

CHAPTER 43

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

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INTERNATIONAL organizations (IOs) play central roles in the organization of world politics. We cannot fully understand patterns and outcomes in essentially every international issue area of concern to states and private actors—national security, economic relations, and environmental degradation, among many others—without including IOs in our analysis. Yet international relations (IR) theory has treated IOs as epiphenomenal features of world politics or as mere instruments for the interests of powerful states. It has only been relatively recently that IR scholars have started to acknowledge IOs as actors in their own right, opening inquiry to the study of IOs as complex bureaucracies whose structures and internal features, in addition to elements of their external environments, shape what IOs say and do in the world. And, in opening this proverbial black box,¹ IO scholars have been empowered to explore a potentially rich but comparatively underdeveloped aspect of the study of IOs' roles in world politics: their organizational cultures.

Indeed, a handful of scholars who set out to explain why IOs behave in the ways they do have arrived at answers that hinge on the role of organizational culture. This emerging research program reflects the recognition that IOs are, after all, *organizations* and thus the “rediscovery” of culture in organizational sociology and

¹ Gayl D. Ness and Steven R. Brechin, “Bridging the Gap: International Organizations as Organizations,” *International Organization* 42/2 (1988): 245–73.

management studies cannot be ignored.² Organizational culture helps explain puzzling outcomes that would otherwise be difficult to understand, such as persistent performance failures,³ mission creep,⁴ stunted reforms,⁵ and perceived hypocrisy.⁶ Why, for example, did the United Nations (UN) fail to enact a robust peacekeeping mandate and force that could have prevented the devastating 1994 genocide in Rwanda?⁷ Why did the International Monetary Fund (IMF) promote capital account liberalization throughout the 1990s despite mounting evidence that openness to capital flows produced damaging financial market crises?⁸ Neglecting organizational culture can also lead to inaccurate predictions of how IOs respond to new norms and demands in their resource and task environments, how they will frame and diffuse norms and policy agendas, or how IOs will adapt, learn, or change. How, for example, has the organizational culture of humanitarian IOs like the UN High Commission for Refugees affected learning and innovation, or produced paradoxes for humanitarian intervention?⁹ Why have so many ambitious reform programs in the World Bank yielded such unanticipated and undesired results?¹⁰

² William G. Ouchi and Alan L. Wilkins, “Organizational Culture,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 11 (1985): 457–83; Edgar Schein, “Coming to a New Awareness of Organizational Culture,” *Sloan Management Review* 25/2 (1984): 3–16; and “Culture: The Missing Concept in Organization Studies,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41/2 (June 1996): 229–40; Harrison M. Trice and Janice M. Beyer, “Studying Organizational Cultures through Rites and Ceremonials,” *The Academy of Management Review* 9/4 (1984): 653–69.

³ Tamar Gutner and Alexander Thompson, “The Politics of IO Performance: A Framework,” *Review of International Organizations* 5 (2010): 227–48; Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, “The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations,” *International Organization* 53/4 (1999): 699–732.

⁴ Moises Naim, “The World Bank: Its Role, Governance, and Organizational Culture,” in *Bretton Woods: Looking to the Future*, ed. James M. Boughton and K. Sarwar Lateef (Washington, DC: IMF and World Bank Group, 1994), 85–90; Jessica Einhorn, “The World Bank’s Mission Creep,” *Foreign Affairs* 80/5 (2001): 22–35; Ngaire Woods, *The Globalizers: The IMF, the World Bank and their Borrowers* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

⁵ David A. Phillips, *Reforming the World Bank: Twenty Years of Trial—and Error* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁶ Nils Brunsson, *The Organization of Hypocrisy: Talk, Decisions, and Actions in Organizations* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1989); Christine Oliver, “Strategic Responses to Institutional Pressures,” *Academy of Management Review* 16/1 (1999): 145–79; Michael Lipson, “Peacekeeping: Organized Hypocrisy?” *European Journal of International Relations* 13/1 (2007): 5–34; Catherine Weaver, *Hypocrisy Trap: The World Bank and the Poverty of Reform* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

⁷ Michael Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).

⁸ Rawi Abdelal, *Capital Rules: The Construction of Global Finance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Paul Blustein, *The Chastening: Inside the Crisis that Rocked the Global Financial System and Humbled the IMF* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001); Jeffrey M. Chwieroth, *Capital Ideas: The IMF and the Rise of Financial Liberalization* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁹ Mark Walkup, “Policy Dysfunction in Humanitarian Organizations: The Role of Coping Strategies, Institutions, and Organizational Culture,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 10/1 (1997): 37–60; Fiona Terry, *Condemned to Repeat* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).

¹⁰ Phillips, *Reforming the World Bank*; Diane Stone and Christopher Wright (eds.), *The World Bank and Governance: A Decade of Reform and Reaction* (London: Routledge, 2006); Catherine Weaver

Of course, organizational culture cannot explain everything we may wish to know about IOs. Rather, we argue that attention to organizational culture, in addition to other explanatory factors, can greatly enrich how we understand and explain the complex forms, functions, and dynamics of IOs in the world today.

Efforts to theorize the mechanisms through which IOs' cultures exert effects and to observe those effects confront difficult challenges. While we do not claim to provide a tour de force here, we choose to address in this chapter three key issues concerning research on IO culture and its significance for our broader inquiry into international organizations in world politics. The first task is clearly *conceptualizing* organizational culture in a way that is amenable to observation and analysis. As sociologist Diane Vaughan notes, scholars too often invoke organizational culture "without precision in conceptual definition, its empirical referent, or its connections to the actions of organizations and their members."¹¹ Conceptual confusion, in short, hinders explanatory analysis.

Second, in order to convince scholars to pay attention to organizational culture in the study of IOs, we must demonstrate *how and when* culture matters and, more importantly, *how much* culture matters, especially in relation to factors such as political power and material interests. Organizational culture is often invoked only after material-rationalist theories are shown to be insufficient explanations for IO behavior. The research we survey suggests that it is a mistake to treat organizational culture as merely a residual explanatory variable. IO culture can be a powerful explanatory factor. That said, we do not necessarily view cultural explanations as rivals for materialist theories; one of the contributions of the cultural approach is to enrich, deepen, and extend our understanding of IOs.

Further, our survey suggests that cultural explanations come in different varieties. Two dimensions along which culture-based theorizing varies—whether culture is treated as a constraint or as a strategic resource, and whether the locus of culture lies within the IO or in the IO's external environment—suggest a tentative typology of culture-based theories, none of which are *prima facie* incompatible with material and rationalist approaches to understanding IO behavior.

Finally, we discuss problems of measurement and inference in the study of IO cultures. While no standard method of measuring culture has emerged, the literature we survey provides several approaches, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. Cultural explanations can also be susceptible to tautological reasoning: we define IO culture by the behavior we observe and then we try to draw causal inferences about how cultural beliefs produced observed outcome(s).¹² Simply put, we

and Ralf J. Leiteritz, "Our Poverty Is a World Full of Dreams: Reforming the World Bank," *Global Governance* 11/3 (2005): 369–88; Weaver, *Hypocrisy Trap*.

¹¹ Diane Vaughan, "The Dark Side of Organizations: Mistake, Misconduct, and Disaster," *Annual Review of Sociology* 25 (1999): 271–305, 289.

¹² Jeffrey W. Legro, "Which Norms Matter? Revisiting the 'Failure' of Internationalism," *International Organization* 51/1 (1997): 31–63, 42.

conclude that it is not only important to make the case for why we must pay attention to organizational culture in the study of IOs, but we must also make a clear and persuasive case for *how* we study organizational culture.

CONCEPTUALIZING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The concept of organizational culture draws extensively from the broader fields of cultural anthropology and sociology, and for decades has been firmly embedded in organizational theory and business management studies.¹³ In the sociological tradition, organizational culture is usually conceptualized as the shared “rules, rituals, and beliefs”¹⁴ that shape the members of the organization’s decision-making processes by specifying the basic assumptions, or “the correct way to perceive, think, and feel”¹⁵ about the world they inhabit. Organizational culture derives from the basic human need for stability, consistency, and meaning. Uncertainty and complexity drive decision-makers to develop routines that provide predictable means of responding to daily tasks as well as unforeseen issues or demands that arise in the organization’s authorizing and task environments.¹⁶ Over time, actors within the organization (the “group” in cultural terminology) come to recognize and internalize not only the formal rules of the organization, but also the unstated norms, standard operating procedures, and shared understandings about “how things are done.” As actors are socialized into the organization’s dominant culture their behavior may begin to follow the logic of appropriateness as much as (or more than) rational and strategic calculation of expected consequences.¹⁷ In Michael Barnett’s study of the UN Secretariat’s behavior during the 1994 Rwandan genocide, for example, bureaucratic culture provided the lenses through which the organization’s analysts and

¹³ See, e.g., T. E. Deal and A. A. Kennedy, *Corporate Cultures* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1982); Gary Alan Fine, “Negotiated Orders and Organizational Cultures,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 10 (1984): 239–62; Edgar Schein, “Organizational Culture,” *American Psychologist* (February 1990): 109–19; and *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992); Mary Jo Hatch, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, and Postmodern Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹⁴ Barnett and Finnemore, “The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations,” 710.

¹⁵ Schein, “Organizational Culture,” 111.

¹⁶ James G. March and Herbert A. Simon, *Organizations* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1958).

¹⁷ James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, “The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders,” *International Organization* 52/4 (1998): 943–69.

decision-makers viewed the world: “UN staff came to know Rwanda as members of bureaucracies; the bureaucratic culture situated and defined their knowledge, informed their goals and desires, shaped what constituted appropriate and inappropriate behavior, distinguished acceptable from unacceptable consequences, and helped to determine right from wrong.”¹⁸

In the sociological tradition, organizational culture is seen to shape actors’ behavior by constructing symbolic systems and meanings that inform how staff members view the core identity, purposes, and goals of the institution. In short, organizational culture embodies the ideologies, norms, language, and routines that together constitute the “theories in use”¹⁹ or “the basic assumptions that affect how organizational actors interpret their environment, select and process information, and make decisions so as to maintain a consistent view of the world and the organization’s role in it.”²⁰

Anthropological approaches to organizational culture differ, in so far as “attention does not focus primarily on ideas, belief systems, or dogmas, but on other properties of culture ... the vocabulary of meanings, the expressive symbols, and the emotional repertoire.”²¹ Anthropologists observe culture through semiotic processes in the codes, stories, ceremonies, and other cultural artifacts through which members express meaning.²² In the sociological approach, organizational culture is widely shared among the members of the culture, temporally stable, and potentially measurable.²³ Anthropologists, by contrast, “offer a more interpretive understanding of culture as a political process of constructing and negotiating meanings, which are continuously contested.”²⁴ Culture is not so much a set of assumptions or scripts that agents internalize and then apply to their environments; rather, culture

¹⁸ Michael Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide*, 7.

¹⁹ This contrasts with the “espoused theories” of organization, observed in the officially stated missions, ideologies, norms and policies of an organization, which are intended more for signaling compliance with external expectations (including legitimacy) than for shaping informal behavior within the organization. See Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön, *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974); John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan, “Institutionalized Organization: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony,” *American Journal of Sociology* 83/2 (1977): 340–63; Brunsson, *The Organization of Hypocrisy*; Weaver, *Hypocrisy Trap*.

²⁰ Weaver, *Hypocrisy Trap*, 36–7.

²¹ Ann Swidler, “Cultural Power and Social Movements,” in *Social Movements and Culture*, ed. Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 25–40, 27.

²² Trice and Beyer, “Studying Organizational Cultures through Rites and Ceremonials”; Lisa Wedeen, “Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science,” *American Political Science Review* 96/4 (2002): 713–28; Ann Swidler, “Culture in Action: Symbols in Strategies,” *American Sociological Review*, 51/2 (1986): 273–86.

²³ Scholars working in this tradition tend to view organizational culture as consistent, integrated, relatively stable, and subject to change only in a path-dependent, incremental manner. See Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*; Oliver, “Strategic Responses to Institutional Pressures.”

²⁴ Galit Sarfaty, *Values in Transition: Human Rights and the Culture of the World Bank* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 75.

lies in the meaning-laden symbols, myths, stories, and rituals that constitute the “social process through which people reproduce together the conditions of intelligibility that enable them to make sense of their worlds.”²⁵ Foucauldian work in this tradition takes the view that “cultural practices, categories, and rules are enactments of power.”²⁶ Galit Sarfaty’s study of how human rights was “mainstreamed” at the World Bank is an exemplar of the anthropological approach.²⁷ Sarfaty demonstrates that the movement of human rights norms within the IO was marked by contests between a subordinate group of lawyers and sociologists, who viewed human rights as an end goal that the organization’s procedures should be oriented toward, and a dominant group of neoclassically trained economists, who viewed human rights as a potentially useful instrument for achieving economic growth. Sarfaty is attuned to “the power dynamics and contestation within the organization,” an approach which she contrasts with work that “treats ‘culture’ as an object that is static and uniform, and can be defined and measured.”²⁸

Two other issues complicate the conceptualization of organizational culture. First, like most organizations, international organizations are open systems.²⁹ Scott defines open systems as “congeries of interdependent flows and activities linking shifting coalitions of participants embedded in wider material, resource and institutional environments.”³⁰ In the context of organizational culture, this means culture does not start or stop at the front doors of 1818 H Street in Washington, DC (the World Bank headquarters), nor are members of one organizational culture confined only to that culture. Wider professional ecologies,³¹ blended with individuals’ other cultural identities and affiliations (be they ethnic, national, etc.), contribute a natural fluidity and complexity to organizational culture that complicates efforts to define organizational culture as a distinct, measurable indicator that holds constant across all members of an identified group and, more problematically, sufficiently stable and entrenched over time to fit neatly into any deductive analysis that attempts to define and hold constant “organizational culture” as an independent variable.

Relatedly, organizations are not internally homogeneous. Subcultures and countercultures exist, particularly within large organizations with broad or multiple mandates, where there are likely to be several different staff specializations or professions, as well as high staff turnover.³² As such, large international organizations

²⁵ Wedeen, “Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science,” 717.

²⁶ Swidler, “Cultural Power and Social Movements,” 30. ²⁷ Sarfaty, *Values in Transition*.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 75. ²⁹ Lipson, “Peacekeeping: Organized Hypocrisy?”

³⁰ W. R. Scott, *Organizations: Rational, Natural, and Open Systems*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003), 29.

³¹ Leonard Seabrooke and Eleni Tsingou, “Revolving Doors and Professional Ecologies in International Financial Governance,” paper presented at PIPES Workshop (Professions in International Political Economies), Frederiksberg, Denmark (2012).

³² Joanne Martin and Caren Siehl, “Organizational Culture and Counterculture: An Uneasy Symbiosis,” *Organizational Dynamics* (Autumn 1983): 52–64.

like the UN will inevitably possess groups within the organizations that bring to the table different ideologies, values, and beliefs. While dominant and subordinate relationships between these units emerge, the existence of subcultures will confound efforts to identify a single set of shared assumptions that are uniformly recognized or internalized across the IOs. Furthermore, accounting for the contestation between dominant and sub- or countercultures is critical to understanding the dynamics of organizational culture, behavior, and change (or lack thereof). As we shall discuss below, this moves the study of IO culture to IO *cultures*. This simultaneously challenges the notion that organizational culture inevitably leads to institutional inertia³³ and necessitates empirical research which delves deep enough into the bureaucratic life of any organization to discern where such subcultures exist and how they interact to affect observable patterns of behavior and change.³⁴

In sum, the interdisciplinary roots, the grab-bag of features attributed to “culture,” the seemingly infinite possibilities for dissecting organizational culture into subcultures, and organizational cultures’ inherently open and fluid nature means that the study of IO culture is first and foremost challenged by a lack of conceptual clarity that enables us to determine exactly what is organizational culture and what is not. However, as we discuss in the next section, this dilemma should not put a full stop to using organizational culture in our analyses of IOs. Rather, it serves to remind us that the onus is on the individual researcher to make clear how he or she is defining and identifying the culture(s) of international organizations in the context of the analytical objectives of the study.

WHY AND HOW ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE MATTERS

In order to understand the value added by cultural approaches to the study of IOs, we must compare them to the main theoretical alternatives to understanding

³³ Michael T. Hannan and John Freeman, “Structural Inertia and Organizational Change,” *American Sociological Review* 49/2 (1984): 149–64; J. W. Lorsch, “Strategic Myopia: Culture as an Invisible Barrier to Change,” in *Gaining Control of the Corporate Culture*, ed. Ralph H. Kilmann, Mary J. Saxton, and Roy Serpa (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985), 84–102; Juan D. Carrillo and Denis Gromb, “Cultural Inertia and Uniformity in Organizations,” *The Journal of Law, Economics & Organization* 23/3 (2006): 743–71.

³⁴ See, e.g., Anthony J. Bebbington et al. (eds.), *The Search for Empowerment: Social Capital as Idea and Practice at the World Bank* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2006); Susan Park and Antje Vetterlein, *Owning Development: Creating Policy Norms in the IMF and the World Bank* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

IO design, (dys)function, and behavior. The alternative approaches tend to share some core assumptions regarding how IOs operate: actors within and outside of IOs are rational optimizers; “authoritative rule structures” are the key factors shaping agents’ strategies;³⁵ and the rule structures within which IO actors operate are strongly influenced by the distribution of material power among the members of the international system.

Organizational culture plays a peripheral role in what we, following Barnett and Finnemore, refer to as “economistic” approaches.³⁶ In economistic approaches IOs are conceptualized as contractual arrangements among rational, materially oriented actors, varying in their capabilities, seeking to maximize their interests subject to the enduring environmental constraints and opportunities that inhere in their domains of operation. Even if we accept that organizations emerge out of processes of institutional tinkering in which “competing entrepreneurs are testing different organizational forms” to see which type performs best,³⁷ this does not imply that organizations always perform well. Any hierarchically organized institution—be it a firm or an IO—involves a potential misalignment of incentives facing principals (those delegating a task to be carried out) and agents (those to whom the task has been delegated). The formal and informal contractual relationships between principals and agents are inherently incomplete or ambiguous; agents have some discretion in interpreting and carrying out their directives (“agency slack”), and principals may disagree with each other and struggle to monitor and sanction agents that deviate from the task. Agents might exploit the unclear nature of the contractual arrangement to advance their own narrow interests (capturing resources to wage and win bureaucratic turf battles, for example).³⁸

In this vein, principal–agent (PA) models recognize that IOs are (relatively) autonomous actors that can engage in behavior that deviates from the wishes of their political masters.³⁹ But PA models largely conform to economistic analysis by assuming IOs to be self-interested, rational actors who have predefined (and unchanging) preferences centered on the expansion of their staff, mandates, and resources. Missing is a persuasive theory of IO identity and interests that goes beyond this blanket assumption to understand the constitution of IO preferences. This is a significant gap in the PA model, in so far as it cannot explain why, when

³⁵ Daniel L. Nielson and Michael J. Tierney, “Delegation to International Organizations: Agency Theory and World Bank Environmental Reform,” *International Organization* 57/2 (2003): 241–76, 251.

³⁶ Barnett and Finnemore, “The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations.”

³⁷ David Lake, “Hobbesian Hierarchy: The Political Economy of Political Organization,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 12 (2009): 263–83, 268.

³⁸ Gutner and Thompson, “The Politics of IO Performance: A Framework,” 238.

³⁹ e.g., Darren Hawkins et al., *Delegation and Agency in International Organizations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

opportunities for agency slippage, resource maximization, and mission expansion exist, IOs choose *not* to deviate from principal demands.⁴⁰

In sum, economic analyses of IOs do not deny the existence of organizational cultures per se. But they do not treat culture as a concept worthy of inclusion in the analysis, either. The spare, contractual view of IOs ignores the reasons why organizations might develop particular cultures and how cultures explain patterns of IO behavior. As Barnett and Finnemore explain in the preface to *Rules for the World*, the turn toward organizational sociology was of necessity more than choice: contractual, economic explanations were much better at explaining why IOs existed than explaining what they were actually doing.⁴¹

And what they were doing sometimes served neither the organizations' principals nor the targets of their ostensibly desirable interventions. Barnett and Finnemore suggest that once IOs are delegated authority by member states to solve the problems with which they have been tasked, they face environments rife with complexity, risks, and uncertainties. IO mandates are often excessively broad, ambiguous, and contested; IO staff members must figure out how to translate their mandates into "workable doctrines, procedures, and ways of acting in the world ... Once in place, the staff of IOs take their missions seriously and often develop their own views and organizational cultures to promote what they see as 'good policy' or to protect it from states that have competing interests."⁴² By failing to appreciate the ambiguity of IO mandates, economic approaches are unable to understand what IOs actually want.⁴³ Their research suggests that much of what IOs do involves figuring out what they *should* do. Bureaucratic culture becomes the key factor in determining the legitimate ends to which IO staff members are working. Organizational culture does not need to be dysfunctional—there is much work on how "winning" corporate cultures can be enduring advantages for firms in competitive environments⁴⁴—but the routinized decision making and compartmentalization that are constitutive features of rational-legal bureaucratic cultures predispose IOs to develop certain pathologies.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Weaver, *Hypocrisy Trap*; see also Michael Barnett and Liv Coleman, "Designing Police: Interpol and the Study of Change in International Organizations," *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (2005): 593–619.

⁴¹ Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, *Rules for the World: International Organizations in World Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), viii–ix.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴³ Jacqueline Best, "Ambiguity and Uncertainty in International Organizations: A History of Debating IMF Conditionality," *International Studies Quarterly* 56/4 (2012): 674–88.

⁴⁴ Jay B. Barney, "Organizational Culture: Can It Be a Source of Sustained Competitive Advantage?," *Academy of Management Review* 11/3 (July 1986): 656–65.

⁴⁵ Barnett and Finnemore, "The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations," 719–24. "Pathology" for Barnett and Finnemore is an observed behavior, shaped by internal organizational cultures, that violates "the self-understood core goals of the organization": *Rules for the World*, 38.

THEORIZING THE CULTURES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

In this section we describe some of the mechanisms identified by scholars involved in the recent “cultural turn” in the study of IOs. The mechanisms illustrate how organizational cultures produce observable effects on IOs’ goals, their performance in pursuing those goals, and their responsiveness to pressures for change. In turn, our brief survey reveals two dimensions along which culture-based theorizing varies. We use the two dimensions—whether culture is treated as a constraint or as a strategic resource, and whether the locus of culture lies within the IO or in the IO’s external environment—to suggest a typological mapping of cultural approaches to the study of IOs.

One key behavioral outcome linked to organizational culture is organizational pathology, defined by Barnett and Finnemore as “dysfunctions ... that lead the IO to act in a manner that subverts its self-professed goals.”⁴⁶ Barnett and Finnemore specifically identify the “irrationality of rationalization” as one of the mechanisms by which IOs’ bureaucratic cultures produce pathological behavior.⁴⁷ The rational-legal bureaucratic form encourages officials within the IO to rely on rules and procedures that, in part, constitute the organization’s operational culture in the process of arriving at decisions. Sometimes the rules are poorly suited to the realities on the ground and prevent the IO from effectively carrying out its mission. Slavish adherence to the rules and procedures may lead IO officials to confuse the ends (pursuing the mission) and the means (following the established rules). Barnett’s work on the failure of the UN to effectively intervene in the 1994 mass killings of Tutsis by Rwandan Hutus provides a striking illustration of this pathology at work.⁴⁸ The UN Secretariat’s insistence on classifying Rwanda in early 1994 as a failed state rather than a country perched on the precipice of genocide shaped the mission of the small, ill-equipped force of peacekeepers. IO decision-makers in New York “were using the categories available from the organizational culture in which they were embedded.”⁴⁹ Once the violence was underway in April 1994, the UN classified the Rwandan situation as an ethnically based civil war rather than a crime against humanity. The UN’s rules of peacekeeping then kicked in, and led to the withdrawal of the peacekeepers on the ground in Kigali.⁵⁰ One hundred days later over 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were dead.

⁴⁶ Barnett and Finnemore, *Rules for the World*, 8.

⁴⁷ Barnett and Finnemore, “The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations,” 720–1; *Rules for the World*, 39.

⁴⁸ Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide*. ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 158. Notably, Barnett does not dismiss interest-based arguments in this account, namely the interests of major power states such as the United States to avoid getting dragged into a perceived “civil war” in Africa, particularly so soon after the killing of American troops in Mogadishu.

A more recent example comes from Autesserre's work on peacekeeping in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).⁵¹ Continuous and extensive local violence in the DRC during the country's rocky transition from civil war (2003–6) was ignored due to the lens through which the UN and other peacekeeping organizations viewed the country: the DRC was classified as a "post-conflict" situation, and as such the IOs involved in the transition followed "a specific set of policies and procedures (such as elections organization)" that were organizationally legitimate but ultimately ill-suited to the problem.⁵² Once the "post-conflict" master frame was imposed on the DRC, the UN agencies set free and fair elections as the key operational goal, elevating elections over local peacebuilding because the electoral route "was associated with an existing set of tools, procedures, expertise, and strategy."⁵³

Organizational cultures affect how IOs define their purposes in the world and interpret and respond to feedback produced by their environments. The IMF, for example, is often described as having a "technocratic" and "neoliberal" culture defined by macroeconomists drawn from top American economics departments.⁵⁴ Shared professionalizing experiences—in the Fund's case, graduate training in mainstream economics coupled with additional training within the organization and quasi-apprenticeships in the first years of new staff members' careers—promote reliance on a simple, shared template for understanding the sources of the payments problems that bring borrowers to the Fund. Starting in the 1950s a group of IMF economists developed a "flows-of-funds" framework that explained precisely how domestic macroeconomic policies interact to generate payments imbalances; more importantly, the framework enabled IMF staff to forecast the size of the borrower's financing needs in the near future, contingent on the extent of policy changes.⁵⁵ "Financial programming" is used to derive "the effects of fiscal policies and credit creation on the balance of payments."⁵⁶ The model simplifies the task facing IMF officials. A list of policy areas that could be at the root of the borrower's economic

⁵¹ Severine Autesserre, "Hobbes and the Congo: Frames, Local Violence, and International Intervention," *International Organization* 63 (Spring) (2009): 249–80.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 254–5. ⁵³ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁵⁴ Blustein, *The Chastening*; Barnett and Finnemore, *Rules for the World*, 45–72; Chwieroth, *Capital Ideas*; Bessma Momani, "Limits of Streamlining Fund Conditionality: IMF's Organizational Culture," *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 8/2 (2005): 39–57; Stephen C. Nelson, "Playing Favorites: How Shared Beliefs Shape the IMF's Lending Decisions," *International Organization* 68/2 (Spring 2014): 297–328; Antje Vetterlein, "Lacking Ownership: The IMF and Its Engagement with Social Development as a Policy Norm," in *Owning Development: Creating Policy Norms in the IMF and the World Bank*, ed. Susan Park and Antje Vetterlein (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 93–112; Woods, *The Globalizers*.

⁵⁵ Michael Mussa and Miguel Savastano, "The IMF Approach to Economic Stabilization," in *NBER Macroeconomics Annual 1999*, ed. Ben S. Bernanke and Julio J. Rotemberg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 108–15.

⁵⁶ James Boughton, *Tearing Down Walls: The International Monetary Fund, 1990–99* (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2012), lvi; see also Barnett and Finnemore, *Rules for the World*, 51–6.

troubles would be very lengthy. The basic model directs staff members' attention to those that are the most important targets.

One consequence of the Fund's ideational culture is that a number of issues, some of which mattered a great deal to external stakeholders (including powerful member governments), were sidelined or watered-down in the implementation stage because they lay outside the perceived core competencies of the staff.⁵⁷ It is not that the IMF's economists do not care about issues such as the ecological and social impacts of economic adjustment policies; rather, "they do not know how to pursue them within their intellectual framework."⁵⁸

Several studies demonstrate the effects of IO culture on responsiveness to environmental cues and pressures for change. The World Bank, for example, has proved to be a fertile testing ground for the role of organizational culture in shaping organizational change. Weaver invokes elements of the Bank's culture to explain decoupling between the organization's talk and its actions: while the IO publicly embraced a more encompassing notion of "sustainable development," including improving the environmental impact of its programs, tackling corruption, and promoting "good governance," it did little "institutionally to promote, monitor, and otherwise make mainstreaming happen" because of conflicts with preexisting organizational ideas and operational norms.⁵⁹ Moreover, the Bank's intellectual and bureaucratic cultures have distinct effects on organizational reform programs: close process tracing of the Bank's attempts at wholesale reform reveals that the success of reforms is linked to how closely they match the organization's pre-existing cultural traits.⁶⁰

The congruence of the proposed reform and the prevailing organizational culture is also an important factor in Barnett and Coleman's study of the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol).⁶¹ They demonstrate through case study analysis that when the content of the proposed reforms and the IO's culture are at loggerheads, the IO will pursue strategies (categorized by the authors as *avoidance*, *defiance*, *manipulation*, and *strategic social construction*) to manage environmental pressures while at the same time preserving the core elements of the organization's culture. When Interpol faced pressures in the 1950s and 1960s to become more like a "modern IO," the changes it implemented were largely cosmetic. It resisted reforms that threatened its organizational culture, reflecting a strong "desire to preserve the autonomy and professional norms of the organization."⁶²

Other studies in this vein emphasize the strategic use of cultural resources by actors engaged in intraorganizational contests to define the IO's agenda. Sarfaty's

⁵⁷ Barnett and Finnemore, *Rules for the World*, 64–5; Vetterlein, "Lacking Ownership."

⁵⁸ Barnett and Finnemore, *Rules for the World*, 65. ⁵⁹ Weaver, *Hypocrisy Trap*, 26.

⁶⁰ Ibid.; Weaver and Leiteritz, "Our Poverty Is a World Full of Dreams"; Daniel Nielson, Michael J. Tierney, and Catherine Weaver, "Bridging the Rationalist-Constructivist Divide: Reengineering the Culture of the World Bank," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 9 (2006): 107–39.

⁶¹ Barnett and Coleman, "Designing Police." ⁶² Ibid., 614.

ethnographic study of the battle over the role of human rights in the World Bank's approach to development illustrates the power of one subculture—that of the economists, “whose language is the dominant mode of communication and rationality”—over the members of the Bank's legal subculture, who were forced to translate the moral and legalistic framing for human rights into the rational, instrumental terms that the economists could understand.⁶³ The power of the economic culture of the Bank emerges in Weaver's discussion of the emergence of the gender and development norm within the organization.⁶⁴ Norm advocates strategically framed the issue in ways that resonated “within the institution's dominant culture, choosing methods, concepts and theories,” focusing on “questions of how to increase women's property rights, access to credit, productivity increases, and the potential effect of these forms of economic empowerment on national economic growth.”⁶⁵ Chwioroth's study of the evolution of the norm of capital account openness in the IMF suggests that even in an organization with a relatively coherent “neoliberal” intellectual culture, norm entrepreneurs access and use cultural resources to wage battles over the organization's direction.⁶⁶ In the 1980s and 1990s economists in one department within the IMF (Monetary and Exchange Affairs) were the most ardent voices in favor of amending the Articles of Agreement to prohibit member states from using capital controls.⁶⁷ They were ultimately unsuccessful, but the cultural “capital” of the pro-liberalization forces within the IMF explains in good part the ability of the group and its figurehead, the University of Chicago-trained Manuel Guitián, to get the proposal on the table when many of the organization's staff members were lukewarm on the issue. Guitián and likeminded officials were skilled operators within the IMF's prevailing organizational culture.

While organizational culture is making more frequent appearance in IO studies, there is little consensus on how culture fits into more rationalist frameworks. Here, we do not view cultural and rationalist accounts as incommensurable. Rather, we see that cultural accounts' emphasis on ideational factors versus rationalists' deference to material incentives provides differing ways for examining decision-making within IOs. As Miles Kahler argues, in culturally driven decision-making: “the feasible [choice] set is sharply constrained by culture, collective beliefs largely guide interpretation of the choice situation, and in the most culturally driven account, choice can hardly be said to occur.”⁶⁸ Yet this does not imply, as some critics have argued, that IO staff members become cultural “dupes,” internalizing and then

⁶³ Sarfaty, *Values in Transition*, 96.

⁶⁴ Catherine Weaver, “The Strategic Social Construction of the World Bank's Gender and Development Policy Norm,” in *Owning Development: Creating Policy Norms in the IMF and the World Bank*, ed. Susan Park and Antje Vetterlein (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 70–89.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 86–7.

⁶⁶ Chwioroth, *Capital Ideas*.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 170–1.

⁶⁸ Miles Kahler, “Rationality in International Relations,” *International Organization* 52/4 (1998): 919–41, 934.

thoughtlessly enacting social scripts without reflecting on their decisions. As the work reviewed here demonstrates, this caricature is often inaccurate.

This observation reveals another strong tension between the various approaches to organizational culture. Culture is sometimes conceptualized as a relatively unified “web of meaning” that “pushes action in a consistent direction,” whereas at other times culture is viewed as a “tool kit ... from which actors select differing pieces for constructing lines of action.”⁶⁹ We see both kinds of conceptualizations in the nascent literature on IO cultures. The sociological approach in which organization culture creates “ritualized behavior” and constructs “a very parochial normative environment within the organization” is evident in Barnett and Finnemore’s seminal work and the research on bureaucratic cultures of IOs that followed.⁷⁰ Sarfaty and Weaver, by contrast, highlight the use of cultural resources by actors within the World Bank to strategically reshape the organization’s mission.

The review of recent work on IO cultures suggests a second dimension of variation: whether the locus of culture lies inside the organization or in the international environment. As we note above, IOs are “open systems,” so the assumption that they are hermetically sealed from external pressure, competition, and political and cultural elements swirling in the international environment is implausible. Nonetheless, scholars differ in where they locate the source of IO culture. Some choose to focus on the distinctive cultures that emerge from dynamics that are products of self-contained organizational dynamics. For example, none of the work that describes the IMF’s culture as “hierarchical” identifies the source of that cultural element as the international environment. Rather, it is an enduring aspect of culture that is particular to that organization and its professional staff. Autesserre, on the other hand, locates the frame that shaped UN peacekeeping culture “at the level of the world polity.”⁷¹ The post-conflict frame was an element of global culture, and was translated into operational rules and procedures at the organizational level. Kim and Sharman argue that the post-Cold War emergence of initiatives to hold state leaders culpable for serious corruption crimes, exemplified by the UN/World Bank joint Stolen Assets Recovery effort, reflect the IOs’ strategic adoption of norms that closely “fit with world culture ... because they present culturally approved solutions to culturally defined problems.”⁷² Others draw links between transnational professional cultures (such as the field of economics) and the cultures and behavior of numerous international economic institutions and epistemic communities.⁷³

⁶⁹ Swidler, “Culture in Action,” 277; see also Klaus Weber and M. Tina Dacin, “The Cultural Construction of Organizational Life,” *Organization Studies* 22/2 (2011): 286–98.

⁷⁰ Barnett and Finnemore, “The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations,” 718.

⁷¹ Autesserre, “Hobbes and the Congo,” 253.

⁷² Hun Joon Kim and J. C. Sharman, “Accounts and Accountability: Corruption, Human Rights, and Individual Accountability Norms,” *International Organization* 68/2 (Spring 2014): 20.

⁷³ André Broome and Leonard Seabrooke, “The Socialization and Translation of Professional Knowledge in International Organizations,” paper presented at the 53rd Annual ISA Convention, San

Table 43.1 Approaches to IO cultures

		Locus of cultural form	
		Internal	External
Cultural form	Culture as constraint	Bureaucratic cultures	World polity, occupational and professional fields
	Culture as resource (“toolkit”)	Norm shifts and cultural contests	Cultural match/clash

Combining the two dimensions—the nature of organizational cultures (constraint or strategic toolkit) and the sites of cultural forms (internal to the organization or in the external environment)—provides an opportunity for typological mapping. In each cell of Table 43.1 we identify approaches to the study of IO cultures. The bureaucratic culture approach pioneered by Barnett and Finnemore, for example, fits in the top-left cell. In this theoretical framework organizational culture imposes a strong constraint on IO officials’ capacity for and interest in rational calculation, and the locus of cultural elements lies within the organization itself. Theories that lie in the top-right cell take a similar view of culture but tend to see IOs as highly permeable and sensitive to cultural elements that exist outside the organization, perhaps at the level of an overarching world culture.⁷⁴ The bottom cells in Table 43.1 conceptualize culture as a repertoire or toolkit upon which actors can draw. Approaches in the bottom-left cell tend to focus on the strategic use of cultural resources in intraorganizational contests over norms and goals. There is, to our knowledge, no research on IOs that clearly fits in the bottom-right cell, but one can speculate on what theorizing along these dimensions would look like: analysis would center on how IOs strategically adopt or reject elements of the external cultural environment to suit their purposes.

We stress that the dimensions are analytical devices for identifying varieties of theories of IO cultures. They do not tell us much about the content of theories linking organizational culture to IO behavior. Middle-range theorizing of the kind surveyed in this chapter is governed by the questions that interest the researcher. Good theories produce observable implications, which can be tested against plausible

Diego, CA (2012); Leonard Seabrooke and Ole Jacob Sending, “Professional Practices in International Organizations,” paper presented at the 2nd GR:EEN Annual Conference, Warwick, United Kingdom (2012); Seabrooke and Tsingou, “Revolving Doors and Professional Ecologies in International Financial Governance.”

⁷⁴ See, e.g., Kim and Sharman, “Accounts and Accountability,” on the elements of the global culture of modernity.

alternatives. How can cultural theories of IOs be tested? This is the issue to which we turn in the next section.

STUDYING IO CULTURES

There is no standard methodology for studying organizational culture. The reasons why are instinctive: the art of studying organizational culture is akin to the task of making the invisible—“shared assumptions, values and beliefs”—visible.⁷⁵ Conceptual clarity opens the door to measurement and empirical analysis. Before we can assess the explanatory power of organizational culture we have to know what we should be looking for. Since scholars conceptualize organizational culture differently, it naturally follows that scholars employ different methods for observing it.

Business management theorists and practitioners tend to view organizational culture as a variable that can be *objectively* observed and measured through instruments such as surveys. Ultimately, culture can also be strategically managed to shift organizational goals, reorient staff around new agendas, or to address performance issues.⁷⁶ Sociological approaches, on the other hand, adopt a more *subjective* view. Culture is conceptualized as the values, norms, and beliefs possessed by agents, which can be revealed through interviews, communiqués, and other forms of correspondence, as well indirectly observed through socializing experiences, such as educational backgrounds, that confer certain beliefs. Finally, anthropological approaches take an *intersubjective* view, seeing organizational culture as “sense-making,” observed in the codes, stories, rituals, and ceremonies through which members express meaning. The intersubjective view of organizational culture suggests immersion in the daily life of the organization.

The bulk of recent studies of IO cultures have adopted a measurement strategy in line with the subjective conceptualization of organizational culture. This work typically involves careful process-tracing, interviews, and text analysis. For example, in Momani’s discussion of the IMF’s organizational culture, she uses extensive interviews with Fund staff and reading of internal documents to examine how the IMF’s technocratic ethos and economistic ideology led the staff to resist proposed changes to guidelines on loan conditionality.⁷⁷ We learn from her study a tremendous amount

⁷⁵ Ronald L. Jepperson and Ann Swidler, “What Properties of Culture Should We Measure,” *Poetics* 22 (1994): 359–71.

⁷⁶ Ouchi and Wilkins, “Organizational Culture.”

⁷⁷ Momani, “Limits of Streamlining Fund Conditionality.”

about how the IMF staff think about the core mission of the IMF and how they should conduct their every day jobs. The reward of rich case study analyses is a high degree of internal validity. The potential pitfalls, however, are significant. As Legro puts it, “this is a holistic exercise that depends on the qualitative interpretation of the specific content of each culture.”⁷⁸ Researchers that seek to glean evidence of organizational culture from interviews must be attuned to the potential biases of current members of IOs (who can be quite socialized into their immediate environments), past members (who might view the organization through rose-tinted glasses or from disgruntled experience), or outside observers such as nongovernmental organizations (who view the IO within the frame of their own agendas). IO scholars working in this vein need to think seriously about the sources from which they derive our understanding of the culture and be wary of overreliance on any particular source.⁷⁹

IO scholars working in the anthropological tradition tend to use ethnographic methods. Ethnographic research entails lengthy fieldwork, usually within a single organization. Organizational ethnographies include evidence from in-depth interviews and analysis of organizational texts from archives, official publications, and unofficial or internal documents, memos, and emails. Critically, ethnographers also draw on participant or non-participant observation of organizational life, either by working directly in the organization or attending meetings, training workshops, or field operations. Galit Sarfaty, in her recent ethnography of the World Bank, spent several years inside the Bank both as a staff member as well as an outside researcher, enabling her to build trust and gain access to internal correspondence critical to discerning how the Bank’s economic and technocratic culture impeded the Bank’s embrace of human rights agendas.⁸⁰ Michael Barnett, likewise, drew extensively from his time working with the US Mission to the UN on the Rwanda desk in 1993–4 to understand how the culture of peacekeeping in the UN strongly shaped the UN’s reluctance to intervene during the Rwandan genocide.⁸¹ Stephen Hopgood spent over a year doing ethnographic research inside Amnesty International’s International Secretariat, using interviews, archival research, and observation of internal meetings to provide an insider’s account of the day-to-day operations within the organization and the recurrent debate between traditionalists who sought to uphold Amnesty’s moral authority and reformers who hope to modernize the organization.⁸² David Phillips drew upon seventeen years of work

⁷⁸ Legro, “Which Norms Matter?,” 42.

⁷⁹ Furthermore, it is imperative to go beyond “what’s in print.” Integrating culture into analysis almost always necessitates rigorous fieldwork, acquiring access to privileged information, such as internal memos and emails, internal publications and internal web access. A handful of documents and a few interviews are simply not going to cut it. Patience and tenacity are not just virtues—they are necessities.

⁸⁰ Sarfaty, *Values in Transition*; see also Weaver, *Hypocrisy Trap*.

⁸¹ Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide*.

⁸² Stephen Hopgood, *Keepers of the Flame: Understanding Amnesty International* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

experience in the World Bank for his study of the organization's checkered history of internal reform.⁸³

Ethnographies seek to discover formal and informal norms, routines, and decision-making processes that may be so deeply internalized among staff as consensus values that they are not immediately recognized in collective consciousness. Such research requires patient collection of data from primary texts and open-ended interviews to reveal unspoken assumptions and values, beliefs and ideologies so deeply internalized that actors may see them as facts. Deep ethnographies can also uncover subcultures and struggles within the organization over meanings and routines. A notable feature of ethnographic work is greater attention to heterogeneity and dynamism of organizational cultures, potentially revealing the opportunities and constraints facing new organizational norms, policies, and practices.

Ethnographic studies depend on interpretive data gathered from semi-structured interviews and participant or nonparticipant observation. One potential pitfall in this method is that a scholar's deep "self-embedding" in the organization can lead her to start to internalize the culture and sympathize with the subjects of the study. Observer bias also affects research subjects. Entrenched perceptions about organizational culture are common, hard to dislodge, and the researcher's interventions in the organization can inadvertently harden staff members' perceptions about their organization's prevailing cultures.

By contrast, scholars that adopt the objective view of organizational culture make use of survey evidence and coding efforts such as those used in Total Quality Management studies.⁸⁴ Surveys are quite common in business management studies, which use Likert-scale and related indices to generate data that allows for the comparative studies of corporate cultures and, subsequently, the strategic "reengineering" of organizational cultures. Such studies offer the promise of portability; they may allow the analyst to compare organizational cultures along one or many dimensions. To date, however, survey-based studies are (as far as we know) nonexistent in the field of IO studies.

The main critique is that such studies are deductive in nature, and thus tend to be based on a priori assumptions or predetermined "givens" about culture, with reliance on leading questions. Organizational cultural properties do not easily translate into objects that can be measured, particularly through structured questionnaires: "the culture measured by conventional survey instruments is almost always the kind about which people disagree and can articulate. Utterly taken-for-granted but articulated knowledge, or unarticulated knowledge, is difficult to ask about directly."⁸⁵

⁸³ Phillips, *Reforming the World Bank*.

⁸⁴ Geert Hofstede et al., "Measuring Organizational Cultures: A Qualitative and Quantitative Studies across Twenty Cases," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 35 (1990): 286–316.

⁸⁵ Jepperson and Swidler, "What Properties of Culture Should We Measure," 368. Edgar Schein similarly notes: "survey work on organizational culture assumes knowledge of the relevant dimensions to be studied" ("Organizational Culture," 110).

A final cautionary note on the empirical study of IOs concerns the temporal dimensions of organizational cultures. As hinted earlier, a frequently launched critique of studies of organizational culture is the tendency to treat culture as a stable variable that allows scholars to identify a consistent effect. After all, culture is something that provides stability to humans grappling with uncertainty and complexity, and thus it is easy to see culture as an immutable factor in organizational life. But in doing so, IO culture scholars tend to assume (or their readers infer that they assert) that culture is more or less inert or sticky—which may or may not be the case.

Further, the fact that organizational culture and behavior evolve together poses a simultaneity problem that many studies fail to consider. Handling this problem requires extra care in conceptualization and measurement. Organizational culture should be conceptually distinct from the effects that it is purported to exert.⁸⁶ IO scholars interested in making causal claims about IO cultures should also seek to design research projects in a way that ensures that the putative cause (organizational culture) is not too “proximate” to the outcome.⁸⁷ When the correlation between organizational culture and the outcome appears to be perfect (perhaps because the cultural element and the outcome of interest are observed simultaneously), critics can (and do) dismiss the work as akin to one of Kipling’s (non-falsifiable) “just-so” stories: culture is invoked as an after-the-fact justification for an observed decision or behavior. Careful attention to timing and the causal process through which organizational culture exerts its effects is necessary.

CONCLUSION: A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR THE STUDY OF IO CULTURES

In summary, while there are numerous challenges to studying IO culture, there is also tremendous promise. IO culture matters, and should be included alongside other key factors that influence the structure, purposes, behavior, and dynamics of change of important international organizations in world politics. However, as a field of research, the study of IO cultures is new and relatively underdeveloped. We thus take the remaining space here to outline what we think are some interesting questions that would benefit from attention to IO culture.

⁸⁶ Legro, “Which Norms Matter?” 57.

⁸⁷ John Gerring, “Causation: A Unified Framework for the Social Sciences,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 17/2 (2005): 163–98.

First, we believe there is an opportunity to explore variation in IO structure, type, and issue-area and how they interrelate with organizational culture. For example, how does IO type (forum versus service, with seconded or permanent staff) affect the character, strength, and permeability of organizational culture? How does an IO's design or organizational structure, such as degree of centralization, shape culture, or how does culture shape structural adaptation over time? How does organizational culture also affect (or reflect) organizational governance and representation?

Second, the proliferation of types of organizational cultures suggests the need for a classification scheme. The cultures of the international financial institutions (the IMF, World Bank, and regional development banks) have been described in the following ways: “elitist,” “neoliberal,” “hierarchical,” “technocratic,” “bureaucratic,” “approval,” “disbursement,” and “control.”⁸⁸ Others describe the UN Secretariat's culture of “powerlessness.”⁸⁹ Rather than referring to “the organizational culture” in the aggregate it may be more profitable to distinguish between *types* of IO cultures. Distinguishing between operational and professional cultures is one potential avenue for future work. Exploring how types of culture shape IO behavior—and how they interact with each other and with the formal structure and issue area—may push us beyond treating all IOs as sharing the same “bureaucratic” culture.

These are merely two possible lines of inquiry. Certainly, studying the cultures of international organizations involves daunting conceptual and methodological issues discussed in this chapter. A comprehensive approach may also entail difficult reconciliation of, or at least due attention to, the diverse disciplinary perspectives and requisite ontologies and epistemologies on IO cultures. Challenges notwithstanding, we believe that attention to the cultures of IOs promises to deepen our backward-looking, explanatory knowledge about why IOs behave in the ways that they do. And in an era of constant reform of existing IOs and the creation of new IOs, the study of organizational cultures can help to advance prescriptive, forward-looking knowledge about how IOs can and should act in the world.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Chwieroth, *Capital Ideas*; Momani, “Limits of Streamlining Fund Conditionality”; Nelson, “Playing Favorites”; Phillips, *Reforming the World Bank*; Weaver, *Hypocrisy Trap*; Ngairé Woods, “Good Governance in International Organizations,” *Global Governance* 5/1 (1999): 39–61.

⁸⁹ Autesserre, “Hobbes and the Congo”; and *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacekeeping* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide*.

⁹⁰ On “backward-looking” and “forward-looking” forms of knowledge, see Alexander Wendt, “Driving with the Rearview Mirror: On the Rational Science of Institutional Design,” *International Organization* 55/4 (2001): 1019–49.

