, 2004), the findings of the current study indicate that elements of organizational culture influenced both job satisfaction and intention to leave in the fitness industry. Specifically, the cultural dimensions of atmosphere, formalization, and service-programs impacted job satisfaction which further impacted intention to leave the organization while connectedness influenced intention to leave directly (unmediated). The partially mediated model identified in the study lends support to the argument that job satisfaction predicts turnover intention (Allen, 2006; Egan et al., 2004; Hom & Kinicki, 2001). Perhaps most importantly it supports Egan et al.'s (2004) contention that elements of an organization's culture may impact both job satisfaction directly and behavioural intention directly and indirectly. Consistent with other research in the sport domain (Choi & Scott, 2008; MacIntosh & Doherty, 2005), the findings indicate that different aspects of culture have different effects in the organization, highlighting the multidimensionality of organizational culture and the complexity of its impact.

Of the cultural dimensions shown to impact job satisfaction in the current study, atmosphere appeared to be most meaningful for fitness staff. Atmosphere embodies the notion that a workplace that is welcoming, friendly, upbeat, and a place where fitness staff can work, and both clients and staff can work out, in a positive environment is an important feature of fitness organizations. The aspect of working and working out points to one of the notable characteristics of the fitness industry in that staff often exercise in the club outside their own work hours. This is a perk to working in this setting and, according to participants in this study, an important indicator of job satisfaction when the atmosphere is positive.

The findings also revealed that the cultural dimension of formalization negatively impacted the participants' level of job satisfaction. This suggests that the number of rules and procedures as well as dress and grooming standards are less desirable aspects of organizational culture. Though it is important for management to have specific checks and balances for each job

position, hence protecting the employee, the organization, and the client, this is an aspect that should be carefully re-examined by fitness club managers. A focus on formalization may detract from the interpersonal nature inherent in this service industry which is an aspect that appeals to fitness personnel (Coffman, 2008). Further, formalization may elevate employees' sense of organizational control and detract from their sense of autonomy and further satisfaction with the job (Namasivayam, 2005). However, formalization is an important part of the fitness industry's control mechanisms that help ensure a baseline of safety components that must be met in order to service the membership. Hence, there is a fine balancing act that needs to occur with regard to the perception and impact of this particular core value.

A focus on the cultural dimension of service-programs in fitness organizations alone was not statistically significant however it was a contributing factor to job satisfaction. The dimension of service-programs represents the clubs' ability to keep things fresh, new and current in terms of fitness programs. This finding suggests that along with atmosphere, staff associate a level of importance to having innovative programming as a service in their club. Together, the cultural dimensions of atmosphere, formalization, and service-programs had a significant influence on job satisfaction, which strongly influenced intention to leave.

The cultural dimension of connectedness had a significant influence only on intention to leave. Staff perceptions indicated that a sense of family or community within the club, that helps promote a sense of belonging, is an important core value that moderately influences the likelihood that they will stay with their fitness organization. Creating a work environment that has a close knit group of employees who engage with each other and client members in friendly interaction and exchanges will assist fitness club managers in combating retention problems. When managers take the time to hire personnel who fit with the organization those new staff are more likely to feel at home in the club (Allen, 2006; Silverthorne, 2004). In addition, taking a personal and professional interest in staff, coordinating team building activities among staff and members, and recognizing staff and member accomplishments are organization development strategies that managers may use to help engender and strengthen individuals' attachment to the club and a sense of community (e.g., Johns & Saks, 2005; Taylor, Doherty, & McGraw, 2008). The fact that connectedness did not predict job satisfaction may reflect that in comparison to workplace atmosphere, formalization and club programs, it is less task related or job specific, and is more about being part of a social community.

It was somewhat surprising that the findings did not reveal the other cultural dimensions (i.e., staff competency, organizational presence, service-equipment and sales) to be significant contributors to job satisfaction and intention to leave, given their presumed importance in the working environment (MacIntosh & Doherty, 2008). In particular, the non-significance of the cultural dimension of sales was unexpected given its prominence across the fitness industry and the notion that the heavy focus on sales gives the industry a negative reputation (MacIntosh & Doherty, 2008). Perhaps sales is an accepted or tolerated dimension of the organization according to staff and any negative aspects are linked more closely to increased formalization in the industry (e.g., sales scripts, regimented sales training). The findings suggest that organizational culture dimensions of staff competency, organizational presence, service-equipment, and sales, though prevalent in the industry, do not impact significantly on fitness staff attitudes and behavioural intention as measured here.

The findings enhance our understanding of the nature and influence of organizational culture in general. The current study supported the development of an industry-specific scale, and also demonstrated support for the influence of organizational culture on job satisfaction and intention to leave the organization, extending previous research to the focal context. The study also highlighted the complexity of these relationships, where different aspects of culture influenced different work-related outcomes. This more complex perspective should be considered in future research on organizational culture.

The results have implications for the management of the particular sport participant service organizations examined here and provide some insight with respect to addressing the problem of retaining staff in the fitness industry. Creating a work environment that fosters the particular cultural dimensions of atmosphere, connectedness and cutting edge programming, while limiting the constraining aspects of formalization, appears to be important for increasing employee job satisfaction and decreasing attrition in this context. Furthermore, pending further verification (as noted below), the CIFO may be a tool that can be used by fitness club managers to develop a profile of organizational culture in their club(s). Ashkanasy et al. (2000) also argued that such tools can be used as a platform to guide and evaluate efforts to strengthen and/or change organizational culture.

6. Future research

In order to further verify the underlying factor structure of the CIFO a confirmatory factor analysis should be conducted with another sample from the fitness industry. In addition, the concurrent validity of the CIFO may be determined by assessing the correlation between this instrument and one or more universal measures of organizational culture. Based on the findings thus far, the CIFO scales would be expected to "correlate moderately well with an instrument that [measures] similar or related constructs" but not "excessively high [so as to] raise doubts about the validity of the new instrument (i.e., it is redundant with existing instruments)" (Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 1998, p. 219). Re-examination of the influence of organizational culture on staff satisfaction and intention to leave should also be undertaken following the confirmatory analysis in order to verify the predictive validity of the CIFO with other samples (cf. Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 1998). The current sample may have been biased with the apparent over-representation of staff from for-profit clubs. Future research should ensure that the study sample is representative of the population of fitness clubs from which it was drawn.

In order to continue to build on our understanding of organizational culture in general, and in the fitness industry in particular, future research may also consider its influence on other important staff and organizational outcomes such as individual effort (e.g., Brown & Leigh, 1996), morale and teamwork (e.g., Goffee & Jones, 1996), and organizational performance over the long term (e.g., Carmeli & Tishler, 2004; Chan et al., 2004; MacIntosh & Doherty, 2005). Following from MacIntosh and Doherty (2007b), it would also be of interest to examine client perceptions of organizational culture across the fitness industry and its influence on their satisfaction and renewal intentions. Such a focus would continue to address the argument and provide empirical evidence that organizational culture is perceived by and impacts on the customer as well (e.g., Kowalczyk & Pawlish, 2002).

In addition, examining management intervention strategies aimed at changing and/or strengthening aspects of cultural dimensions and tracking the influence of such changes over the course of time is of interest. Indeed, longitudinal research would be beneficial to further examining the influence of organizational culture on employee attitudes and behaviours.

Demographic data were collected as part of this study in order to get a sense of whether the sample was representative of the population of fitness professionals. There is a dearth of information regarding the profile of personnel in the fitness industry and thus the current study contributes to the limited knowledge in that area. Further research may examine the influence of organizational culture while controlling for the possible effects of staff position (e.g., manager vs. front-line staff) and club/organization type (e.g., for-profit vs. not-for-profit, women's only vs. coed). Any variation may suggest the existence of subcultures within the industry, and those subcultures may explain differences in individual and organizational outcomes (cf. MacIntosh & Doherty, 2005; Martin, 1992). In addition to continued research in the fitness industry the study provides further impetus for the exploration of industry-specific dimensions of organizational culture in other contexts.

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