

# Culture

I202, Fall 2003  
Session 8  
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# Culture

- Hear about a lot in this class
  - Important in these readings
  - Never really explained...
- So here it is

# Key elements

- Shared beliefs and values
  - Members of culture take for granted
  - Unite against outside world
  - Reflected & reinforced by stories
- Shared actions
  - Including rituals (often not noticed by participants)
  - Constant "enactment" reinforces it
- Way of reproducing
  - "socialization" of new members
  - Sometimes ritual, e.g. fraternity hazing

# Different Versions of Culture

- Found in many disciplines
  - Sociology
  - Anthropology
  - Management
- Place stress on different aspects
  - Beliefs and cognition
  - Actions
  - Rituals
  - Folklore, etc.

# Exists at Different Levels

- International
  - e.g. culture of industrial societies
- National
  - E.g. culture of modern United States
- Regional
  - E.g. Midwestern culture
  - Even specific Bloomington culture

# Two Kinds Key Here

- Organizational culture
  - Shared & reinforced within particular firm
  - E.g. Microsoft in the *Microserfs* reading
  - Many successful organizations have strong culture
- Professional & Occupational cultures
  - Doctor, programmer, manager, hacker, etc.
  - Formal & informal parts to socialization
  - Can form strong subcultures in single organization

## Case of Hackers

- Technology as focal point for a culture
  - Initiation involves use of technology
  - Values of culture shaped by technology
    - Software produced is shaped by culture
  - Culture reinforces tendencies of individuals
- Hackers are subculture within MIT
  - Distinct from regular grad students
  - Take pride in outsider status

## Setting Cultures

- Hard to change
- Many firms try
  - Mission statements
  - Culture consultants, etc.
- Often produces "fragmented culture"
  - Official statements & rhetoric
  - Versus actual situation
  - E.g. Enron ethics policies

## One Common Problem

- Clash of cultures between
  - Users of technology
  - Producers of technology
- Sub cultures of IT people are distinctive
  - Most users do not share
  - Don't design the system you want to use!
- Examples
  - Designing search capability
  - Customizing look and feel