

Quantification and Qualification of Belief

A mixed-methods framework for measuring founder-led
enterprise

Matthew Graham

Foundership Institute

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matt@thefoundership.org

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Quantification AND Qualification of Belief

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Abstract

This paper specifies the methodological position of the Foundership Institute's Vase instrument as an explicitly **mixed-methods** framework for measuring belief in founder-led enterprise. The Vase performs two distinct, simultaneous operations on the same underlying belief state: **quantification** (producing numerical scores on four metrics — L1 belief continuity, L2 maintenance energy, L3 realized value, and Virtue) and **qualification** (assigning the enterprise to one of four canonical modes — Intact, Founder's Gap, Restored, Belief Performance). The signed Founder's Gap value — the difference between L1 and L3 — operates as the bridge between the two operations: the numerical delta determines the categorical mode. Drawing on Creswell's (2014) mixed-methods research designs, the SAGE Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010), Johnson and Onwuegbuzie's (2004) paradigm-positioning paper, Bridgman's (1927) foundational work on operational definitions, and the grounded-theory tradition (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2006), the paper positions Foundership as a contribution to the third methodological movement in social research. The leadership canon's existing organizational culture instruments — Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2001), the Denison Organizational Culture Survey (Denison, 1990; Denison & Mishra, 1995), and the Cameron and Quinn Competing Values Framework (Cameron & Quinn, 2011) — are quantification-only frameworks. Schein's (1985, 2017) three-level model is qualification-only. The principal leadership-thinking frameworks (Sinek, 2009; Kotter, 1996; Drucker, 1954) are neither. Foundership integrates both operations in one instrument. The paper specifies operational definitions, the bridge mechanism, and the empirical validation program for both sides of the mixed-methods position.

1. Introduction: Two operations on belief

When the Vase instrument is run on a founder-led enterprise, two distinct outputs emerge from a single analysis. The first is a set of numbers: L1 = 89, L2 = 91, L3 = 77, Virtue = 85, Founder's Gap = -12. The second is a category assignment: *Intact, with mispriced-believer-private signature*. The first answers the question *how strong is the structural state on each metric?* The second answers the question *what kind of state is the enterprise in?*

These are different operations. The numbers permit comparison across enterprises, trend analysis across time, and quantitative testing. The category permits diagnosis, strategic intervention selection, and qualitative interpretation. Both are useful. Neither alone is sufficient.

The leadership canon has a habit of providing one or the other but not both. Hofstede's cultural dimensions produces numbers but no canonical mode classification

(Hofstede, 2001). The Denison Organizational Culture Survey produces benchmarked numerical traits across four dimensions but no integrated categorical state (Denison, 1990). The Cameron and Quinn Competing Values Framework produces a quadrant assignment via the OCAI instrument but without the kind of structural-mode reading the Foundership Vase produces (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Schein's three-level model of organizational culture (Schein, 1985, 2017) names the levels qualitatively but provides no measurement instrument at all. Sinek's *Start With Why* (2009), Kotter's *Leading Change* (1996), Drucker's *Practice of Management* (1954), Mintzberg (1973), Senge (1990), Lencioni (2002), and Gulati (2022) offer no measurement instruments of any kind.

This paper specifies the Foundership Institute's methodological position: the Vase performs both quantification *and* qualification in a single integrated instrument, with the Founder's Gap as the bridge. The framework is explicitly mixed-methods in the established social-science sense of the term, and it claims this integration as a distinct methodological contribution to the founder-led enterprise literature.

2. Premise

The Foundership Institute has been operating on the claim that founding belief in a founder-led enterprise is a maintenance-dependent structural asset measurable through a four-metric instrument (the Vase). Two companion papers extend the framework by specifying architectural infrastructure as a fourth source of belief maintenance (Graham, 2026b) and storefront signage as a publicly readable structural diagnostic (Graham, 2026c). The present paper specifies the methodological position underneath all three: the Vase performs both quantification and qualification, simultaneously, on a single underlying belief state.

The claim of this paper:

The Foundership Vase is a mixed-methods instrument. It produces both numerical scores (quantification) and categorical mode classification (qualification) on the same underlying belief structure. The signed Founder's Gap is the bridge between the two operations: the numerical delta drives the categorical mode assignment. This integrated mixed-methods position is methodologically distinct from the existing measurement instruments in the organizational culture and leadership literature and constitutes a specific contribution to the third methodological movement in social science research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

3. The two operations specified

3.1 Quantification

The Vase quantifies belief states in founder-led enterprise on four metrics, each operationalized for measurement against a defined corpus or observational dataset:

- **L1 (belief continuity)** — the stability of founding belief language across time, measured through anchor-term recurrence across time-stamped corpus epochs.

- **L2 (maintenance energy)** — the active operational practice of belief maintenance, measured through indicators of operational repetition (broadcast frequency, in-person presence, succession ritual evidence).
- **L3 (realized value)** — the commercial scale the enterprise has realized, normalized against theoretical carrying capacity for the belief structure.
- **Virtue** — the alignment of organizational action with founding belief across the operating arc, measured through action-corpus consistency.

Each metric produces a score on a 0-100 scale. Scores permit comparison across enterprises and across time. The numerical outputs are reproducible: another researcher running the same protocol against the same data should arrive at scores within a defined tolerance.

The Vase’s quantification position rests on the philosophical tradition of operationalism articulated by Bridgman (1927) in *The Logic of Modern Physics*. Bridgman’s central claim — that abstract concepts must be defined through the operations used to measure them, lest they remain methodologically unaccountable — is the foundation under any defensible measurement instrument in social science. The Foundership Vase’s operational definitions for L1, L2, L3, and Virtue meet Bridgman’s criterion: each construct is specified through the procedure used to measure it.

3.2 Qualification

The Vase simultaneously qualifies the same underlying belief state into one of four canonical categorical modes:

- **Intact** — high L1, high L2, high or moderate L3, high Virtue; founding belief is being actively maintained and the enterprise is operating coherently against it.
- **Founder’s Gap** — the signed delta between L1 and L3 has reached a magnitude indicating structural divergence between belief and realized value. Positive Founder’s Gap ($L3 > L1$) indicates valuation outrunning belief — the pre-collapse signature characteristic of Kodak, Sears, Blockbuster. Negative Founder’s Gap ($L1 > L3$) indicates belief outrunning valuation — the mispriced-believer signature characteristic of BRCC, Patagonia, MKC, and (per Graham, 2026d, in preparation) the Ramsey enterprise.
- **Restored** — the enterprise has previously experienced a Founder’s Gap collapse and a documented L1 restoration arc, observable through corpus discontinuity followed by realignment.
- **Belief Performance** — a sustained operational state of belief carrying capacity that exceeds realized value, observed across multiple measurement windows without the volatility characteristic of the Founder’s Gap mode.

Category assignment is the qualitative output. It permits diagnosis, intervention selection, and the kind of structural-mode reading that quantitative output alone does not.

The Vase’s qualification position draws on the grounded-theory tradition. Glaser and Strauss (1967) established that categorical frameworks for social phenomena should emerge from systematic engagement with empirical data rather than be imposed a priori. Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Charmaz (2006) extended this through pro-

cedural specifications for systematic qualitative analysis. The Vase's four canonical modes were developed through engagement with the 509-firm corpus library underlying the framework's calibration work; the modes emerged from the data, not from a priori classification. The qualification position is methodologically grounded.

3.3 The Founder's Gap as bridge

The signed numerical Founder's Gap value ($L1 - L3$ normalized) determines the categorical mode assignment per the following rules:

- $L1 \geq 70$ AND $L3 \geq 60$ AND $|L1 - L3| < 10 \rightarrow$ **Intact**
- $L3 - L1 \geq 15$ AND $L1$ in declining trend \rightarrow **Founder's Gap (pre-collapse)**
- $L1 - L3 \geq 10 \rightarrow$ **Belief Performance** or **mispriced believer** (sub-category depending on enterprise type)
- Documented $L1$ trajectory showing collapse followed by recovery to $L1 \geq 70 \rightarrow$ **Restored**

These rules are first-pass operationalization. The empirical validation program in Section 7 specifies how the threshold values would be calibrated against the 509-firm library and tested against new enterprise readings.

The bridge is the methodological mechanism that integrates the two operations. Without it, the Vase would produce numbers and categories that did not relate to each other. With it, the numbers determine the categories deterministically (under calibrated thresholds), and the categories provide the structural reading that operators and researchers actually need for decision-making.

4. Adjacent methodological literatures

A defensible claim that Foundership is a mixed-methods framework requires engagement with the mixed-methods research literature.

4.1 Mixed methods as the third methodological movement

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) positioned mixed methods research as "the third methodological movement" in social and behavioral research, following the quantitative tradition and the qualitative tradition. Their core argument was that mixed-methods research is the natural complement to traditional qualitative and quantitative approaches, that pragmatism offers an attractive philosophical foundation for it, and that mixed-methods designs follow specifiable procedures rather than constituting a loose eclecticism.

Creswell (2014) provided the now-canonical procedural specification of mixed-methods research designs, identifying convergent design (collecting both quantitative and qualitative data in parallel), sequential explanatory design (quantitative followed by qualitative for interpretation), and sequential exploratory design (qualitative followed by quantitative for measurement). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) had previously specified that a mixed-methods study requires at least two methodological components, one qualitative and one quantitative, each with its own research questions, designs, and data-analytic techniques.

Tashakkori and Teddlie's (2010) *SAGE Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research* provided the field-defining synthesis. The handbook positioned mixed methods as a coherent third movement with its own philosophical foundations, methodological standards, and applications across disciplines.

The Foundership Vase fits the Creswell convergent design pattern: quantification and qualification operations are performed in parallel on the same underlying data, with the integration occurring at the analysis stage via the Founder's Gap bridge mechanism. The instrument is one specific implementation of the convergent design pattern applied to founder-led enterprise belief.

4.2 Operationalism and the measurement foundation

Bridgman's (1927) *The Logic of Modern Physics* established operationalism as the philosophical foundation for measurement in modern science. Bridgman's central claim — that the meaning of a concept is the set of operations used to measure it — was widely adopted in social science research throughout the 1930s and 1940s and remains foundational for any defensible measurement instrument. Operational definitions are required for measurement to be reproducible; without operational specification, instruments produce numbers but those numbers cannot be interpreted by other researchers.

The Foundership Vase's L1, L2, L3, and Virtue constructs are operationally defined per Bridgman's criterion. Each metric is specified through the procedure used to produce its score against a defined data source. The operational definitions for vessel-Vase metrics (Graham, 2026b) and for storefront-sign categorical typology (Graham, 2026c) follow the same operationalist criterion.

4.3 Grounded theory and the emergence of categorical modes

The grounded theory tradition originated with Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a methodology for generating theoretical categories from systematic engagement with empirical data rather than from a priori imposition. Strauss and Corbin (1990) specified procedural codifications for systematic data analysis; Charmaz (2006) extended the tradition into constructivist grounded theory acknowledging the researcher's interpretive role.

The Foundership Vase's four canonical modes (Intact, Founder's Gap, Restored, Belief Performance) were developed through systematic engagement with the 509-firm corpus library underlying the framework's calibration work. The modes were not imposed a priori on the data; they emerged from patterns observable in the corpus across enterprises with documented structural histories. The grounded theory tradition is the relevant methodological lineage for the qualification operation.

4.4 The pragmatist philosophical foundation

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) and Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) both position pragmatism as the natural philosophical foundation for mixed-methods research. Pragmatism — drawn from Dewey, James, and Peirce — privileges methodological

choices that work to answer the question at hand rather than committing in advance to qualitative or quantitative purity for philosophical reasons. The Foundership framework is pragmatist in this sense: the choice to integrate quantification and qualification reflects the structure of belief-state measurement in founder-led enterprise, not a prior methodological commitment.

5. Predecessor measurement frameworks and the integration gap

The leadership-thinking canon and the organizational-culture measurement canon have produced several recognized instruments. None of them integrates quantification and qualification as the Vase does.

5.1 Quantification-only instruments

Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1980, 2001) emerged from the analysis of more than 116,000 IBM employee questionnaires across more than 70 countries between 1967 and 1973. The framework produces numerical scores on six cultural dimensions (Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-Term Orientation, Indulgence). The measurement instrument is the Values Survey Module, most recently updated as VSM 2013. The framework is fundamentally quantification-oriented; it does not produce a canonical categorical state assignment in the way the Vase does. Critics have raised concerns about the internal consistency of the VSM scales (Bond, 2002; Beugelsdijk et al., 2015), but the framework remains widely cited and influential.

The Denison Organizational Culture Survey (DOCS; Denison, 1990; Denison & Mishra, 1995) measures organizational culture across four traits (Involvement, Consistency, Adaptability, Mission), each subdivided into three indices, for twelve total dimensions. The 48-item survey produces benchmarked numerical scores against a database of more than 1,100 organizations. The DOCS provides quantification at high resolution but does not produce an integrated structural mode classification.

The Cameron and Quinn Competing Values Framework (Cameron & Quinn, 2011) operationalizes a four-quadrant culture typology (Clan, Adhocracy, Hierarchy, Market) through the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI). The OCAI is the closest predecessor to the Vase's integrated approach: it produces both numerical scores AND a categorical type (dominant culture quadrant). However, the Competing Values Framework is positioned as a culture-type framework, not as a structural-state framework, and its four types are descriptive categories (kinds of cultures) rather than structural modes (states a single enterprise can be in). The Vase's four modes are structural states a single founder-led enterprise occupies at a moment in time, transitions between, and can be diagnosed against.

5.2 Qualification-only frameworks

Schein's three-level model of organizational culture (Schein, 1985, 2017) is the canonical qualification framework in the field. Schein's iceberg model identifies three qualitatively distinct levels — artifacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions — but provides no measurement instrument. Schein's contribution is

foundational for qualitative organizational culture research but offers no quantification mechanism. The Foundership Vase's qualification operation extends Schein's qualitative-classification tradition by adding the measurement instrument the tradition has lacked.

5.3 Frameworks providing neither

The principal leadership-thinking frameworks — Sinek (2009), Kotter (1996), Drucker (1954), Mintzberg (1973), Senge (1990), Lencioni (2002), Gulati (2022) — provide neither quantification nor qualification instruments. These frameworks operate at the level of conceptual articulation and practitioner prescription; they do not specify measurement procedures or categorical state assignments that another researcher could reproduce.

The integration gap the Vase fills is therefore substantial. Existing measurement instruments quantify or qualify but not both. Existing qualitative frameworks specify levels or principles but provide no measurement. The leadership-thinking frameworks operate without measurement entirely. The Vase is the first instrument in the founder-led enterprise space to integrate both operations in a single procedural specification.

6. The Foundership contribution

The Vase's methodological contribution can be specified across three dimensions:

(1) Integrated mixed-methods position. The Vase fits the Creswell convergent design pattern explicitly. Quantification and qualification operations are performed in parallel on the same underlying data; the Founder's Gap is the integration mechanism that joins them at the analysis stage. This is the third methodological movement (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010) applied to founder-led enterprise belief measurement.

(2) Bridge mechanism specification. The Founder's Gap is the bridge specifying how numerical metrics determine categorical modes. The bridge converts the question "what do these numbers mean?" into the question "what mode is this enterprise in?" and provides a deterministic mapping. The bridge mechanism is itself a methodological contribution: existing mixed-methods frameworks in social science research typically integrate quantitative and qualitative findings at the discussion stage of a research project rather than within a single instrument output. The Vase's bridge operates inside the instrument.

(3) Operationalist and grounded-theory dual foundation. The quantification operation rests on Bridgman's (1927) operationalism; the qualification operation rests on the grounded-theory tradition (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2006). The Vase is methodologically grounded in two foundational traditions of social-science research and is positioned for engagement with both quantitative and qualitative reviewers.

7. Empirical validation program

The mixed-methods position of the Vase implies a defined empirical validation program addressing both operations and the bridge.

7.1 Inter-rater reliability of quantification

Question: Do trained analysts produce consistent L1, L2, L3, and Virtue scores when running the Vase protocol against the same corpus?

Design: Inter-rater reliability study. Sample N = 30 enterprises with corpora of varying sizes. Three independent analysts produce Vase scores for each enterprise. Calculate intraclass correlation coefficient for each metric. Target reliability ≥ 0.85 .

7.2 Inter-rater reliability of qualification

Question: Do trained analysts produce consistent categorical mode assignments when applying the bridge mechanism to the same numerical outputs?

Design: Inter-rater reliability study. Given numerical outputs from Section 7.1, three independent analysts apply the bridge rules. Calculate Cohen's kappa for categorical agreement. Target kappa ≥ 0.80 .

7.3 Bridge calibration against the 509-firm library

Question: Do the bridge threshold values (specified at first-pass in Section 3.3) correctly classify enterprises with documented structural histories into their known modes?

Design: Retrospective validation. Sample N = 100 firms from the calibration library with documented structural histories (collapsed, restored, sustained Intact, sustained Belief Performance). Run the bridge rules. Calculate classification accuracy. Refine threshold values to maximize accuracy.

7.4 Predictive validity

Question: Do Vase readings at time T predict structural state changes at time T+24 months?

Design: Longitudinal cohort study. Sample N = 50 founder-led enterprises. Vase reading at baseline. Track structural changes (operator turnover, valuation collapse, mode transition) over 24 months. Test whether baseline numerical scores and categorical mode predict subsequent state changes.

7.5 Convergent validity with predecessor instruments

Question: Do Vase readings correlate appropriately with cognate measurements from predecessor instruments (Denison OCM, OCAI)?

Design: Concurrent measurement study. Sample N = 30 enterprises with both Vase readings and predecessor-instrument scores. Test correlations on cognate constructs (Vase L1 with Denison Consistency; Vase Virtue with Denison Mission). Identify divergent constructs as evidence that the Vase measures something distinct.

8. Scope notes and limitations

This paper specifies a methodological position. Specific limits:

- The bridge threshold values in Section 3.3 are first-pass operationalizations. The empirical validation program in Section 7 specifies the work required to calibrate them against the 509-firm library and refine through systematic testing.
- The Vase's quantification operation depends on the validity of the underlying L1 instrument, which has been calibrated against the 509-firm library composed primarily of public-company corpora. Extension to small-business contexts (per Graham, 2026b) requires parallel calibration against a small-business sample.
- The four canonical modes (Intact, Founder's Gap, Restored, Belief Performance) emerged from grounded-theory engagement with the calibration library. Additional modes may emerge from extended analysis. The framework is open to category refinement; the canonical four are the current operational set.
- Mixed-methods research as a methodological movement has been critiqued on philosophical grounds, with some scholars arguing that the underlying paradigm-bridging is more rhetorical than substantive (see Bryman, 2007, for a discussion). The Foundership Vase's position is that the integration is substantively performed inside the instrument via the bridge mechanism, not rhetorically through claims of paradigm reconciliation.
- The Vase's qualification operation, while grounded-theory-derived, does not currently employ the constructivist grounded-theory acknowledgment of the researcher's interpretive role (Charmaz, 2006) in its operational specification. This is a methodological refinement available for subsequent work.

9. Conclusion: A measurement instrument for belief

The Foundership Institute claims the methodological position of explicitly mixed-methods belief measurement in founder-led enterprise. The Vase instrument performs quantification and qualification on the same underlying belief state, with the Founder's Gap as the integration bridge. The framework rests on operationalism (Bridgman, 1927) for its quantification operation and on the grounded-theory tradition (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2006) for its qualification operation, integrated through the convergent design pattern specified in the mixed-methods literature (Creswell, 2014; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

The existing measurement instruments in the organizational-culture and leadership space are quantification-only (Hofstede, Denison, OCAI), qualification-only (Schein), or neither (Sinek, Kotter, Drucker, Mintzberg, Senge, Lencioni, Gulati). The Vase integrates both operations in a single instrument. The integration is the contribution.

The instrument is empirically validatable through the program specified in Section 7. The framework awaits this validation work for full establishment at peer-review level. In the meantime, the methodological position is specified and claimable. Founder-led enterprise has, for the first time, a mixed-methods belief measurement instrument grounded in two foundational traditions of social-science research.

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- The Foundership Institute · thefoundership.org · Inquiries: matt@thefoundership.org · v1 published 2026-06-06. Companion to The Founder's Gap (Graham, 2025a), The Vase is in the Bricks (Graham, 2026b), and What "Under New Management" Really Means (Graham, 2026c). Subsequent papers will cover AXIS as the operating system of leadership thinking, and the mispriced-believer signature in private-form enterprise.*