

Multicultural Diversity Through Organizational Culture Lenses: A Multiparadigm Approach

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Summary

Multicultural and diversity management are a mixed field of study including a variety of research on the multiple cultural and demographic influences brought by employees to organisations. Reviews of the field have underlined the diversity of approaches, research concerns, and the fact that the studies were written from distinctive theoretical perspectives. Considering the above mentioned reasons, the aim of this paper is the development of a theoretical framework for studying multicultural dynamics within organizational setting. First, based on a comparative analysis of the relevant literature we identify and describe the different approaches used in organizational culture research. As a next step we accept the most used approaches as the organizing categories of our study, applying a multiparadigm approach. Within these categories we make propositions regarding the definition of the concept of multiculturalism choosing as object of our study the different identity groups within the organizational context (content), and the relationships between the different groups (process). We continue the development of theory identifying the main dimensions of multiculturalism, and with their help we formulate hypothesis from the different theoretical perspectives regarding the ideal state of the complex reality of identities (content) within a diverse and multicultural organization.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Diversity, Integration, Differentiation, Fragmentation, Identity, Identification

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Theoretical framework

In the existing reviews of the cultural literature we can find different classifications according to the meta – theoretical assumption (Smircich, 1983), anthropological schools (Allaire and Firsirotu, 1984), historical development (Martin et al., 1996, 2004) or the Burrell and Morgan' (1979) typology (Parker, 2000). Taking into consideration the great influence on the cultural researchers of the Burrell and Morgan' (1979) typology and the Martin et al.' (1996, 2004) frame, we are going to build our literature re – view and comparative analysis on the combination of these two.

Martin and her coauthors' framework (Meyerson and Martin (1987), Martin (1992, 2002); Martin et al. (1996)) shows that all organizational culture can be studied through three different perspectives: integration, differentiation and fragmentation. In their most recent work (Martin et al.

(2004)) they differentiate quantitative and qualitative research on culture, and managerial vs. non – managerial perspectives of studying culture too. In our frame we take into consideration only the main axe (integration, differentiation, fragmentation) and the managerial vs. non – managerial axe.

The *integrationist perspective* supposes the existence of consensus at the organizational level, and the same time assumes the existence of consistency between the different levels of culture. The differences are considered simple dysfunctions, which can be managed. These studies have a normative approach; the deviations from integration are considered regrettable shortfalls. The culture is what is shared, has the role of the “social glue”, the differences exist only at the surface, if we go deep enough, we will find the basic assumptions, which are shared by all organizational members (Schein, 2004). The researches usually merge the concepts of I and we, describe feelings of organization wide community (Parker, 2000). The majority of the studies written from this view are searching for causal links towards management practices, employee commitment, and profitability. They are supportive of status quo; the changes are initiated and managed by the leaders. But there is an important question, that we need to address before we step further, to the differentiation approach, if we want to understand one basic difference between these two approaches: Can subcultures¹ emerge in a strong culture organization? If they do, what is their content and function?

Boisnier and Chatman (2002) based on the concepts of pivotal and peripheral values introduced by Schein (1988) argue in the favour of existence of subcultures within strong organizational cultures. In their opinion the peripheral values can be important for different subcultures and less important for the dominant culture, thus being possible to appear cultural differences between different groups. Within this perspective the subcultures emerge from the dominant culture values, some subcultural values may conflict with it, while others may not. What is very important to notice here is that the subcultures are defined from the dominant culture perspective, in concordance with their relationship. According to Martin and Siehl (1983) they can be enhancing, orthogonal or counter cultures, the accent being on the dominant - and sub – culture interactions. So, incorporating the notions of pivotal and peripheral values with the above mentioned typology, the existence of subcultures within a strong, coherent and consistent organizational culture is made possible. The members of *enhancing* subcultures adhere to the core

¹ Many researchers have discussed the role of sub – groups in organizations (e.g. Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967), but not all sub – groups can be considered subcultures. Subcultures are groups whose common characteristic is a set of shared norms, values and beliefs (Boisnier and Chatman, 2002). At its origin the concept of „subculture” has been associated with images of deviants, delinquents and other nonconformists. In organizational studies there are a variety of types of organizational subcultures, not all of which are based on expressing opposing views (e.g. Martin and Siehl, 1983). We have to distinguish subculture and counterculture, where the latter holds discordant values, and its members explicitly oppose certain aspects of the dominant organizational culture.

values even more than the members of dominant culture. The members of orthogonal subcultures agree with the dominant culture values, but also hold their own, different but not conflicting values. The members of a counterculture hold values that conflict with the core organizational values. But within this perspective this is not necessarily a threat towards the overall organizational culture, instead it can be seen as strengthening the dominant culture. This can happen because through a process of reflection and comparison between the core and counter values, the formerly implicit values become explicitly considered and openly debated (Boisnier and Chatman, 2002).

The *differentiation* perspective focuses on the study of different *subcultures*, which are formed around pre-defined categories. These can be defined by the organizational structure (horizontal/functional or hierarchical/vertical) or context bound, defined by informal networks or demographic characteristics (e.g. profession, race, gender, age, tenure, etc.). The difference between integration and differentiation views is not merely a question of level of analysis (organization/group) but the fact that the latter has in focus more than one subculture, and implicitly the relationships between them (focusing simultaneously on difference and similarity) (Martin, 2002). While integration considers only the subordinate relationship between the dominant – and sub - culture, the differentiation focuses on the interactions between the different subcultures, the concept of dominant culture being non-existent within this frame (there can exist subcultures with more power, but not an overall, dominant culture). The relationship between these subcultures can be mutually reinforcing, conflicting or independent (Louis, 1985). Another important difference between integration and differentiation is that this approach may correct the *power blindness* of the former approach. But, there are differences between horizontal and vertical differentiation, since horizontal differentiation may be exactly as power – blind as integration.

From the *fragmentation* perspective the focus is on the sense - making process, grasping the ambiguities and uncertainties, and on the dynamics between the multiple cultures existing within organizational boundaries. Within this approach the conflict centred approach of the differentiation view is oversimplified, because in organizations we have to deal with multiplicities of interpretations, constantly in flux (Martin, 2002).

The managerial vs. non – managerial² axis helps us to differentiate the cultural studies depending on the interests they take into consideration.

² Managerial studies see in culture an organizational variable, which can be managed / changed in order to improve organizational performance, employee' commitment, loyalty and productivity (Martin, 2002). Non – managerial studies acknowledge conflicting interpretations in organizations, showing how certain interests are preferred and others are silenced, neglected (Martin et al., 2004).

One of the most influential typology was constructed by Burrell and Morgan's (1979) which considering the different sociological paradigms makes distinction between four approaches to organizations: functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist and radical structuralist.

In order to structure our review and build our theoretical framework we consider the different paradigms identified by Burrell and Morgan (1979) and the Martin et al.' (1996, 2004) cultural perspectives as two dimensions of our analysis. The cultural perspectives does not force the researcher to adopt a particular paradigm, even though some combinations will occur more frequently than others. Table 1. summarizes our review in a three – by four design, with cells containing references to studies that represent intersections of the paradigms and cultural perspectives. The studies were assigned to cells based on their predominant cultural perspective, and theoretical assumptions. We acknowledge, agreeing with Alvesson (2006), the *constructed nature* of typologies, and that they represent only one way of making sense of the studied field, involving a *mapping* element, but not having as main objective to reflect everything that exists “out there” in the literature, but rather to facilitate orientation within this terrain, and to make possible the definition of the concept of multiculturalism and the identification of its main dimensions.

Before taking the next step, and look for possibilities to blur/transcend the boundaries of the boxes from our theoretical frame, we define the content and function of culture within the main boxes of the frame.

The **functionalist, integrationist and managerial** box contains the practitioner oriented (Barley et al. (1988)) writings of management gurus (e. g. Peters and Waterman (1982), Deal and Kennedy (1988) and Ouchi (1981)) and the studies interested in providing the academics with more sophisticated theories to able them to explain and solve the problem of order (e.g. Schein, 2004). For these studies the culture is mainly defined as the organization's shared norm and value content. These can be managed from above if their content and underlying structure is understood by the management: “*We need to find out what is actually going on in organizations before we rush in to tell managers what to do about their culture.*” (Schein, 1990:110)

These studies provide static pictures of consensus within organizations. The management is responsible for the adaptation of organization and its culture to their environment, in order to achieve an equilibrium state of internal integration necessary for survival (Schein, 2004). The conflict is mostly not recognized within this approach, or seen as having a negative effect on the desired homogeneous organizational culture (Martin, 2002). The aim of these studies is to offer an organizational culture typology and make predictions about best fit between cultures and different contingencies (e.g. Person - Organization fit literature).

The **functionalist, differentiation and managerialist studies** contain notions of diversity based subcultures with functionalist claims about effective strategies of managing diversity. These studies discuss the potential economic benefits of a diverse workforce (e.g. increased innovation and creative problem solving) and describe best practices that can help managers to realize them (e.g. Cox's (2001) model for developing a diversity competent organization). This approach hides power in diversity portraying an organization where each individual receive the same opportunities. Trice and Beyer (1993) research is a good example here because they use the language of dysfunctions and adaptation (functionalist) as well as insisting that organizations are multicultural contexts.

Within the **interpretive** paradigm the culture is something an organization *is* (Smircich, 1983), focusing on the local nature of cultural processes and offering a more holistic content definition of culture. Architecture, furniture, meetings, clothes, jargon and jokes are studied as manifestations of meaning. Barley's (1983) paper on funeral homes provides a good example of **integrationist and managerialist** study (within interpretive paradigm), drawing attention to the meanings that inform and explain organizational practice, without questioning the existent tradition. Within the **differentiation** approach the central idea is, that there are "native views" (Gregory, 1983), which can be captured and reproduced by the researcher. The language of paradox, ambiguity and contradiction is common within the **fragmentation** approach (e. g. Meyerson (1991)). The interpretive paradigm like functionalism is power blind.

The **radical humanism** paradigm defines organizational culture as "contested relation between meanings – the distinctive understandings of a particular social group which may conflict with those of other social groups" (Parker, 2000). It focuses on divisions within organizations. These can be between male and female, age and youth, management and shop floor, or whatever classification is considered relevant at a given time. The cultural studies within this paradigm focus on power and meanings, with a few exceptions from the **integrationist** perspective (e.g. Van Maanen and Kunda, 1989). Within the **differentiation** perspective Sharpe (1997) suggests that "vertical" or "horizontal" divisions within an organization can have different cultures, and also that the culture of an organization can be cross – cut by ethnic (de Vries, 1997; Koot, 1997), geographic (Parker, 2000), gender (Burrus, 1997) and professional (Bloor and Dawson, 1994) senses of community in the wider society. The aim of these studies is to understand "the way things are done around here", in order that a new way of doing things might be brought into being. An excellent example of this approach is the paper written by Van Maanen (1991) in which he describes the work at Disneyland, stressing the status differentials and techniques of resistance which have developed in an organization which claims strong homogeneous culture. The studies written from a

fragmentation perspective follows Alvesson's (2002) proposal for a redirection of cultural understanding: (1) they shift the focus from the organization towards the various communities within it; and (2) they choose to study social practices instead of values and beliefs of a rather abstract nature.

We have combined Martin et al.' (2004) and Burrell and Morgan' (1979) typologies as a way of arranging the substantial body of literature produced on organizational culture since the '80s and as a way for determining those approaches which are most used in cultural studies, because they are going to represent the organizing frame for the definition of the concept of multiculturalism. But before this, we have to acknowledge, that there are other researches on organizational culture which merge the different perspectives, and we need to take into consideration this too, so first we need to look for possibilities of crossing the boundaries.

Table 1. Organizational culture literature re - view

	Integrationist		Differentiation		Fragmentation	
	Managerial	Non - managerial	Managerial	Non - managerial	Managerial	Non managerial
Functionalist	Ouchi (1981); Peters and Waterman (1982); Deal and Kennedy (1982); Quinn (); Handy (1985); Schein (1985); Ott (1989); Denison (1990); Hofstede (1990);		Martin and Siehl (1983); Cox and Blake (1991); Cox (1993; 2001); Trice and Beyer (1993); Milliken and Martins (1996)		Weick (1991)	
Interpretive	Garfinkel (1967) Barley (1983); Martin et al. (1983);			Gregory (1983); Gherardi (1995)		Meyerson (1991) Linstead and Grafton – Small (1992)
Radical structuralist				Willmott (1993)		
Radical humanist	Martin and Meyerson (1997, 1998) Sewell and Wilkinson (1992, 1998) Van Maanen and Kunda (1989)			Foucault (1977) Smircich and Morgan (1982) Bartunek (1984); Turner (1986); Mills (1988); Bartunek and Moch (1991); Van Maanen (1991); Ibarra (1995); Alvesson and Billing (1997); Laurila (1997); Mills and Hatfield (1997);		Feldman (1991) Alvesson (1993) Gabriel (1995) De Los Reyes (2000); Litvin (1997);

Multiparadigm approach

Burrell and Morgan (1979) argued in their seminal work that paradigms are alternative views of realities (p. 23-24.) and inter-paradigm ‘journeys’ are rare (ibid. 24.), because the “four paradigms are mutually exclusive” (ibid. 25.) Meanwhile Martin (1992) argues that organizational cultures are integrated, differentiated and fragmented at the same time. Multiparadigm approaches share similar position as Martin (1992) in incommensurability debate that organizations can be examined through four paradigms.

Lewis and Grimes (1999) collected and clustered multiparadigm approaches according to techniques applied in a given research. Authors list *bracketing*, *bridging*, *parallel*, *sequential*, *metatheorizing*, and *interplay* as possible multiparadigm techniques. **Bracketing** means that researcher “bracket the assumptions of the other paradigms to become familiar with and apply the traditions, language, and method of a specific paradigm. (ibid. 673). **Bridging** has different assumption about paradigms relations, it assumes that paradigm borders are not rigid, but rather fuzzy and permeable. Gioia and Pitre (1990) explain this in their article. They suppose that there is a transition zone between paradigms. These two approaches (and a combination of them) neglect the possibility of paradigm differences coexist.

Further techniques emphasize exactly this: in **parallel** technique distinctly different paradigmic approaches are present in one organization the same time, e.g. in Martin (1992) three perspectives or Hassard (1991) research about a British Fire Service. It is important to state that there is no hierarchy or sequence of paradigms of perspectives, because in parallel technique researcher would arrive the same results independently of the order his/her research steps. While Hassard (1991) conducted basically four distinctly research in one organization, and argued that we can learn more about organization by considering all four research results build on the four paradigm, Martin (1992) conducted interviews and from one research body she draw different conclusions. In the surface her examined organization was very integrated, but in deep analysis of independent interviews revealed that differentiation and fragmentation are present in the examined organization, while important features of integration are also valid.

In sequential technique researcher starts his/her investigation in one paradigm and continues the research in an other paradigm, while accept and apply his/her previous research findings, and this way research results cultivate each other. In this technique one paradigm has superiority over that other, one paradigm serves as input for other paradigm. E.g. Gannon (2003?) develop cultural metaphors with this method, accepting Hofstede (1980) functionalist research as guidelines, but applying rather interpretive paradigm in developing metaphors. Gannon (2003?)

has clear preference for interpretive concepts over functionalist, while he never questions the result of Hofstede (1980) work.

Metatheorizing goes further when arguing that paradigm offers just partial truth, but at the same time they clearly argue against unification, synthesis or reconciliation of opposing assumptions of paradigms. According to metatheorizing technique it is necessary to apply divergent research in order to reveal more about the research object. Morgan (1997) is a seminal example of this approach. **Interplay** shares the assumptions that paradigms offer just partial truth with metatheorizing, and it is necessary to maintain paradigm boundaries, it is not possible (and not even desired) to unify and reconcile juxtapositions of paradigms, but as Schultz and Hatch (1996) argues there is a creative tension between paradigms but at the same time there is interdependence of paradigms, so it is necessary to go back and forth between paradigms in order to gain knowledge on the research object.

In our investigation we share Martin (1993) arguments about parallel approaches, but at the same time we also apply paradigms presented by Burrell and Morgan (1979). In this way we reject the incommensurability assumption, which was supported by Burrell and Morgan (1979) original argumentation.

Multiculturalism from a multiparadigm approach: parallel technique

One of the most important propositions in the field of organizational culture is that organizational action is based on a sense of organizational identity (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991). But the “members” of an organization may not experience the same organization and may not identify themselves as organizational members. There is no justification to take organizational identification for granted; it might be more useful to wonder how any identification with a “we” is possible in highly differentiated organizations embedded in an individualistic society (Dahler – Larsen, 1997). As we could see in our literature review this complexity was broken down by the different studies focusing on different dimensions or units of analyses. Some authors described strong and distinct organizational cultures (e.g. Peters and Waterman, 1982) that require and enhance commitment and identification, where organization itself is synonymous with a sense of “we”. Others argued that organizational membership is less salient than occupational identification, supported by years of long educational socialization and intense daily work (e.g. Gregory, 1983). The identifications, from an organizational perspective, might be based on “externally” derived classifications (e.g. gender, profession, region) or “internally” derived classifications of difference (e.g. geographical location of the workplace, hierarchical level, department, tenure). BUT, none of

these dimensions should be taken for granted. Agreeing with Hernes (1997) that organizational culture and group membership(s) are related concepts (the values, beliefs and norms of people in organizations can be explained by their identification with the groups in which they are members), we can ask ourselves: What does it mean multiculturalism within an organizational – cultural frame?

The concept of multiculturalism within organizational – cultural framework

The organizational – cultural frame is defined by the most used categories in organizational culture research identified in our literature review. We **combine** these categories applying a multiparadigm approach, choosing the parallel technique, because we believe that only in this way our understanding of multiculturalism within organizational context can be more complete.

We propose as first step towards the definition of multiculturalism a cultural perspective applied on a diversity broadly defined. Agreeing with Prasad et al. (2006) at the core of diversity are *distinctiveness* and *similarity* (difference and inclusion). Regarding the nature of difference and inclusion we take a *cultural perspective*, which means that diversity is more than a matter of representation of different social groups within an organization (Prasad et al. 2006). So, to decide what is distinctiveness and similarity, we have to draw *cultural boundaries* within, between and across organizations (Parker, 2000), having at the heart of the problem issues of *classification*. At this point some of the social psychological literature is helpful, because it points to the multiple ways in which people might classify themselves and other people. In concordance with social identity theories (e.g. Ashforth and Mael, 1989), which suggest that the recognition of, and preference for similar people help to sustain a positive social identity and it is also like to result in the formation of subgroups, we actually agree with Nkomo and Cox (1996) argument that the concept of identity appears at the core of understanding diversity. So, the resources that might be used for categorization are enormous and variable (e.g. gender, race, clothing, age, profession – what is common that they are used as markers of difference). Through the reviews of the field of identity research (AMR special issue 2000; Alvesson, 2006; Beech and McInners, 2006; Hatch and Yanow, 2006) we can also find a wide variety of theoretical frames and choices of methods. So there is a need to define some key dimensions of the identity concept, to be able to use it in our definition propositions for multiculturalism within the different theoretical categories identified above. One dimension, which appears to be crucial thorough the identity literature, has as extremes the identity as integrated, fixed and stable (“*being*”) and a clear reference and starting point of how oneself can orientate him(her)self in life, and on the other end a more uncertain, anxiety – driven, in movement, becoming or radically decentered, processual (“*becoming*”) identity (Alvesson,

2006). So, considering this dimension the identity literature differs in terms of one – dimensionality versus multiple identities and in terms of being stable/fixed or fluid. Within our theoretical frame these are not simply the extremes of one and the same dimension, but as we are going to see they imply a more profound difference at epistemological and ontological level. The other dimension is the degree of agency, at one extreme having the individual defining his(her) “we-ness” and the other extreme locating this power outside the individual (Alvesson, 2006). The relevance of the identity concept and these dimensions for the definition of multiculturalism within our theoretical frame is strengthened by the conceptual frame of workplace diversity proposed by Prasad et al. (2006), who building upon Burrell and Morgan’ (1979) identified the following elements: (1) objectivist or subjectivist epistemology; (2) low or high awareness of power; (3) the driving causal forces of diversity dynamics at the individual, intergroup or macro – structural level of analysis; (4) fluid or fixed identities.

The concept of *fixed identity* refers to the fact that the individual can hold a single or multiple identities and act out one of them determined by the context and individual characteristics. The fluid identity has different degrees, from flexibility across situations, till the simultaneous holding of contradictory and ambiguous “selves” which are created and recreated within the process of interaction (Prasad et al., 2006).

In concordance with this line of argument we need to theorize organizational culture in a broad manner as a “*process of making multiple claims about membership categories*” (Parker, 2000) formulating propositions concerning multiculturalism through insights gained from a comparative analysis within our theoretical framework regarding the (1) *nature of cultural boundaries* and (2) *nature of identities* (Table 2). For the nature of boundaries we consider the effects they have on organizations, where the boundaries as distinctions³ and boundaries as thresholds⁴/degree of porosity can be important (Hernes, 2004). For the latter as a key theoretical source we use **social identity theory** (SIT) (Ashforth and Mael, 1989) and **self categorization theory** (SCT) (Tajfel and Turner, 1988). Doing this we face several theoretical questions: How should be the *concept of cultural boundaries* conceptualized to reflect the process of cultural interpenetration? Knowing that people belong to many different cultures *what does it mean to be a member of a culture?* Are there *degrees of cultural identification?*

³ Boundaries as *distinction* are markers of identity serving to convey distinct physical, social or mental features by which the organization differentiates itself from the environment (Hernes, 2004).

⁴ High threshold means that an organization regulates strictly what crosses its boundaries (Hernes, 2004).

Table 2. Multiculturalism within organizations: three perspectives

	Level of analysis	Nature of cultural boundaries	Nature of identity
Integration (mostly functionalist, managerial)	Organizational	organizational boundaries	Organizational identity (single, fixed)
Differentiation (mostly radical humanism, non – managerial)	Group	Pre-defined group boundaries (subcultures)	Fixed multiple identity
Fragmentation (mostly interpretive ⁵)	Group	Issue specific group boundaries (multiple cultures)	Fluid multiple identity

Within the **integration** (mostly functionalist and managerial) approach we accept the idea that an organization is circumscribed by a stable, unambiguous (high level of distinction), boundary, with a low degree of porosity, tending towards an equilibrium state (Hernes, 2004), and that cultural boundaries overlap with the organizational boundaries, assuming a monolithic and fixed identity, with a static focus on being identified. Van Dick et al. (2004) presented an organizational identification typology, where an individual can identify him – or herself with (1) his or her career (personal level); (2) different subunits within organization (e.g. departments, project teams, etc.) or (3) with the organization as a whole. The integrationist studies consider only the third possibility, supposing that all newcomers are value – based selected and socialized (Dose, 1997) into a culture characterized by consistency and consensus, and the resulting organizational identification is stable over time, making predictable the behaviours and emotions of the employees. A low degree of identification or disidentification with the organization is possible, but this is seen as an exception (Alvesson, 2006). This can be explained within the social identity theory (Ashforth and Mael, 1989), because this emphasizes group and *organizational* identification as a source of a sense of order, stability and clarity. Ashforth and Mael (1989) define social identification as the “perception of oneness with or belongingness to some human aggregate” (pg. 135). Here the organization one belongs to provides the source of identity. Within this view the

⁵ We include here the postmodern studies too.

individuals are “loyal soldiers” (Alvesson, 2006), emphasizing the conformist and adaptable nature of identity constructions in organizations. This studies focus on the content of culture, on what identity is (should be), taking a “top – down” perspective on multiculturalism, where leaders are advised to serve as role models for normative behaviour within organization. Within this frame the leaders manage organizational diversity as it is a problem which needs to be solved, ignoring the process characteristic of culture, controlling the multiple cultural memberships, subordinating them to the organizational membership, but there is a critical question, which shows the limits of this approach: is *organizational identity the salient identity*⁶ of the organizational participants indifferent of the individual and situational characteristics?

As we are going to see, within the **differentiation** (mostly radical – humanism, non – managerial) frame we can ask this question, reformulating/broadening it: to which subculture the organizational participants have the *strongest identification* (or which is the *salient identification*)? From the social identity theory perspective each subculture (“we”) is organized around some core values, and on a “consciousness of difference” considering an out – group, and by boundaries between “we” and “them”, the boundary management capturing the interactions between the different groups (Dahler – Larsen, 1997). The cultural boundaries are assumed to be coincident with explicit, highly distinctive, objectively measurable variables, such as hierarchical status, occupation, division or project group. We can use here the social identity theory, because it takes into consideration dynamic and relational as well as static and “trait- like” components, assuming intergroup interactions too, and being not necessarily power blind. On the one hand the definitions of ‘we’ and ‘them’ are mainly relational and comparative (Ashforth and Mael, 1989), and it is assumed that “most individuals slide fairly easily from one identity to another” (Ashforth and Mael, 1989:148), on the other hand there is group identification, which implies something stable and fixed. Here the subunit one belongs to provides the source of identity (Van Dick et al., 2004). In this situation a few issues can be important: (1) are the different subcultures defined on the same level or they are subgroups of each other (and then even organizational culture can be considered one subculture, which partly contains the other subcultures); (2) the strength and salience of the identification with the different subcultures; (3) the subculture memberships are concordant or discordant; (4) are these identifications stable or varying in time and across situations (Hernes, 1997).

⁶ Identity salience (within the SIT/SCT frame) refers to “the potential of a social category to help employees classify and systematize their environment and orient themselves within the organization” (Chattopadhyay et al., 2004).

Within this approach on the premise that organizational culture and group membership are related concepts, we can formulate propositions regarding multiculturalism, through the study of the salient social identifications in the case of multigroup memberships. Organizational participants may identify with a salient category if the category is associated with positive qualities, which are usually associated with higher status (power) within organization (Hogg and Terry, 2000). The employees from a higher status group, tend to identify with their own group, using a status maintenance strategy (Chattopadhyay et al., 2004), reinforcing the existing divides, cultural boundaries within the organization. The case of lower status organizational participants (e.g. women, minorities, blue collars, etc.) is more complex, because they can identify themselves with similar others under certain circumstances and dissimilar others under other circumstances (Chattopadhyay et al., 2004). Within the differentiation vertical approach, if they perceive the cultural boundaries as permeable (high degree of porosity, permeability) they can use the social mobility⁷ strategy to enhance their social identity, and if these boundaries are impermeable they can apply the social competition⁸ strategy.

So, with the SIT and SCT theories within differentiation (mostly radical humanist, non – managerial) approach we could propose a more complex model of multiculturalism focusing on the strategies used by organizational participants to construct positive social identities, and this way (re)define the multicultural map of organizations, highlighting the need to focus on identification with multiple targets (e.g. demographic, professional or task groups).

As we could see these two perspectives emphasize a static or bipolar (high and low status participants, dominant vs. sub – culture) on culture stressing what the (salient) identity *is (should be)*, simplifying the way (process) it is constructed within the organizations, cross - cutting the enhancing, orthogonal, counter – or competing subcultures. To overcome this we need to take into consideration the last perspective of our theoretical frame.

Within **fragmentation** perspective (mostly interpretive) organizational culture can be defined as “the tacit organizational understandings (e.g. assumptions, beliefs and values) that contextualize efforts to make meaning, including internal *self – definition*” (Hatch and Schultz,

⁷ Social mobility reflects the efforts of the individual to dissociate from a low – status group and gain membership in a high – status group, adopting the values of that group (Chattopadhyay et al., 2004). Identification with dissimilar others can become accentuated through the process of cultural inversion (e.g. being a women is understood as being everything that is not a man), or through the process of compliance (e.g. a women conforms to the men expectations in terms of attitudes and behaviors in order to gain acceptance as tokens into jobs dominated by men).

⁸ Organizational participants applying the social competition strategy identify with their own category, and work for its betterment, because they believe that their category should be evaluated positively on status – relevant qualities (Chattopadhyay et al., 2004). We have to make an important distinction between these two strategies: the former one is usually an individual strategy, while the second one is collective.

2002:996). The boundaries are moveable, with a high degree of porosity, their distinctiveness being ambiguous. The identity is fluid/ processual, the “stugglers” and “surfers” (Alvesson, 2006) being engaged in *identity work*, constructing their identity in a context of contradictory and ambiguous demands (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Ashforth and Mael (1989) within the tradition of SIT and stretching its boundaries express this idea stating: “Individuals have multiple, loosely coupled identities, and inherent conflicts between their demands are typically not resolved by cognitively integrating the identities, but by ordering, separating or buffering them. This compartmentalization of identities suggests the possibility of double standards, apparent hypocrisy and selective forgetting.” As a principle of cultural analysis can be to take into consideration the organizational participants’ own definitions of their “we – ness”, and no previously described demographic, professional or organizational unit should be taken for granted as the source or target of identification. The question is not anymore how the salient *identifications occur*, but how the identifications at a given moment in time and situation relate to each other and how can be this interpreted in an organizational – cultural framework?

The key dimensions of multiculturalism within organizational context

To have a more complete understanding of diversity within organizational – cultural context, in the followings, we are going to explore, within the different theoretical perspectives, two important dimensions of multiculturalism: cultural variation and moral philosophy. Within our frame these are not simply two dimensions with different perspectives as the end points of a continuum, but they reflect different theoretical perspectives too. Based on these two dimensions, and considering the above mentioned descriptions of multiculturalism within the different theoretical categories of our frame we can propose the answers to the question: *what is the desirable or ideal state of multiculturalism within organizations?*

Cultural variation can be defined as the variety and concentration of values, behaviours and attitudes experienced and accepted by various groups within an organization (Nemetz and Christensen, 1996). At one end of this dimension is cultural particularism and at the other end is cultural homogenization (Nemetz and Christensen, 1996). The *cultural homogenization* emphasizes the existence of an integrated organizational culture and minimize between – group differences through the application of organizational practices (e.g. selection process, organizational socialization). Within this approach the religion, national culture or profession have marginal effects in comparison with organizational culture on the individual’s working identity. *Cultural particularism* emphasizes “within – group” similarities and “between – group” differences, focusing on the between groups conflicts (Nemetz and Christensen, 1996). Cultural

pluralism assumes that within one organization many different cultures can coexist, where the members of different cultures may adopt norms and values from each other (Cox, 1991).

Moral philosophy defines a continuum from relativism to comprehensive universalism, with deliberative universalism as a variant to the latter one (Nemetz and Christensen, 1996). The universalism believes in the existence of an objective, moral truth at the fundamental level. The relativism argues that moral codes can differ from one culture to an other, and from one point in time to an other. Within this approach the accent is on the tolerance of the differences. The deliberative universalism is somewhere between these two extreme opinions, relying partly on core universal principles and in the same time being open to negotiate, to deliberate along the possible conflicts.

Table 3. The main dimensions of diversity within organizational – cultural context: three perspectives

	Cultural variation	Moral philosophy
Integration (mostly functionalist, managerial)	Homogenization	Cultural universalism
Differentiation (mostly radical humanism, non – managerial)	Cultural particularism (vertical) Cultural pluralism (horizontal)	Deliberative universalism
Fragmentation (mostly interpretive)	Cultural pluralism	Cultural relativism

The Table 3. identifies a possible linkage between the ideal state of multiculturalism within organization and the nature of organizational culture (and society). With this linkage we assume that the individuals' belief regarding multiculturalism is influenced by their fundamental belief system regarding the nature of society and organization. We assume that within the integration perspective (mostly functionalist, managerial) the ideal state of multiculturalism is consistent with homogenization and cultural universalism. Within the vertical differentiation perspective will be supported an ideal of multiculturalism based on particularism and deliberative universalism. Within the fragmentation and differentiation, horizontal the ideal state of multiculturalism will be based on pluralism and relativism.

