

# GENDER & ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES

Culture is the central theoretical concept of anthropology

“A system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artifacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning.”

Franz Boas. 1911. *The Mind of Primitive Man*. NY: Macmillan.



The symbols-and-meanings approach to **organizational culture** explores the “system of such publicly and collectively accepted meanings operating for a given group at a given time.”

Andrew M. Pettigrew (1979:574)

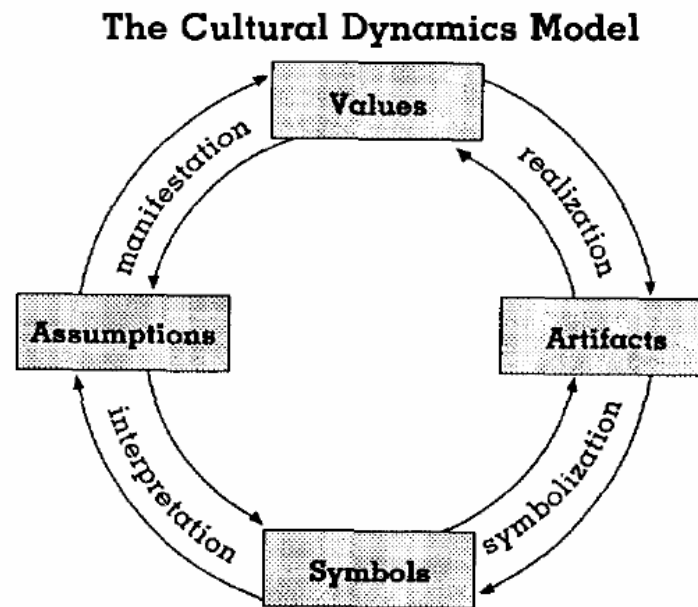


Organization members use symbols and communicative processes to produce and reproduce shared values, attitudes, beliefs, customs, and patterns of language and thought that are transmitted in their symbolic forms.

# Organizational Culture Dynamics

Edgar Schein developed a **Assumptions-Values-Artifacts** model of organizational culture, an internal variable that explains an organization's work-related structures, practices, outcomes. Mary Jo Hatch added **Symbols** & specified that four bi-directional influence processes link the four elements in the **AVAS model**.

Organizational cultures change through the interplay of four clockwise and counter-clockwise influence processes, evolving over time and generating a spiraling double-helix:



# Values & Assumptions

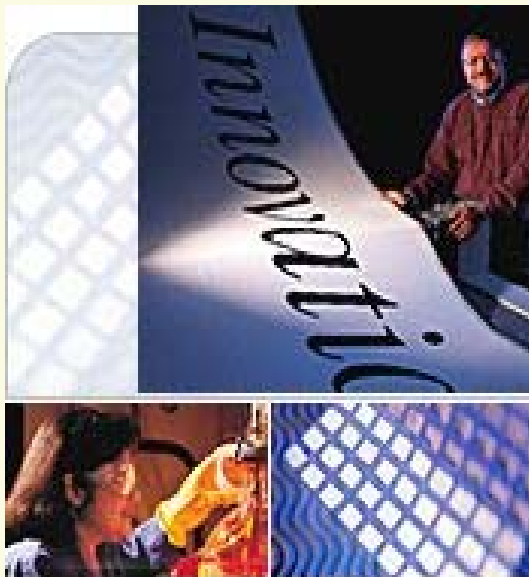
Assumptions and Values are deep-structure elements

**Assumptions:** taken-for-granted beliefs about reality & human nature

**Values:** social principles, philosophies, goals, and standards considered to have intrinsic worth

**Manifestation** occurs when specific values, behavioral norms are evoked perceptually, cognitively, or emotionally

**Realization** occurs when values are expressed in outcomes or acts



**3M Corp describes itself as a “Culture of Innovation”**

- What underlying assumptions does 3M make regarding human creativity and learning capabilities?
- How are those assumptions manifested as values of employees in R&D dept, product marketing, human resource management?
- Which org'l artifacts express 3M's values (e.g., award ceremonies)?

# Artifacts & Symbols

Artifacts and Symbols are surface components of org'l culture

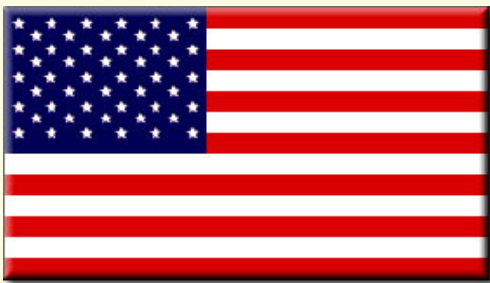
**Artifacts:** the visible, tangible and audible results of activity that are grounded in values and assumptions

**Symbols:** anything that represents a conscious or unconscious association with some wider, usually more abstract, concept or meanings

**Symbolization** translates artifacts into symbols, linking an artifact's literal meaning to its subjective meanings

**Interpretation** links previous assumptions to possibilities for new symbolic understandings

What symbolic meanings do you attach to these artifacts?  
Have their meanings changed as result of recent events?



# Symbolic Buildings

Corporate cultures are encoded in org'l languages, metaphors, narratives (“story-telling”), ideologies, rituals, myths & ceremonies

**Slogans:** IBM “Think”; Saturn “A different kind of car company”

**Logos, brand names, advertising campaigns:** “An Army of One”

**Physical layouts, design, décor, & architecture:**



What corporate cultural assumptions & values are symbolized by the Walt Disney Co's corporate headquarters building in Burbank, CA?

## Symbolic Buildings II

What different set of assumptions and values are expressed by the recently opened Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles?

(Designed by Frank Gehry, also architect of UM's Weisman Art Museum)



## Symbolic Buildings III

Now consider the Chiat Day advertising firm, whose clients include Apple Computer, Seagram, Levi Strauss

What's the meaning of the entrance to their Venice, CA, building?

(Another Gehry design, in collaboration with pop artist Claes Oldenburg)

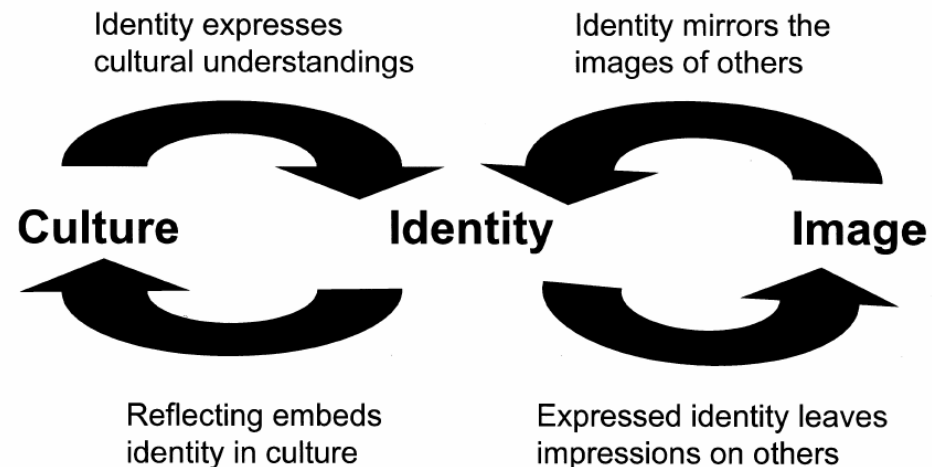


# Culture, Identity, Image

In Hatch & Schultz's (2002) **Org'l Identity Dynamics Model**, socially-constructed meanings & sense-making operate via two feed-back loops connecting culture, identity, and image.

**IDENTITY:** what org'l members think, perceive, believe, feel about their org and its culture

**IMAGE:** holistic, vivid impression of org held by other persons or groups

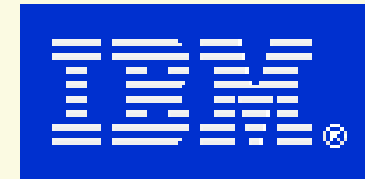


“Org'l image involves externally produce meaning-making about the org but, ... has an influence on internal processes of identity formation. ... [I]t is likely that image and identity will be compared and these comparisons communicated within the symbolic context of the org, leading to possibilities for synergy **but also for cynicism.**” (Hatch and Schultz 1997:362)



# Corporate Images

As viewers in the “audience,” what images do you hold of each org?  
What elements - symbols & meanings - comprise those images?



i n v e n t



The Walt Disney Company



TimeWarner



# What is the U of M Culture?



We all know something about the organizational culture of the University of Minnesota. Can we collectively identify some of its core assumptions, values, artifacts, and symbols?

- Each group works on one of the four AVAS components
- Re-assemble and list some of these cultural components
- Discuss how these components are interconnected
- How is the UM's major goal – to become the #3 public university in the world – changing the U's culture?



# Organizational Subcultures

Given evident ambiguities toward organizations & corporations held by many participants, a unitary corporate culture is often questionable.

**Organizational subcultures** arise and persist, especially among diverse **occupational communities** that make differing, conflicting assumptions about the most important values to uphold.

- Alternative values, interests, and competing occupational commitments overwhelm participants' conformity to a single corporate culture
- Many participants resist the organizational culture & identity imposed by an organization's **dominant coalition** (its owners and/or top managers)

Schein identified three conflicting subcultures inside many companies, whose integration requires orgs to understand better how these occupational communities learn and interact.

**What incompatible assumptions and values are held by:**

1. **Executives** – in charge of overall corporate strategy
2. **Engineers** – professionals engaged in research & design
3. **Operators** – direct production & service activities

# NASA's Catastrophic Subcultures

Columbia shuttle breakup was 2<sup>nd</sup> NASA catastrophe in 111 flights. Review panel: "NASA's organizational culture had as much to do with this accident as foam did." Conclusion echoes Diane Vaughan's (1996) analysis of 1986 *Challenger* shuttle disaster, when NASA decided to launch despite unknown combination of brittle O-rings + ice.



**“Culture of production”**: crucial information was structurally dispersed in NASA; managers not able to assemble credible evidence of the looming disaster

**Loosely coupled subcultures** weakened NASA's safety control systems ⇒ **“normal accident”** (Perrow)

Performance pressures arose from a fatal interplay among incompatible political, bureaucratic, and technical **subcultural scripts**:

- **Engineers** followed an extrapolation paradigm, putting faith in built-in redundancy and showing deference to NASA administrators' authority
- **NASA managers** used adversarial reviews, which demanded “proof” to halt launches, effectively silencing those engineers who had unvoiced reservations about the wisdom of proceeding with Challenger launch

# Strong Culture ⇒ Performance + Control

“Strong” Corp Culture enthusiasm emerged in 1980s academic & practitioner writings (e.g., Peters & Waterman *In Search of Excellence*)

- General org'l mission statement sustains high member commitments
- Strong culture provides guidelines for effective actions
- Source of meanings & member identity (1950s IBM “organization men”)

Strong cultures produce superior individual & collective performances?

- **Exemplars:** 3M, IBM, Kodak, HP; **Nonexemplars:** Enron, K-Mart, etc
- Strong culture is difficult to imitate/transplant; its competitive advantage lies in the rarity of reproducing strong cultures inside most orgs

Strong culture is a **social control mechanism** for reducing supervision

- Origins lie in an entrepreneurial leader's values, norms, vision
- Learning an org culture: Recruiting & socializing newcomers to inculcate commitment (Military boot camp; cult indoctrination; monastic rituals)
- Validation & reinforcement through folklore, stories, legends, interpreting the organization's history as consistent with its core cultural values

# Gender in Org'l & Occup'l Cultures

“Does where you work matter just as much as what you do?”

Kirsten Dellinger studied how **dress norms** varied across both org'l and occupational cultures at *Womyn* & *Gentleman's Sophisticate*.



**Accountants** at both places had same “Rationality & Order” occupational culture. Conservative business attire expressed separation of work from private life.

**Editors** “Creativity” occup'l cultures reflected two places' different social constructions of sexuality.

**Dorm room culture** at *Womyn*: dress norms encouraged sexy-hip, “feminist” appearance; much talking about clothes; flattened power hierarchy; blurring of editors' work & personal identities.

**Locker room culture** at *GS*: similar casual-chic norms; little talk about clothing, and no jokes about women editors' appearances; keep a very strict separation between work & personal identities.

# Dress Codes as Cultural Artifacts

How can magazine dress codes be interpreted as cultural artifacts?



The “dress norms demonstrate how local workplace norms influence people’s definitions of pleasurable, acceptable, and unacceptable sexuality at work. ... Occupational and organizational culture impact how sexuality is negotiated at work and, in part, determines **what counts as sexual harassment** and what does not.”  
(Dellinger 2002:23)

Discuss how the dress codes for the editors reveal major cultural differences in these two gendered and sexualized workplaces.

Why is talking about women’s appearances and their personal lives encouraged at *Womyn*, but is considered “out of line” at *GS*?

In what ways do the org’l & occup’l cultures of *GS* enable the employees to avoid behaviors that might be interpreted as sexual harassment?



# Do Orgs Replicate Their National Cultures?

**National Cultures:** Societies evolved distinct beliefs, values, and ways of life that emerged through historical experiences and institutions originating in traditional family and kinship systems.

- ❖ Japan's **collectivist culture** based on Confucian ethical values
- ❖ U.S. **individualist culture** derived from Protestant Ethic (Weber)
- ❖ What cultural conflicts arise in “transplants” - Nissan in Kentucky?

**Hypothesis:** National cultures are major shapers of their orgs' cultures. Thus, orgs originating within the same nation show more similarity than orgs from different national cultures.

Lammers & Hickson (1979) identified 3 nation-based managerial cultures:

- **Latin** (Fr-Sp-It): high centralization, rigid strata, sharp inequality, conflicts erupting around areas of uncertainty
- **Anglo-Saxon** (US-UK-Scand): decentralization, fluid strata, flexible rule applications
- **Traditional** paternalistic leaders, implicit rules, elite collusion



# An Emerging Global Org'l Culture?

Alternate view that global competition transforms national cultures, thus businesses steadily converge toward a common org'l culture.



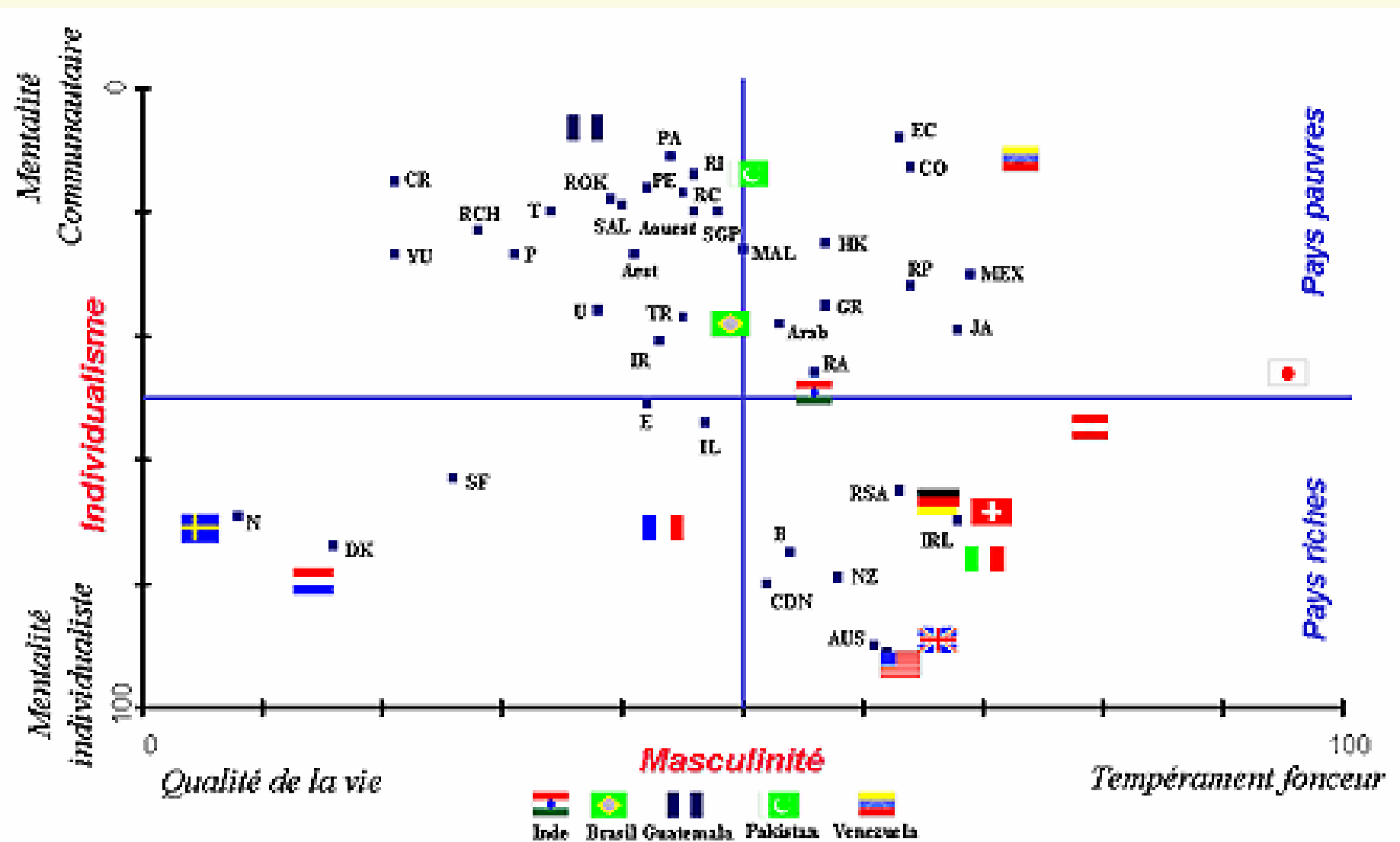
American popular culture is capturing national markets everywhere: movies, music (MTV), fast food (“Coca Colanization”), cigarettes, Microsoft, satellite TV (CNN). Like Medieval Latin, now English is main language of business & academia.

MNC subsidiaries are primary sites to forge a global managerial culture. Hofstede’s (1997) study of IBM found five corporate cultural dimensions:

- **Power distance:** accept social hierarchies or small power differences?
- **Individualism-collectivism:** oriented to personal or group achievement?
- **Masculine-feminine:** separation or convergence of traditional sex roles?
- **Uncertainty avoidance:** comfortable with ambiguity or seek certainty?
- **Long/short time orientation:** patience or today’s bottom line?

Which dimensions will MNCs use in constructing a global corporate culture? Can “host nation” org'l cultures persist?

# Masculinity & Individualism



SOURCE: Yvan Valsecchi. Marketing International. <<http://marketing.thus.ch/loader.php?page=International-II>>

# A Walk on the Darkside of Org'l Cultures

Root of both culture & cult from Latin “cultus” = cultivate, care, adoration

**Greedy Institutions:** Pathologies of unconstrained self-demands when members internalize the org'l culture as a “total-institution” identity

- ✓ Personality absorbed into org'l mission, cutting off outside ties & identities
- ✓ By structurally isolating members, the org controls all information flows
- ✓ At extreme, org may demand members sacrifice their resources, even lives



- **Direct-selling orgs:** “charismatic capitalism” (Mary Kay Cosmetics, Amway, Herbal Life, Tupperware?)
- **Doomsday cults:** “Drink the Kool-Aid” (Jonestown, Branch Davidians, Solar Temple, Heaven’s Gate)

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