Beyond Disorder & Maintenance: A Triadic Model of Cultural Entropy, Negentropy, & Syntropy

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Abstract: Organizational culture is often depicted as a system vulnerable to entropy—a gradual drift toward disorder and incoherence. While existing models emphasize negentropic interventions to restore order, they often overlook the force that drives systems toward higher-order harmony and aspirational growth. This theoretical paper advances the conversation on organizational culture by introducing syntropy as a distinct and measurable force, providing a more complete and optimistic model than the traditional entropy-negentropy dyad. This paper positions this model within the organizational development debate of emergent versus managed change, arguing that effective cultural stewardship requires both. This analysis defines syntropy as a measurable construct representing a culture's capacity for purposeful self-organization and coherent growth, consequently distinguishing it from negentropy's focus on structural repair. Through a proposed mixed-methods research design, including a qualitative case vignette and plans for quantitative scale validation, these constructs are prepared to be operationalized. The paper's primary contribution is twofold: 1) it offers a novel theoretical lens that clarifies syntropy's role in fostering innovation and cultural coherence, and 2) it provides a practical framework, including a diagnostic "Syntropy Audit" and an intervention roadmap, for leaders and their organizations to move beyond mere cultural maintenance toward intentional, transformative design.

Keywords: entropy, negentropy, syntropy

Introduction

In an era of perpetual disruption, the sustainability of an organization's culture is a primary concern for both scholars and practitioners (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). The prevailing metaphor for cultural decay is entropy, a concept borrowed from thermodynamics describing the inevitable tendency of a closed system to move from order to disorder (Jia & Wang, 2024). In organizations, this manifests as strategic drift, employee disengagement, and the erosion of shared values. The conventional antidote is negentropy, the input of energy to restore order and counteract decay (Carr-Chellman et al., 2020).

However, this dyadic model of entropy-negentropy presents a Sisyphean view of cultural management: an endless battle to rebuild what is destined to crumble. It sufficiently explains how to maintain a system but fails to account for how organizations can evolve, innovate, and achieve a state of dynamic, purposeful harmony. This paper argues for the inclusion of a third, critical force: syntropy – the force that creates. Syntropy is the emergence and manifestation of latent potential, often witnessed in the form of tangible improvement and innovation. A principle originally proposed by Luigi Fantappiè (1942) as the inherent drive of living systems toward organization, syntropy has been more recently applied in organizational contexts to foster design coherence and collective intelligence (Freeman, 2023). By defining syntropy as a system's capacity for coherent growth, this model offers a perspective analogous to concepts like organizational flourishing by focusing on the underlying generative force rather than the resulting positive state. This paper makes the case that syntropy is that force, one that manages the cultural 'gestalt' to facilitate, rather than impede, the emergence of a thriving workplace.

By integrating negentropy as the structured energy for renewal and syntropy as the directional force for growth and harmony, unprecedented potential can be unlocked through enriching the entropy/ negentropy dichotomy that insists on merely restoring and maintaining culture. Synthesizing insights from Schein's culture model, Hatch's cultural dynamics, the Organizational Culture Transformation Model (OCTM), and Jia and Wang's (2024) entropy-based proactive control model, this paper yields practical tools for fostering workplace resilience and ascendent change.
Entropy, originating in thermodynamics (Jia & Wang, 2024), describes the natural tendency of any

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system to move toward chaos and disorganization if left unchecked. In the workplace, entropy manifests as disengagement, unclear roles, dwindling productivity, or the gradual erosion of shared values. Imagine a project team where deadlines are missed due to lack of communication, or where employees feel rudderless because they don't understand their objectives—these are signs of cultural entropy creeping in.

Negentropy, or negative entropy, represents the structured effort to reverse or mitigate this drift toward disorder. It's the energy that restores order, encourages alignment, and renews purpose. In organizational settings, negentropy can take the form of clear goal-setting, effective communication, or leadership initiatives that rebuild trust and engagement. For instance, when a struggling team realigns its roles and expectations, executes work efficiently and to standard, supported by regular feedback, it reclaims coherence and begins to function effectively again (Jia & Wang, 2024).
While negentropy counteracts disorder, syntropy strives for the next level. It is the creative, forward-moving force that drives systems toward harmony and collective flourishing. Said differently, cultural syntropy facilitates elevated levels of performance and behavior in the workplace, whether that be externally through elevating product and service quality, or internal facing benefits such as elevating the employee experience. In workplaces, syntropy is evident in environments where adaptability thrives, where cultural values are integrated with organizational goals, and where personnel feel capable to contribute their best work (Hatch, 1993; Jia & Wang, 2024). Consider a company that not only solves its internal conflicts but also implements practices that foster collaboration and creative problem-solving and generativity—this is syntropy in action. Table 1 illustrates the model.

Table 1

Entropy, Negentropy, Syntropy Triadic Model

Category	Definition	Workplace Examples
Entropy	Gradual disintegration of order and coherence within an organization, leading to decreased performance and clarity.	Missed deadlines due to unclear communication. Decline in team collaboration as silos develop across departments. Erosion of core values resulting in ambiguous role expectations and diminished accountability.
Negentropy	The deliberate process of restoring order by implementing corrective actions and reinforcing structures to reverse disorder and promote stability.	Re-establishing clear job roles and responsibilities to foster better coordination. Instituting regular communication channels and feedback loops to re-align team efforts. Standardizing work processes to enhance consistency and operational efficiency.
Syntropy	The strategic, transformative effort to elevate the organization into an innovative and thriving state, creating a purposeful and dynamic system.	Launching cross-functional innovation initiatives that realign teams with a unified company vision. Developing comprehensive training and leadership programs to drive continuous improvement and adaptability. Reshaping strategic planning to integrate creative, future-focused approaches.

This research narrows its focus to a core question: How does the interplay of entropy, negentropy, and syntropy explain the dynamics of cultural decay and renewal, and how can leaders strategically

intervene to foster not just stability, but coherent, innovative growth?

To investigate this, this paper offers a triadic model that positions organizational culture as a semi-closed energy system, meaning it is influenced by both internal and external forces. This paper will demonstrate how this model resolves tensions in existing literature, particularly the debate between culture as an emergent phenomenon (Hatch, 1993) and a managed system (Schein, 2010). This framework suggests that effective organizations navigate both—using negentropic interventions to manage stability and syntropic interventions to guide emergence. The unique contribution of this paper is the operationalization of syntropy as a measurable organizational capacity that predicts key outcomes like adaptability and identity coherence, moving it from a philosophical concept to a practical tool for organizational development.

Theoretical Framework & Hypotheses

Organizational Culture & Dynamic Instability

To better understand the interplay between entropy, negentropy, and syntropy within organizational culture, it is helpful to contrast three key theoretical approaches: Schein's layered model, Hatch's dynamic cultural exchange model, and the entropy-based frameworks. Schein (2010) identifies organizational culture as layered across artifacts, values, and underlying assumptions. Hatch (1993) enhances this view by emphasizing the dynamic exchange across levels—symbolization, manifestation, interpretation, and realization—as indicators of both coherence and erosion. In cases of maladaptation, these processes can enable inertia or erosion when misalignments go unnoticed, generating cultural entropy (Hatch & Schultz, 2015).

Entropy, in thermodynamic terms, describes a system's tendency to become disordered unless acted upon by an external force (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). Organizational systems are similarly vulnerable, particularly when operating in a closed-loop without fresh energy in the form of ongoing workplace culture reinforcers such as trust, vision, or competence renewal (Freeman, 2023). Negentropy serves as the external input for realignment.

Meanwhile, syntropy introduces a complementary dimension: the intrinsic motivation for convergence toward growth and harmony. Jia and Wang (2024) observe that negentropy is critical for offsetting decay, yet such an orientation does not account for the inherent desire and need for growth and progress. Organizations do not exist merely to keep things from falling apart, although that is sometimes the best that can be done against formidable opposing forces. Instead, workplaces endeavor to strive and thrive. Syntropy offers the aspirational direction that sustains progress and coherence over time, while seeking to ascend the current state into a future state that is more desirable than the present. Rather than a mere negentropic approach that seeks to maintain, integrating the force of syntropy enables renewal through open-system behaviors and intentional cognitive reframing that focuses aspirations on syntropic progress rather than negentropic maintenance. Correspondingly, OCTM favors structured behavior change, beginning with shared purpose and reinforcing clarity through communication and expectations (Latting et al., 2009). Hatch's model, by contrast, illustrates change as interpretive and self-reinforcing. Jia and Wang reconcile both: entropy emerges naturally, but negentropy require deliberate control of energy dynamics. Table 2 compares the approaches.

Table 2

Comparison of Approaches

Aspect	Schein's model	Hatch's model	Entropy-based framework
Focus	Artifacts, values, and assumptions as foundational layers of culture.	Dynamic interplay between symbolization, manifestation, interpretation, and realization.	Energy dynamics regulating entropy to balance decay (negentropy) and growth (syntropy).

Aspect	Schein's model	Hatch's model	Entropy-based framework
Change mechanism	Change occurs through deep alignment with underlying cultural assumptions.	Change is interpretive, emergent, and self-reinforcing.	Deliberate interventions to channel entropy into regenerative and progressive pathways.
Intervention	Diagnose and address cultural assumptions: Deep dialogue, reflecting on the practice of core values.	Promote reflective dialogue to challenge existing interpretations of cultures.	Reflexive-adaptive practices such as after-action reviews, fishbone diagram, or five whys.
Outcome	Cultural stability and cohesion.	Adaptive exchange maintaining coherence or revealing erosion.	Long-term sustainability through negentropy; aspirational growth through syntropy.

Another comparable body of knowledge worth including comes from the field of positive psychology. While concepts like flourishing describe a desired organizational state, they are best understood as the outcome of a healthy system. Syntropy, by contrast, is concerned with the gestalt of that system—the contextual and intervening conditions that must be managed to facilitate such outcomes. Said differently, syntropy is the active force that addresses systemic factors to clear the path for, rather than impede, constructive collaboration and collective wellbeing. From this perspective, cultural syntropy is not merely an abstraction of consciousness; it is the practical work of shaping the organizational environment to foster perceptions of safety, purpose, and connection, thereby creating the conditions for individual wellbeing and collective flourishing. This multi-level effect is supported by foundational research in affective neuroscience. Panksepp's (1998) widely-regarded emotional models posit that consciousness and its requisite wellbeing are outcomes of an individual's perceptual attributions of their environment. Given that an individual's state –such as their engagement and morale– is dependent on their perception of their surroundings, the organization's culture, defined by factors like psychological safety and trust, becomes a primary driver of those perceptions.

Workplace Entropy and Cultural Decay

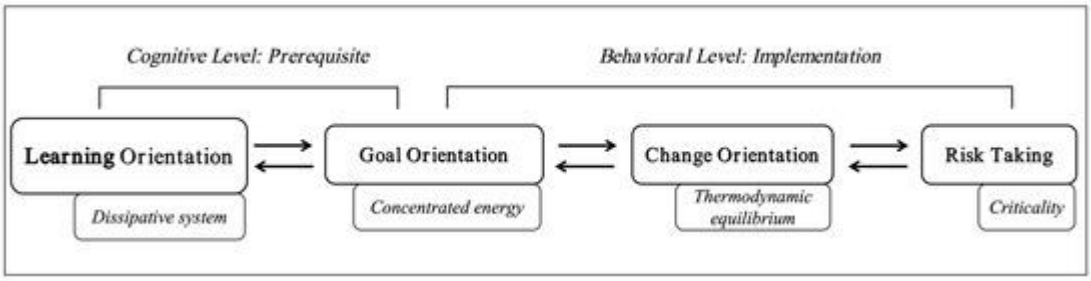
Cultural entropy emerges in environments where engagement diminishes, values diverge from behavior, and personnel –namely leadership– fails to renew meaning systems (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). This dissipation reduces adaptation and progress, while reinforcing protective rigidity (Pulakos et al., 2000). Jia and Wang (2024) expand on this by offering entropy as both a metaphor and a measurable construct in organizational psychology. Their psychological entropy model views individuals as dissipative systems capable of self-organization and entropy control (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1

Correlation Variables of Psychosocial Entropy (Jia & Wang, 2024)

Figure 2

Dynamic Mechanism of Entropy-Based Proactive Control Model (Jia & Wang, 2024)



Negentropy, Syntropy, and Cultural Renewal

Within the past five years, several notable scholar-practitioners have come forth with actionable strategies for intervening on entropy within the workplace. Carr-Chellman et al. (2020) introduce energy-creating tools designed to revitalize systems by fostering coherence and psychological security. Freeman (2023) presents design coherence and symbolic alignment as cultural "charging stations." Principally, Jia and Wang (2024) galvanize these precepts through four orientations that enable proactive entropy and syntropy regulation:

Learning orientation supports open-system behavior and collective knowledge.

Goal orientation aligns energy toward common aims, while syntropy ensures that these goals facilitate unity and harmony.

Change orientation sustains productive disequilibrium, tempered by syntropic aspirations of long-term coherence.

Risk taking catalyzes emergence in critical states, guided by negentropic principles ensuring risks lead to constructive outcomes.

Toward Integration

Despite these promising models, the field is still pursuing integration. Few studies merge these systems with practical psychological tools contextualized for workplace applications. By framing syntropy as the counterforce to entropy and a parallel to negentropy, Jia and Wang's entropy-based proactive control model is better suited to provide a holistic bridge between interpretive and interventionist paradigms. Further, recent scholarship has made significant strides in applying

concepts like wellbeing, thriving, and flourishing beyond the individual to the team and organizational levels. These multi-level models rightly identify that a healthy organizational context is essential for achieving such positive states. However, these frameworks often define flourishing or thriving as a desirable outcome or a collection of positive organizational attributes. The triadic model proposed in this paper offers a complementary yet distinct perspective by focusing on the underlying energy dynamics of the cultural system itself. Drawing from thermodynamics, syntropy is not posited as the state of flourishing, but rather as the generative cultural force that makes flourishing possible. It seeks to explain the systemic capacity that enables the movement toward coherent growth, providing a model for how a culture can proactively organize itself to achieve states like wellbeing and sustained thriving.

The closest parallels to this paper's claims are found in discussions of positive psychology; Namely within praxis of synergy, thriving, or flourishing. These are generally treated as outcomes or conscious states measured by improvements in physiological wellbeing perceptions. To distinguish, this paper complementarily regards culture as a collective phenomenon, a directional, system-level force with its own specific mechanisms and interventions. Said differently, while concepts like flourishing are outcomes, syntropy is the directional force or system capacity that enables the processes toward those outcomes.

To conclude, this concept of a generative cultural force aligns with established research on Psychological Capital (PsyCap), which comprises the individual resources of hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism (Luthans et al., 2006). From this perspective, a syntropic culture is one that intentionally cultivates these individual psychological resources, transcending personal resilience into a collective, regenerative capacity.

An Integrated Model of Cultural Dynamics

This paper proposes that organizational culture operates as a semi-closed energy system, subject to three distinct forces. Table 3 integrates these forces into a dynamic process model.

Table 3

The Triadic Process Model of Cultural Dynamics

Stage	Trigger/driver	Intervention path	Key actions	Outcome
Stable culture	Preexisting coherence and shared assumptions	Proactive adaptation, avoiding stagnation	Elicit latent potential by facilitating innovation	A state of coherence, but with potential for inertia if not proactively managed
Entropy	Time & neglect; lack of fresh energy or reinforcement	Passive state	Passive state	A gradual drift toward disorder, manifesting strategic drift, disengagement, and erosion of shared values
Cultural decay	Accumulated entropy: Espoused values diverge from daily behaviors	Passive state	Passive state	Breakdown of shared meaning and purpose; energy dissipates into non-productivity

Stage	Trigger/driver	Intervention path	Key actions	Outcome
Negentropic intervention: restored stability	Cultural decay	Path 1: Negentropy	Implement corrective, control-directed actions: standardize work processes, clarify roles, reinforce communication channels	Restored order & stability; the system returns to previously known state of order, but may lack necessary adaptability
Syntropic intervention: thriving, adaptive culture	Cultural decay	Path 2: Syntropy	Align purpose, foster connection	Coherent growth & innovation → Thriving, adaptive culture that enables the organization to thrive

Cultural Entropy: The Inevitable Drift to Disorder

Cultural entropy is the degradation of shared meaning, coordination, and purpose. It is not chaos itself, but the process of becoming chaotic and producing negative effects at the psychological and physiological levels of analysis. In line with Jia and Wang (2024), we see psychological entropy at the individual level (e.g., role ambiguity, goal conflict) as the micro-foundation for macro-level cultural entropy. When symbols lose their meaning (Hatch, 1993) and espoused values diverge from daily behaviors, the system's energy dissipates into non-productive activities, such as inter-departmental friction, redundant work, and self-interested maneuvering.

Hypothesis 1: Higher levels of psychological entropy (measured as role conflict and goal ambiguity) will be positively correlated with indicators of cultural entropy (e.g., lower cross-functional collaboration, higher employee turnover intentions).

Negentropy: The Force of Restorative Order

Negentropic interventions are corrective, control-oriented actions designed to counteract entropy. They are essential for creating stability and predictability. These actions include clarifying job roles, standardizing workflows, reinforcing formal communication channels, and implementing performance management systems. While critical, negentropy is fundamentally conservative; its aim is to restore the system to a previously known state of order, not to create a new, more adaptive one.

Hypothesis 2: The implementation of negentropic practices (e.g., process standardization, role clarification) will moderate the relationship between psychological entropy and cultural entropy, weakening the positive correlation.

The Unique Contribution of Syntropy: Beyond Maintenance to Coherent Growth

Herein lies the central theoretical contribution of this paper's model. Syntropy is distinct from negentropy. If negentropy is about structure and control, syntropy is about coherence and ascendence. It is an incentivizing, generative force that aligns autonomous agents around a shared, aspirational purpose. While negentropy imposes order, syntropy cultivates emergent order. Its mechanisms are not rules and procedures, but shared vision, psychological appreciation, cross-functional collaboration, and dynamic work processes.

Syntropy explicitly addresses the "emergence" side of the culture debate. It creates the conditions for positive, self-organizing behaviors to flourish. This force is what enables an organization to do more than just survive; it empowers it to innovate, adapt, and build a resilient, coherent identity. Consequently, syntropy as such is a key driver of outcomes that require creativity and collective commitment.

Hypothesis 3a: Cultural syntropy (measured by shared purpose, psychological appreciation, and cross-functional connections) will be positively correlated with organizational innovation rates.

Hypothesis 3b: Cultural syntropy will be positively correlated with employees' sense of identity coherence and organizational commitment, even after controlling for negentropic factors.

Proposed Research Design & Methods

To test this model, this paper proposes a sequential mixed-methods research design. This approach allows for initial qualitative exploration and theory refinement, followed by large-scale quantitative testing and validation.

Phase 1: Qualitative Multiple-Case Study

Description

The first phase would involve in-depth case studies of 3-4 organizations undergoing cultural challenges. Using interviews, observation, and archival analysis, researchers would explore how leaders and employees experience and respond to the forces of entropy, negentropy, and syntropy. This phase aims to refine this paper's theoretical constructs and generate rich, illustrative data. After refinements borne from the pilot are implemented to corroborate validity and reliability of the research design, the sample size of organizations would be increased to a subset population of 12 organizations. Further research would include organizations of varying demographics and industries, developing into a large-scale study.

Mini Case Study Vignette: "Operation Phoenix" at Upward Inc.

Phase 1 involves the following vignette:

Upward Inc., a mid-sized footwear company, was suffering from severe cultural entropy. After a period of rapid growth, its once-vibrant, collaborative culture had fragmented. Departments degenerated and became fiefdoms, project deadlines were consistently missed, and employee morale plummeted. The initial response from leadership was purely negentropic: they hired consultants to standardize workflows, implemented rigid project management software, and clarified roles and responsibilities in detailed documents. Field notes from this period show employees feeling "micromanaged," and "boxed-in." While some operational chaos subsided, innovation ground to a halt.

Recognizing this, a new Vice President of People (VPP) initiated "Operation Phoenix," a syntropic intervention. The focus shifted from control to connection. The new VPP launched cross-functional Employee Resource Groups based on shared interests (e.g., total rewards, customer experience), giving them autonomy and a small budget. The VPP instituted weekly "demo days" where teams shared works-in-progress, celebrating learning from failures as much as successes. The VPP inculcated an overarching guiding principle through communications that consistently reinforced a shared purpose: "We are here to create footwear that empowers people to live." Field notes from this phase captured a remarkable shift in energy. A designer noted, "For the first time in years, I feel like I'm creating with people who care as much as I do, I'm not just handing off my best ideas to colleagues who don't care, people that I'll never interact with." The Employee Resource Groups began generating novel product ideas, and employee engagement scores saw a significant increase. Upward Inc. didn't abandon the negentropic structures, but it balanced them with syntropic energy, leading to both stability and renewed growth.

Phase 2: Quantitative Survey Study

Building on the qualitative insights, Phase 2 would involve a large-scale survey to test the hypotheses.

Participants

Aim for a sample of at least 500 employees from a diverse range of industries and organizational sizes, recruited via a platform like Prolific or Qualtrics Panels.

Procedure

A cross-sectional survey. To test the intervention model, a future longitudinal study could employ a pre-test/post-test design with a control group.

Measures

The survey would include established and newly developed scales. See Table 4 for a summary. The full proposed scales for Entropy, Negentropy, and Syntropy are available in the Appendix.

Scale Validation

The new scales for Entropy, Negentropy, and Syntropy would be validated using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to establish construct validity. Cronbach's alpha would be used to assess internal consistency reliability.

Table 4

Summary of Proposed Measures

Construct	Sample item/source
Psychological entropy	Adapted from Jia & Wang (2024), using subscales for Role Conflict (Rizzo et al., 1970) and Goal Ambiguity.
Cultural entropy	New scale item: "Projects frequently lose momentum because teams operate in silos without clear coordination" (see Appendix).
Negentropic practices	New scale item: "We use standardized workflows and tools to ensure consistency and reliability across teams" (see Appendix).
Syntropic culture	New scale item: "Our shared vision energizes teams to co-create innovative solutions that go beyond current expectations" (see Appendix).
Innovation rate	Self-report scale adapted from an established measure (e.g., "In the last year, my team has implemented many new ideas.").
Identity coherence	Adapted from established organizational identification scales (e.g., "I feel a strong sense of belonging to this organization.").

Proposed Data Analysis Plan

Hypothesis 1 and 3 would be tested using multiple regression analysis.

Hypothesis 2 (moderation) would be tested using moderated regression (e.g., with the PROCESS macro for SPSS).

A full Structural Equation Model (SEM) would be used to test the overall fit of the integrated model (Figure 1).

Practical Implications: A Framework for Intervention

This model is not just theoretical; it provides a practical framework for organizations.

The Syntropy Audit: A Diagnostic Tool

Leaders can use the scales in the Appendix as a "Syntropy Audit" to diagnose their culture's state. By scoring each area, they can identify whether the primary problem is dissipative entropy, a deficit of negentropic order, or a lack of syntropic direction. Table 5 characterizes the audit framework.

Table 5

The Syntropy Audit Framework

If your organization scores high on …	And low on …	You are likely in a state of …	Recommended action
Entropy	Negentropy & syntropy	Chaotic drift	Prioritize negentropic actions. Stabilize the system by clarifying roles and processes.
Negentropy	Entropy & syntropy	Rigid stagnation	Introduce syntropic initiatives. Foster cross-functional connection and align teams around an inspiring purpose.
Syntropy	Negentropy	Inspired anarchy	Implement negentropic structures to provide a stable foundation for creative energy to flourish without chaos.
All three		Dynamic equilibrium	Continuously monitor and adjust, balancing stabilizing and aspirational activities.

An Intervention Best Practice Roadmap

Effective cultural change requires careful sequencing. Acting out of sequence (e.g., attempting syntropic initiatives in a highly entropic system) can backfire. Table 6 outlines best practices for a differentiated, scaffolded approach to diagnosing and implementing interventions.

Analysis & Synthesis: Entropy, Negentropy, & Syntropy: The Cultural Energy System

Culture may be best viewed as a semi-closed energy system, meaning it is powered by both internal and external forces. For example, company values and social norms represent internal forces for culture. Meanwhile, external factors such as societal shifts, economic pressure, and evolving workforce trends also exert their force on the company.

Table 6

A Sequenced Intervention Scaffold

Phase	Focus	Interventions
Stabilize	Negentropic	Assess: Conduct the syntropy audit to identify key sources of entropy.
		Clarify: Redefine roles, responsibilities, and decision rights.
		Standardize: Implement clear, simple workflows for critical tasks.
		Communicate: Establish reliable channels for information flow.
Connect	Syntropic	Articulate purpose: Co-create a compelling direction (i.e., vision) that connects daily work to a larger aspiration.
		Foster psychological safety: Create forums where open dialogue and constructive dissent are encouraged and rewarded.
		Build bridges: Launch cross-functional projects and communities of practice to break down silos.
Elevate	Syntropic & negentropic balance	Empower: Grant teams autonomy within the clear boundaries established in Step 1.
		Celebrate: Recognize and amplify behaviors that embody both stability (reliability) and growth (innovation).
		Iterate: Continuously monitor cultural health and adapt the balance of interventions as needed.

Symbols and rituals circulate energy, but when they lose resonance, entropy builds. Renewal requires intentional re-energizing through coherent action, not just procedural clarity (Freeman, 2023). Psychological entropy enables this through internal alignment and meta-cognitive resilience—workplaces with high psychological entropy can sense and reframe disorder before it calcifies into decay (Jia & Wang, 2024). However, syntropy goes even further, ensuring that the work of restoration is not merely functional but transformative, fostering a culture that thrives by deliberate harmony and direction.

For instance, organizations with rigid routines and excessive procedural clarity stand to stifle innovation which can lead to disengagement (cultural entropy). Over time, personnel can become disenfranchised from the organization's purpose and avoid taking risks, resulting in stagnation. To counter this, initiating cross-departmental innovation practices, such as those depicted in the earlier-featured vignette, can be designed to serve as a syntropic attractor. By encouraging open dialogue, collaboration, and creative problem-solving, effectively re-aligning collective energy toward shared goals, engagement and innovation can flourish in unprecedented ways. By integrating negentropic processes such as structured brainstorming sessions with syntropic principles of fostering harmony and innovation, organizations can not only mitigate entropy but also revivify its culture with a renewed sense of purpose.

Conclusions & Future Research

This paper makes several key contributions. Theoretically, it advances the conversation on organizational culture by introducing syntropy as a distinct and measurable force, providing a more

complete and optimistic model than the traditional entropy-negentropy dyad. It helps resolve the tension between managed and emergent views of culture by arguing that both are necessary and can be addressed through different yet complementary interventions.

Practically, the triadic model offers leaders a more nuanced diagnostic lens and a more strategic intervention roadmap. By distinguishing between the need for stability (negentropy) and the need for growth (syntropy), leaders can avoid the common trappings of either creating a stifling bureaucracy or allowing creative energy to devolve into chaos.

Limitations and Future Directions

This paper outlines a proposed study; its primary limitation is the lack of empirical data. The proposed research design has limitations of its own, including potential common-method variance in the survey and the limited generalizability of a small-N case study. Moreover, the boundary conditions of this study call for investigating across multiple industries to measure for consilience between the triadic model and different workplace settings. For instance, in highly regulated, safety-critical industries (e.g., nuclear power, aviation), a heavy emphasis on negentropic control will likely be revealed as paramount. Conversely, in creative or high-growth industries (e.g., tech startups, design firms), cultivating syntropy may be revealed as the primary driver of success. Future research should conduct the longitudinal study outlined, test the model across different industries, include businesses at distinct stages of their lifecycle, and explore the specific workplace behaviors that are most effective at fostering syntropy. Further, future research should develop more complex instruments in measuring syntropy as a distinct construct—beyond its perceptual framing—as a psychological and systemic force. Operationalizing syntropy may involve developing comprehensive assessment tools that gauge a culture's directional coherence, ascendant purpose, and regenerative capability. In tandem, empirical studies can examine how syntropic alignment influences outcomes like operational alignment, innovation, and identity coherence across diverse organizational contexts. Another promising prospect lies in exploring workplace behaviors and cultural rituals that function as syntropic attractors, thus identifying and leveraging patterns of meaning-making that not only counter entropy but generate shared cultural capital. Longitudinal case studies could investigate how specific interventions (e.g., trust-building dialogues, symbolic realignment, narrative reframing) modulate entropy levels over time and whether syntropic momentum can be cultivated intentionally. The integration of Jia and Wang's (2024) proactive control model reveals how learning, goal, change, and risk orientations can be psychocultural levers for navigating instability while fostering creative emergence.

In conclusion, this theoretical reframing of culture as a living energy system—one that not only decays but also possesses an innate drive toward coherent growth—opens new possibilities. The challenge for 21st-century organizations is not merely to resist entropy but to cultivate syntropy, thereby building cultures that are not merely resilient, but regenerative, purposeful, and profoundly adaptive. Principally, this paper seeks to advance the conversation on organizational culture by introducing syntropy as a distinct and measurable force, providing a more complete and optimistic model than the traditional entropy-negentropy dyad. It helps resolve the tension between managed and emergent views of culture. Crucially, by distinguishing this generative force from outcome-based states like flourishing, it provides a new lens for understanding how resilient and adaptive cultures develop.

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Appendix
Triadic Model Scales

Instructions

Please rate each statement on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Below are three 6-item scales to assess Syntropy, Negentropy, and Entropy, each tied to Schein's culture layers and Hatch's cultural processes.

Syntropy Scale

Item	Survey Statement	Schein Layer	Hatch Process
1	Our shared vision energizes teams to co-create innovative solutions that go beyond current expectations.	Values	Manifestation
2	Employees routinely reach across departments to spark new ideas and build on each other's expertise.	Artifacts	Symbolization
3	Leadership frames change as an opportunity for collective progress and invites diverse perspectives to shape our future.	Assumptions	Interpretation
4	Individuals take initiative to form informal networks that drive breakthrough projects.	Artifacts	Realization

5	Decision-making processes encourage experimentation and align innovative approaches with our long-term goals.	Values	Manifestation
6	We celebrate success stories as milestones toward a larger, shared aspiration for growth and unity.	Artifacts/Values	Symbolization

Negentropy Scale

Item	Survey Statement	Schein Layer	Hatch Process
1	Strategic objectives are clearly defined, regularly communicated, and linked to daily work processes.	Artifacts	Symbolization
2	We use standardized workflows and tools to ensure consistency and reliability across teams.	Artifacts	Manifestation
3	Regular review meetings help us detect misalignment early and implement corrective actions without delay.	Values	Interpretation
4	Role expectations and responsibilities are documented, revisited, and adjusted to prevent confusion.	Assumptions	Interpretation
5	Transparent performance metrics enable swift realignment when targets are missed.	Values	Manifestation
6	Formal feedback channels exist to restore cohesion and keep everyone moving in the same direction.	Artifacts/Values	Realization

Entropy Scale

Item	Survey Statement	Schein Layer	Hatch Process
1	Conflicting messages or missing information often leaves us unsure about our top priorities.	Underlying Assumptions	Interpretation
2	Projects frequently lose momentum because teams operate in silos without clear coordination.	Values	Manifestation
3	Unplanned disruptions (e.g., sudden scope changes) regularly derail our progress without timely resolution.	Artifacts	Realization
4	Our stated values feel disconnected from everyday practices, causing uncertainty about “how we do things.”	Values	Manifestation
5	Tasks are sometimes duplicated or overlooked because roles and responsibilities aren’t clear.	Artifacts	Symbolization
6	People hesitate to propose innovative ideas or surface issues when they sense a lack of structure or support.	Underlying Assumptions	Interpretation