

Jeffrey Thomas

Professor Becky Rouse

Module 2: The Security Environment D14

31 July 2025

DBF for Formative Assessment #9

Gold Thomas DBF

Culture defines the boundaries. Climate decides the tone. But leadership? Leadership decides whether anyone wants to stay inside the boundaries at all. A leader's success hinges not on culture or climate alone, but on their ability to read both and shape the one they actually can. Climate matters more because culture resists change like a rusted bolt. Climate, however, responds.

Why? Because culture calcifies. It is embedded in rituals, artifacts, language, and assumptions. In a video explaining Schein's theory, Organizational Communication Channel (2018) referred to culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions" that have proven themselves valid over time (00:05:03). You cannot carve culture. But you can tilt climate. It drifts and shifts. It is not anchored. Jay (2022) clarified: "Organizational climate refers to an employee's long-lasting perception of the working environment" (para. 2). Influence rides the drift. That is where the leverage lives.

Leadership operates in the present by shaping the climate, rather than in hindsight or inheritance. Pratt (2023) put it plainly: "We've all seen how a unit takes on the personality of its leader"

(00:07:48). That is not a metaphor. It is a pattern. Climate emerges from tone, timing, response, and silence. From how leaders listen, how they correct, and how they follow through. Change enough of those signals, and the entire atmosphere changes with them. That is influence.

You can work in a Navy squadron with rigid protocols and unbending tradition and still feel like your voice matters because your commander leads with transparency and trust. Flip it with slogans, surface-level inclusivity, but a fear-driven, blame-heavy command, and the mission suffers. Most mid-level leaders rotate within three years. They lack the time or authority to alter culture, but they can shape climate through presence, tone, and example.

In summary, culture tells you what has always mattered. Climate tells you what matters now.

Leadership must meet people in the now.

References

Jay, S. (2022, March 21). What is organizational climate? 7 steps to improve yours. Academy to Innovate HR. <https://www.aihr.com/blog/organizational-climate/>

Organizational Communication Channel. (2018, February 13). Organizational culture: Edgar Schein [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wd1bsxWeM6Q>

Pratt, M. W. (2023, June 7). Session 2.22 – Organizational culture and climate [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsP_5cIaXtQ

DBF Responses

Secondary Post #1 (*by July 31, 2025*)

Emmanuel, sharp analysis. I would extend your point on the availability heuristic with Williams' (2010) observation that we often judge future likelihood based on past frequency, but vivid or striking memories can distort that sense of probability. In fast-moving environments, that shortcut feels like speed, but it often delivers false clarity. You also nailed confirmation bias, though I would argue it compounds under stress, especially when leaders are pressed to act decisively. As Nickerson (2014) suggests, the barriers to change are not purely cognitive; they emerge from the political and cultural terrain that mid-level leaders must navigate (p. 5). They survive in the command climate, too. That is where mid-level leaders can intervene. Awareness is not enough. As Williams (2010) warned, decision-makers often “actively pursue only the information that will validate” their assumptions, ignoring disconfirming evidence (p. 63). Few do. Fewer are trained to. But those who do? They make better calls.

References

Nickerson, J. A. (2014). *Leading change from the middle: A practical guide to building extraordinary capabilities*. Brookings Institution Press.

Williams, B. S. (2010). Heuristics and biases in military decision making. *Military Review*, 90(5), 58–70.

Secondary Post #2 (*by July 31, 2025*)

Jordan, this is spot-on. You capture how confirmation bias does not present as doubt; it shows up dressed as confidence. That is what makes it dangerous. Williams (2010) is clear that bias thrives under pressure, when leaders most need clarity. Nickerson's (2014) reminder that mid-level leaders are sense-makers, not just executors, hits hard. They interpret the mess. If their lens is warped, the whole system suffers. Miller and Turner (2013) warned that when people are forced to adjust routines, "pain, discomfort, anger, or panic will often occur" (p. 1). Bias anchors fast under those conditions. I agree, the antidote is disciplined doubt. Asking "What am I missing?" is not hesitation; it is professionalism.

References

- Miller, B., & Turner, K. (2013, August). Leading organizational change: A leader's role. Fort Leavenworth, KS: Command and General Staff College.
- Nickerson, J. A. (2014). Leading change from the middle: A practical guide to building extraordinary capabilities. Brookings Institution Press.
- Williams, B. S. (2010). Heuristics and biases in military decision making. *Military Review*, 90(5), 58–70.