

DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY

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National culture and organizational culture. Methodological aspects of the study of organizational cultures

Key words: *organizational culture, Polish national culture, Ukrainian national culture, case study, management through culture*

The considerations in the work regarded embracing the differences in organizational cultures formed under the influence of national cultures. In this dissertation the following goals were achieved:

- The knowledge of organizational culture and national culture has been deepened and systematized – the complicated relationship between the two has been presented;
- A model for organizational culture research has been created and verified;
- Cultural differences between the researched companies have been identified.

With regards to achieving the first goal, knowledge of cultural issues, which formed the theoretical basis for empirical research, was deepened. A review of definitions and key concepts by Polish and foreign scholars in the area of cultural studies was carried out. Much attention was paid to the development of the cultural movement in management. Issues related to paradigms, definitions, functions, the formation and conditions of organizational culture were discussed in detail. The threshold of the relationship between national culture and organizational culture was focused upon. With regards to the national culture matter, the work focused on capturing elements characteristic of Polish and Ukrainian national cultures.

Due to considerable homogeneity, determining the characteristics of Polish culture did not cause many problems. However, capturing the features of Ukrainian culture proved challenging for such a diverse and full of contrasts country. It was considered whether one can relate to Ukrainian culture, or rather should use the notion of culture "in Ukraine." Reference was made to the concept of "two" Ukraines by M. Riabczuk: pro-Russian and pro-Western. Despite the popularity of the idea, its

weakness - arising from the difficulty of establishing the divide between "two" Ukraines - was shown. Many regions of the country remain culturally fluid, heterogeneous, and combine Ukrainian and Russian elements. Therefore, an attempt to find common points was made, and it was considered legitimate to use the concept of Ukrainian culture. Then, the criteria on the basis of which the characteristics of Polish and Ukrainian national cultures were developed, were set. As guidelines for national culture four cultural dimensions by G. Hofstede: power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, and uncertainty avoidance were adopted. In the next step a comparative analysis of both cultures in accordance with those cultural dimensions was conducted.

In the light of the analysis of the existing literature on national culture it has been established that individualism rate in Polish culture is much higher than in Ukrainian culture. Power distance in both countries is relatively high in relation to other European countries. However, in the Poland – Ukraine comparison, Poland's power distance can be considered moderately high, while Ukrainian very high. The level of uncertainty avoidance in both cultures is relatively high, though slightly higher in Ukraine. Polish culture shows more characteristics of male culture while Ukrainian – female. Both: the analysis of the literature and studies conducted so far have confirmed the existence of cultural differences between the compared countries.

With regards to achieving the subsequent goals of the work, the history of research on organizational culture was presented and the dispute concerning methodological issues was paid heed. Methodological fundamentalism was rejected in favor of pluralism. The possibility of paradigm integration was accepted, since it was considered that the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in one research project on a cognitively neutral ground is impossible. When a researcher decides to adopt quantitative and qualitative methods, apart from the assumptions of the main paradigm, the assumptions of the so-called hidden paradigm are also used. The vision to seek one ideal method has been replaced by the effort to combine research methods, which do not arise high epistemological expectations. The question was therefore not whether the two types of data and associated methods can be chained together during the study design, but rather how to do it and for what purpose. The development of a method for organizational culture study was focused upon. The method was decided to be a case study, which was based on two paradigms: Neo-positivist-Structuralist-Systematic and Interpretive-Symbolic. The study model, created for the sake of this

work, served to diagnose the relationship between national culture and organizational culture. It allowed for the discovery of the differences in organizational cultures formed under the influence of national cultures. It referred to the structural model of organizational culture by E. Schein as well as the integrated model of organizational culture. The selection of an adequate research tool for each of the studied levels of organizational culture structure: the artefacts, values and the basic cultural assumptions allowed for a comprehensive examination of organizational culture. Due to this model, it could be accurately indicated at what level the investigated cultures differ. During later stage of the research process, the model has also enabled identifying cultural features in the management of the researched subjects.

The research aim was to find solutions to the following problems:

1. Does the specificity of the national culture (Polish and Ukrainian) show in the researched companies (Malow and Litpol-Ukraine) on three levels of organizational culture - the artefacts, values and basic assumptions?
2. What is the relation between the way the company is managed and the specific features of national culture (Polish and Ukrainian)?

With regards to the above questions, research aims have been formulated. They concerned diagnosing: the artefacts (1), values (2), and basic assumptions (3) in the organizational cultures of the Polish and Ukrainian companies as well as identifying the cultural features in the management of those companies (4).

Three of the four aims concerned the first research question, while the fourth aim – the second one. The general hypothesis and four specific hypotheses have been formed. The general hypothesis read: the specific features of national culture occur at all of the levels of organizational culture and influence the management. The specific hypotheses were formulated as follows: The influence of national culture on organizational culture appears at the level of artefacts (1), in the system of values (2), and in the basic cultural assumptions (3) of organizational cultures of Malow and Litpol-Ukraine companies. The specific hypothesis (4) read the following: In the management of Malow and Litpol-Ukraine companies, specific features of national culture (Polish and Ukrainian) can be identified.

The study presented in this work has been carried out on the basis of the multiple, exploratory and explanatory case study method. It consisted of four stages, which are presented in Figure 1.

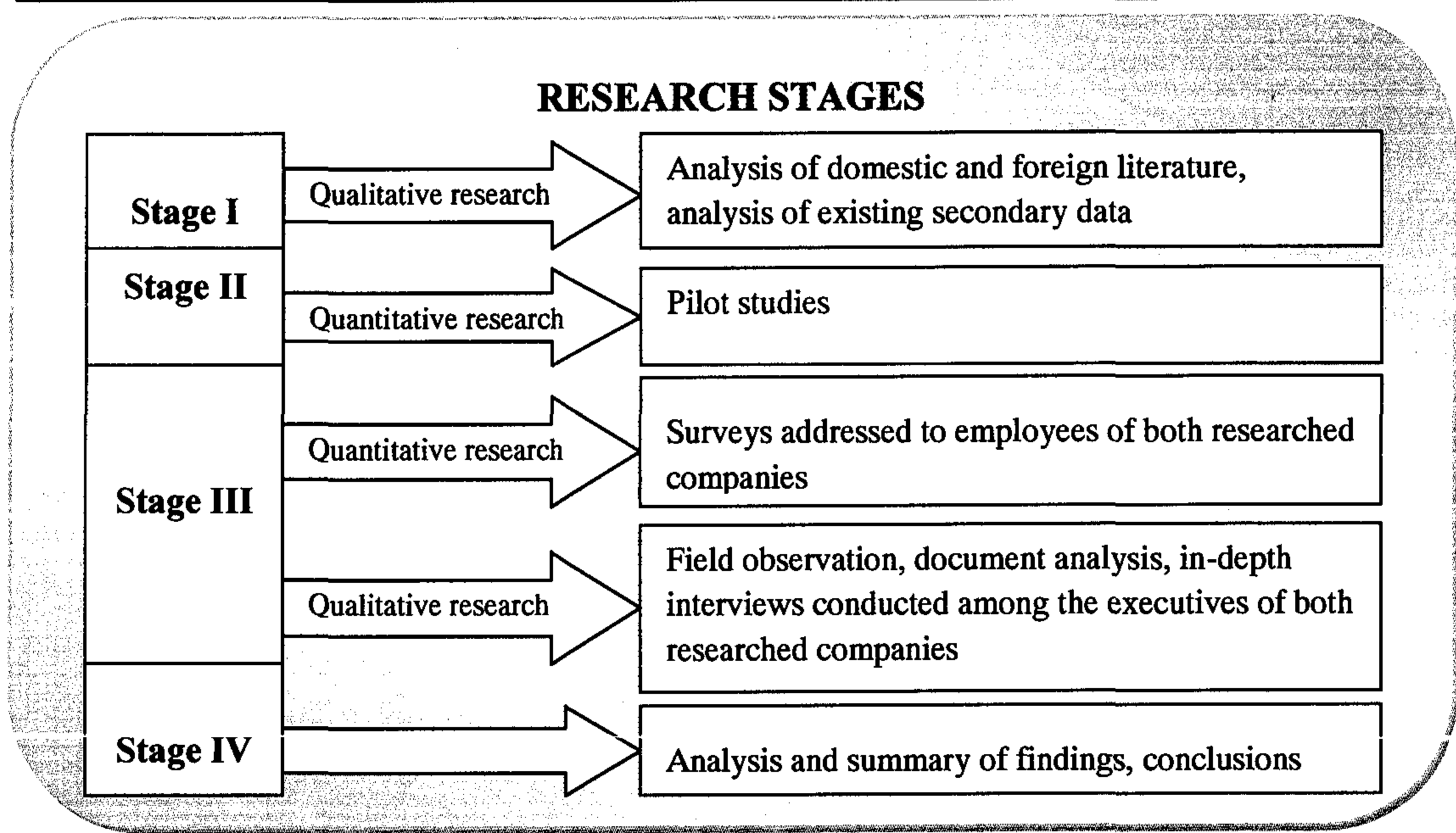


Figure.1. Research stages

Source: author's own elaboration

I. The first stage included literature analysis (analysis of existing secondary data), which aimed to determine the characteristics of Polish and Ukrainian cultures.

II. In the second stage of the research a pilot study was conducted among representatives of Polish and Ukrainian national cultures.

III. The third stage involved an investigation of organizational cultures of companies operating in the environment of Polish and Ukrainian cultures.

The research plan included:

1. Quantitative research based on a questionnaire interview (conducted in the form of an auditory survey), aimed at employees of both researched companies. The subject of the questionnaire were issues expressing basic cultural assumptions and values, whose specificity reflects orientation on tasks or interpersonal relationships.

2. Qualitative research focused on the field observation of Malow and Litpol-Ukraine companies' organizational cultures. The object of observation were cultural artefacts. Additionally, within the case study, in-depth interviews, whose content referred to the basic cultural assumptions (power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance), have been carried out. In-depth interviews were conducted among executives of both researched companies. In addition, a content analysis of companies' documents regarding the formalized organizational culture principles, such as mission, vision of the company, motivation system and code of ethics was conducted.

IV. The fourth stage of the study consists of a summary, which is primarily based on the juxtaposition of differences in organizational cultures of the researched companies.

The selection of the research sample was purposeful. It served selecting respondents who may constitute the most valuable source of information about the examined phenomenon. The pilot study included 407 people, while the main research – 184. The time range comprised the years: 2013-2015. The spatial extent in relation to the theoretical part of the work covered the territory of Poland and Ukraine, while the practical part of the work included areas of three cities: Suwalki, Kharkiv and Kiev.

In order to verify the hypothesis (1) direct observation was carried out. A comparative characteristics of physical, linguistic, and behavioral artefacts of organizational cultures of the researched companies, relying on qualitative indicators, was carried out. On the basis of these indicators the diversification of ways of communication in both companies was described. In the light of the achieved results the organizational culture of Litpol-Ukraine turned out to be one of higher context than the organizational culture of Malow. Thus, the first specific hypothesis has been verified. On this basis, a contextual model referring to the first level of organizational culture structure in the environment of Polish and Ukrainian national cultures was developed.

The second level of the organizational culture structure research, which refers to the preferences of final values: intrapersonal and interpersonal, and instrumental values: competence and moral, was based on quantitative indicators. Given the hypothesis (2) formulated in the research, the statistical analysis was to demonstrate the differences between the obtained indices regarding the independent variable, which is the national culture. The statistical analysis used the non-parametric U Mann-Whitney test when determining differences in values preferences between the two researched groups. The Value Scale by Milton Rokeach was used in the diagnosis of the value system. The analysis of the results allowed to formulate a key conclusion from the point of view of a researcher of this level of organizational culture. Employees of the Polish company rated higher the intrapersonal and competence values, while employees of the Ukrainian company – the interpersonal and moral ones. As a result, respondents from Malow company attributed higher ranks to values orientating towards task performance, and respondents from Litpol-Ukraine – to ones orienting towards interpersonal relationships. Thus, the second specific hypothesis was positively verified. Based on the results of research of preferences of final and instrumental values, an axiological model

related to the second level of the organizational culture structure in the environment of the Polish and Ukrainian national cultures was presented.

Regarding the third level of organizational culture structure, concerning basic cultural assumptions, as in the case of values preference, quantitative indicators were applied. Given the hypothesis (3) formulated in the research, the statistical analysis was to demonstrate the differences between the obtained indices regarding the independent variable, which is the national culture. The statistical analysis also used the non-parametric U Mann-Whitney test when determining differences in the basic cultural assumptions between the two researched groups. In the identification of the basic cultural assumptions a tool constructed for the purposes of this study, which uses the concept of cultural dimensions by G. Hofstede, was applied. The obtained results proved to be largely consistent with the theoretical and empirical analysis by other authors. Only in relation to the dimension of masculinity-femininity discrepancies appeared. The study shows that the masculinity level in the organizational culture of the Polish company is slightly lower than in the organizational culture of the Ukrainian one. The analysis of test results regarding basic cultural assumptions showed that organizations reveal characteristic differences. They demonstrate the influence of national culture on organizational culture. Therefore, the third specific hypothesis has also been positively verified. Thus, a model of basic cultural assumptions in the setting of Polish and Ukrainian national cultures was created. The obtained results indicate that the organizational culture of a company operating in the environment of Polish national culture was characterized by higher than in the case of a company operating in the environment of Ukrainian national culture level of individualism, while lower levels of power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity.

The tests verifying the first three research hypotheses allowed to define the profiles of organizational culture of the analysed companies.

Another research objective, referring to the hypothesis (4), was to identify differences in management in the two companies, which results from the unique culture of the environments they operate in. Qualitative methods were used to find an answer to the question: What is the relation between the way the company is managed and the specific features of national culture (Polish and Ukrainian)? An analysis of the internal documents text of companies, aimed at obtaining information on recruiting, training, evaluating, rewarding employees, expectations related to the implementation of the mission and vision, and content analysis of standardized unstructured interviews (in-

depth) with managers of both companies, were conducted. In order to identify differences in the management of companies, cultural dimensions reflecting the basic assumptions were used. It was found that in the management of the researched subjects in relation to the dimensions: power distance, masculinity-femininity, and uncertainty avoidance cultural factors are considered. However, in the dimension of individualism-collectivism in the management of Litpol-Ukraine a divergence with national culture was observed. Thus, the fourth specific hypothesis as a whole has been positively verified in relation to Malow company, while in the case of Litpol-Ukraine it has been positively verified in relation to three of the four cultural dimensions.

The positively verified specific hypotheses assuming that the impact of national culture on organizational culture is reflected at the level of artefacts (1), the system of values (2), and in the basic cultural assumptions (3) of organizational cultures of both researched subjects and the positive verification of the hypothesis (4) related to the specific features of national cultures (Polish and Ukrainian) being identified in the management of Malow and Litpol-Ukraine companies allowed to confirm the general hypothesis, which assumes that the specific features of national culture show at all of the levels of organizational culture and influence the management.

The dissertation combines two research strands: theoretical and empirical, which is reflected in the layout and content of the work, and consists of three parts supplemented by a research annex and attachments. In the first part the theoretical context of the work is shown. Knowledge drawn from Polish and foreign literature was used to this end. In the second part the matter of own research and methodological assumptions are presented. In the third part the results of own research are presented and the conclusions drawn.

The first part of the work contains four chapters. In the first chapter the genesis and development of the cultural current in management is shown and paradigms, definitions, functions, conditions and classifications of organizational cultures are presented. The second chapter introduces the diagnostic model of organizational culture. The interpretation of artefacts, referring to the classification of cultures by high and low context, is shown. The division of values, which underlies the axiological model of organizational culture, is discussed. The description of cultural dimensions related to the basic assumptions is focused upon. The third chapter presents the concept of culture and the concept of national culture, which become the theoretical basis for empirical research. The complexity of the relationship of national culture and

organizational culture is reflected upon. An overview of definitions and key concepts by Polish and foreign scholars allowed to establish the criteria by which a comparative characteristics of Polish and Ukrainian cultures can be made. The fourth chapter presents the integrated model of organizational culture based on three concepts of culture, understood as: an independent variable, a dependent variable, and an indigenous metaphor. In it, organizational culture appears as the dependent variable, which is affected on the one hand by national culture, on the other - different parts of the organization, and as an autonomous entity. This work includes the research of organizational culture understood as a variable dependent of national culture, while not denying the influence of other factors. The issue of the role of organizational culture in management is also discussed.

The second part of the work consists of two chapters. The first chapter presents the history of the organizational culture study as well as research methods used hitherto. Much attention was paid to methodological dispute associated with the use of different research methods in one project. Deliberations on the issue of integration of paradigms are conducted. The methods allowing the in-depth examination of organizational culture are discussed. The focus is laid on case study, as it is believed to allow to precisely reach each level of organizational culture: the artefacts, values and basic assumptions. The next chapter focuses on the presentation of the research problem, research objectives, hypotheses, variables and indicators. The research tools and investigated entities are characterized. A model for the study of organizational culture, enabling to capture its complexity, is presented. The appropriate research techniques were chosen for each level of the organizational culture structure. This allowed to show the relationship between national culture and organizational culture.

The third part also contains two chapters. The first chapter presents directions of quantitative and qualitative analyses. Then, the results of own research are presented. In the next stage the directions of qualitative analysis is focused upon, and the analysis of companies' documents and content of interviews with senior management of both researched entities is carried out. The described research steps served to identify differences in the management of the companies, resulting from the unique culture of the environment in which they operate.

In the final part of the work generalizing statements and the conclusions resulting from theoretical consideration.