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## Edgar Schein's model of organizational culture levels as a hologram

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## EDGAR SCHEIN'S MODEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE LEVELS AS A HOLOGRAM

*The current study dwells upon Edgar Schein's original framework for exploring organizational culture by classifying its elements to three levels. Important directions of model's elaboration are identified and analyzed. The last have been undertaken by different researchers in the last three decades, based on individual's necessities, involvement and experience with the application in practice of this model. Viewing Schein's model as a hologram is recommended as a way to dissolve subjectively identified by different authors issues or ambiguities in this framework. Thus, a contemporary, useful and richer "snapshot" of this model is proposed for use in the organizations during these turbulent times when cultural intelligence capabilities come of greater importance for their successful market performance.*

JEL: M14; L20; D03

### 1. Introduction

The majority of lecturers and instructors, leading cultural awareness training courses for managers and employees in the contemporary organizations and students at the university from different specialties obligatory include in their syllabuses a model of organizational culture levels, developed by a MIT Sloan professor - Edgar Schein. By his model the scientist proposes a framework of corporate culture, consisting of three levels, as follows: (a) artifacts, (b) adopted beliefs and values, and (c) basic assumptions (i.e. deep-rooted beliefs). The degree of visibility for the attributes, belonging to each level, is chosen as the only criterion on which the suggested pattern of grouping of the aforementioned levels of corporate culture is based [Schein, 2010]. This deliberate choice partially explains the greater interest to this model, demonstrated by scientific community, leading business consultants and a myriad of professional managers who are in desperate need of a friendly instrument in order to be able to assess and monitor critical changes in target organizational cultures, belonging to different other organizations they interact with. Diverse business-related necessities of the members in these professional groups, playing the roles of different stakeholders for a given organization, justify the further elaboration of the original work, done by Edgar Schein. That is why the aims of this

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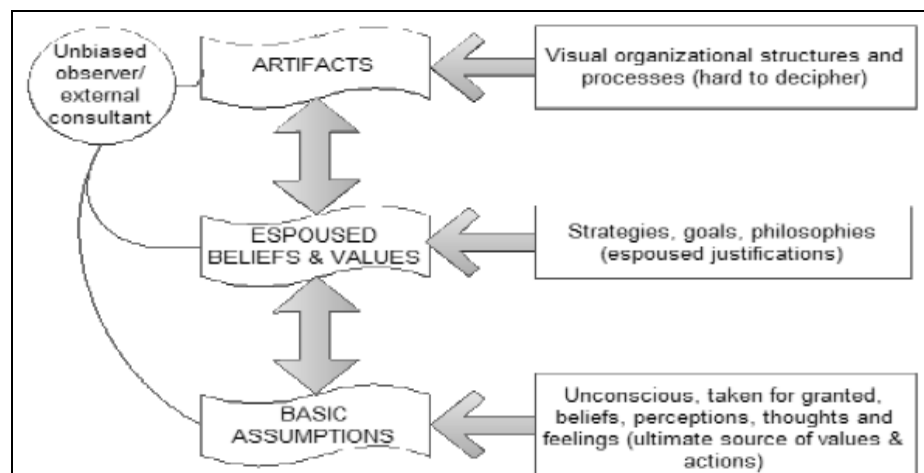
study may be formulated, as follows: (a) to present and analyze identified directions and spheres of the model's further development by other contributors and (b) to propose the applications of an interesting approach, i.e. the hologram perspective, in studying and analyzing its current entirety.

## 2. The Original Framework by Edgar Schein

Understanding that even through rigorous study it is not possible to explore a target organizational culture in its entirety, Schein determines the greatest benefit of using his model, as the possibility of making some statements about some cultural elements, occupying the position of an unbiased observer (see figure 1). Relying on his professional experience, it is not a surprise that the scientist stands for an iterative, clinical approach for inquiring about culture, i.e. a reproach resembling a therapeutic relationship between a psychologist and a patient (Schein, 2010; Schein, 2004).

Figure 1

Edgar Schein's levels of organizational culture



Source: Adapted from Schein, 2010.

Logically the surface level of the so called *artifacts* represents the first component a potential user of this model has to deal with. According to the professor artifacts are:

- Attributes located in the organization.
- Attributes with the following features: they can be seen, felt and sensed (heard), touched by any unbiased observer.
- Easy to be monitored attributes, which attract too many probable interpretations of embedded meaning, thus becoming extremely difficult to be used in determining the characteristics of a target organizational culture.

That is why the most difficult issue for an outsider, analyzing an organizational culture at this level, is finding a veracious and full explanation why these artifacts

have been established. The answer may reveal, if the outsider penetrates into the espoused values level of the culture. The proposed list of artifacts by the author incorporates: buildings (facilities and offices), equipment, furniture, visible rewards and recognition of merit, dress code of the staff members, the ways in which personnel members interact with each other and with external people (i.e. representatives of different stakeholder groups), company documents (slogans, mission/vision statements and other operational creeds), technology, art, work climate, work processes, organizational structures, office jokes, colours, etc.

*Accepted beliefs and values* represent the second level of organizational culture in this model. They embody the proclaimed (officially professed, desired) culture in the organization, i.e. accepted and embraced causes that are applied as apologies for undertaking certain initiatives. These beliefs and values are normally espoused by the leading figures of a culture. Their meaning may materialize in slogans, statements of mission, vision and credo of the entity, company policies, goals and strategies pursued by the leaders. Schein points out that if accepted beliefs and values are consistent with the underlying assumptions (i.e. the deepest cultural level), than converting these values into a philosophy (way) of action can help in solving the issue of internal integration among group members. Thus a source of identity and mission for personnel members is generated. But it is considered a better situation, if espoused values are supported by some shared assumptions about, for instance:

- how a company should be run,
- how clients should be treated or
- how employees should be managed.

If the organizational reality reveals the opposite case, i.e. espoused values by leaders are not in congruence with basic assumptions of entity's culture, this might be considered as a sound signal of a great trouble in the near future or at least be seen as a predictor of a long period of mediocre existence for the organization that is not a rare case. Many researchers study the organizational behavior at this level by interviewing the employees and/or implementing questionnaires to snapshot their attitudes.

*The basic assumptions (engrained, rooted beliefs)* constitute the deepest level of corporate culture. These are cultural attributes that cannot be seen (i.e. remain invisible) or may not be cognitively identified in everyday interactions between/among people, working in (with) the organization, although they are the main source of the dominant values and their supporting activities in the organization. Cultural elements which discussion is "forbidden" (unacceptable, taboo) in the organization, are classified at this level, too. In fact, many of these unspoken (tacit) rules exist, without organization members' being conscious of their presence (influence). Additionally, the personnel members with longer tenure in the organization, enabling them to better understand the meanings of the cultural attributes from the deepest level usually get used to them over time, thus effectively "hiding" their existence. According to Schein some elements of organizational culture may be unraveled by means of discussions among group members, led by external consultants. Survey methods as questionnaires and interviews do not bring

the desired results here. The possible lack of strong correlation between assumptions and espoused values may cause great problems in the minds of the working people, such as frustrations, lack of morale and inefficiency in performance. That is why they may be considered as the original source of the actual values that constitute a given culture. The list of typical basic assumptions includes:

- Assumptions regarding the human nature
- Assumptions regarding time
- Assumptions regarding space
- Assumptions regarding human relationships etc.

The elements, comprising the set of shared basic assumptions in an organization, are typically well integrated that they are hard to be recognized by people from within. Any emerging key issue for the organization may be the only opportunity of illuminating some elements of its basic assumptions system, especially in the perspective of a sharp contradiction between a given assumption and the rest items from the set. As a rule this may happen as the group searches a solution for a business-related problem in the organization that requires putting deliberate efforts in planned and/or contingently managed change initiatives, led by management. Management's taking into account the cultural component of an undertaken change intervention is a sine qua non for bringing up to the surface a deeper cultural element by making group members conscious of its existence and direction of influence.

In summary, Schein's model serves as a means by which unbiased observers (leaders and other stakeholders) may increase the extent of their understanding about paradoxical organizational behaviors in terms of:

- Identifying great difference between an organization's professed highly aesthetic and moral standards at the second level while at the same time displaying totally opposing behavior at the deepest level of culture.
- Detecting the existence of a complete difference in implied norms by organizational rewards at the levels of professed values and basic assumptions.
- Justifying a necessary time period and surmounting some difficulties by each newcomer in his/her socialization endeavors in an organization.
- Explaining the main reason why organizational change agents usually fail to achieve the programmed goals, as underlying tacit assumptions are consciously apprehended after would-be change agents begin transformative activities, the resistance against which describes dominating culture characteristics of the organization as a strong group defense mechanism.
- Clarifying to some extent the nature of the relationship between basic assumptions and common business practices within the company in order to improve the effectiveness of the entity. A change in basic assumptions set is necessitated to better fit espoused values and artifacts, desired by leaders, so that the organization may survive and prosper in a turbulent environment.

### **3. Abolishing Borders between Adjacent Levels and Merging Respective Contents**

The underlying reasons for undertaking such changes in the structure of the model may be classified, as follows:

- Clarifying the meanings of used terms that at first may sound a bit confusing and emphasizing the semantic differences among them (Raz, Fadlon, 2006).
- Determining a peripheral role of organizational culture issues within presenting of a generalized view of management in organizations (Schermerhorn, 2011).
- Opposing all cultural elements, characterized by any extent of visibility for an observer to the set of totally invisible cultural attributes as shared assumptions (Saiyadain, 2006).

#### *3.1. Aviad Raz’s “update” of the model*

The professor of Sociology and Anthropology in Ben-Gurion University directs his attention to specifics in measurement of each of the three cognitive levels in Schein’s model (Schein, 2010; Shafritz, Ott, Jang, 2009) as follows:

- The observation of anyone who confronts a target organizational culture is the typical measure at the level of artifacts.
- Interviews of personnel members and reading official documents of the organization are the typical measures at the level of professed values and beliefs.
- Deep observation of the in-depth of the organization and interpretation of an outside expert is the typical measure at the level of basic assumptions.

On this basis Raz identifies two critical issues, concerning Schein's model, as follows (Raz, Fadlon, 2006):

- First, he sees great obscurity, concerning declared difference between the professed values and the tacit assumptions. Additionally, he considers as an almost impossible task to define the exact moment of transformation of a professed value or belief into a tacit assumption. The Israeli brings in question the overreliance on the possession of the “appropriate capabilities” by the external investigator, since tacit assumptions cannot be explored by interviews and questionnaires.
- Second, the term of “organizational attributes” is confusing for him because it may encompass almost everything that happens in the organization.

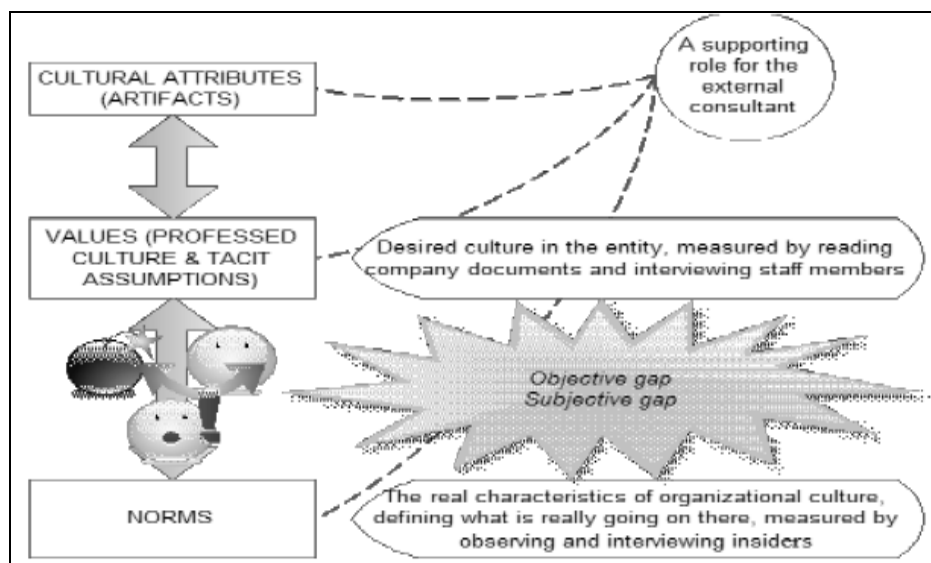
The scientist proposes a valuable solution to these issues by transforming a bit the original framework (see figure 2). On one hand, he groups together in one level professed culture and tacit assumptions, dominating in an organization. On the other hand he compares the contents of the new group (i.e. values), representing desired situation in the entity which may be measured by reading company documents and interviewing staff members, to the so called “norms”, representing what is really going on there. Norms may be measured by observing and interviewing insiders.

Additionally Raz limits the meaning of the term “cultural attributes” to physical objects at the organization in order to increase its accuracy. In this way he succeeds in identifying two important potential gaps in a target organizational culture, as follows:

- *Objective gap* – incongruity between the values and the norms.
- *Subjective gap* – incongruity between the values and employee understanding of what the values are.

Figure 2

Edgar Schein’s levels of organizational culture through the perspective of Raz



Source: Adapted from Raz, Fadlon, 2006.

The author uses the existence and extent of these gaps as a means by which the strength of an organizational culture may be measured where the case of a mild gap corresponds to a strong organizational culture. In this way he almost eliminates the need of an outside consultant for bringing to the surface some of the deepest cultural elements in an entity.

### 3.2. John Schermerhorn's interpretation of Schein's ideas

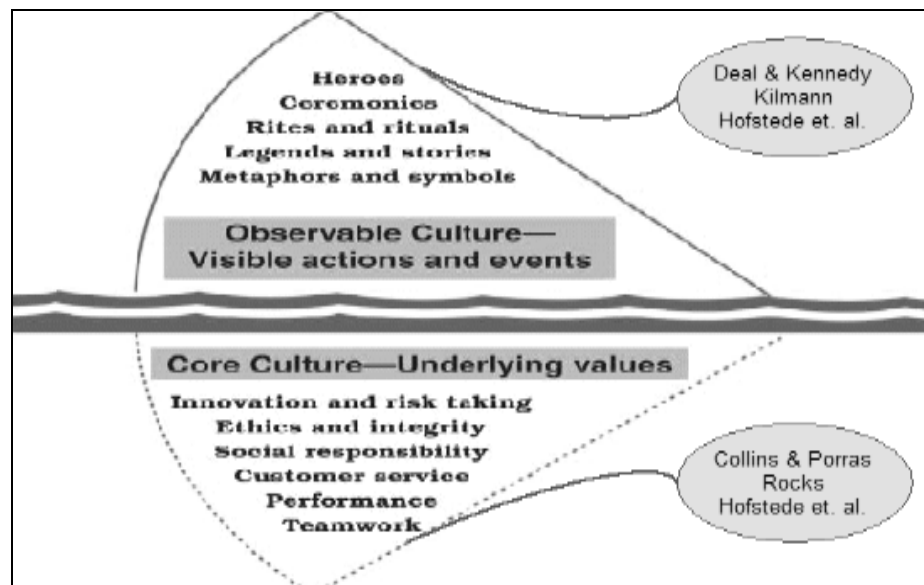
As one of the most persistent authors in the sphere of management, Schermerhorn proposes a simplified version of Schein's framework (Schein, 1997), probably taking into account that cultural sphere is just a peripheral part of the explored broader contents of management. He decreases the number of presented levels in the original model to two ones, relying on their visibility to an observer as a classification criterion. These levels are named respectively observable culture and

core culture and each of them has special characteristics, comprising the shape of an iceberg (Schermerhorn, 2011):

- **Observable culture** – it is located above the water surface and is easily examined. It encompasses everything an individual sees and hears, entering in an organization as a visitor, client, or employee. It is disclosed by adopted dress code, chosen facility layout, the way staff members communicate and behave with each other, the way they treat their clients, etc.
- **Core culture** – it is located under the water level and remains hidden. It consists in key values and basic assumptions, shaping and directing group members’ behavior.

The choice of organization culture illustration as an iceberg is not accidental. The new dress of the framework implies that there is something hidden, with unpredictable influence and dangerous in new and unknown environments a person has to act in while fulfilling his/her professional obligations (see figure 3). This “cultural stuff” lies beyond official processes, structures and hierarchies, in the field of “soft factors”, causing unpleasant surprises to the unprepared people. Additionally the author fills the milieu of each level with specific contents, using results from publications of his colleagues, as follows: (a) observable culture (Deal, Kennedy, 1982; Kilmann, 1984; indirectly Hofstede et. al., 1990); (b) core culture (Collins, Porras, 2006; Rocks, 2000).

Figure 3  
Edgar Schein’s levels of organizational culture through the perspective of Schermerhorn



Source: Adapted from Schermerhorn, 2011.



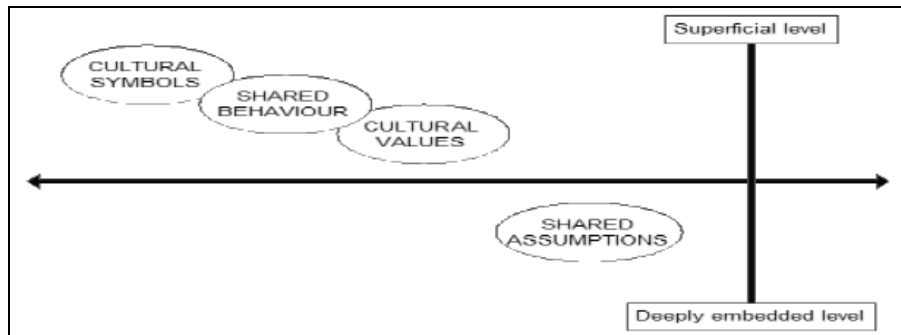
3.3. *The moves on the axis “values – assumptions” as a driving force for constituting a variation of Schein’s model*

It seems that Mirza Saiyadain (2006) initially preserves Schein’s number of cultural levels in the organization, but finally analyzes and roughly groups them on their cultural manifestations as tangible and intangible forms, monitoring the transformational process of a leader’s idea of a way of action for a certain group into a shared, conscious value or belief, and finally in some cases to a basic assumption. The scheme of the proposed levels is the following:

- *Level 1:* Artifacts, technology, visible and audible behavior patterns that make a target culture visible in various forms, but only at the superficial level. It may seem that staff members interact with one another but laying down the essence of underlying feelings or the availability of acceptable level of understanding among them would require probing in the target culture.
- *Level 2:* Validation values in physical and social environment. It is due to achieved continuous success in finding solutions of a given issue in ways which have been tried and tested earlier. Initially, the first solution to deal with a new issue or task is proposed by influential members of a group (i.e. leaders or founders). That is why it reflects some individual’s own concept of what is right or wrong, or what may work or may not work that habitually is questioned, debated, challenged, and tested by the other members. The undertaken joint action of the group and the mutual observation of the outcome of that action generate the shared knowledge of its members that transforms initial dominating perception “what the leader wants” into “a shared basis for determining the validity of proposed action”. If the solution proves it works, then the group members develop their shared perception of success that contributes to cognitive changes, turning this perception into shared values and beliefs. The cultural manifestations at this level are characterized by greater awareness and internalization.
- *Level 3:* Assumptions about human nature, human relationships and behavior that incarnate a process of conversion. The repeated observation that the method, applied earlier, works most of the time, transforms it into the “preferred solution” and gradually into non-discussible, taken-for-granted underlying assumptions (i.e. if success continues). The conversion process guarantees appropriate behavioral guidance of members, but it has the potential of influencing their capabilities of rational thinking and making objective analysis.

Saiyadain localizes the aforementioned three levels on a scale, limited by two extreme positions of superficial to deeply embedded levels. The process of conversion of cultural symbols to shared assumptions ensures their crossing the frontiers from a superficial level to a real internationalized level (see figure 4). The last one consists of current traditions, customs, and the ways of doing things, based on prior (continuous) success. Residues of such successes may be detected in many leading organizations as a culture of quality, competitiveness, customer satisfaction, etc., that show the results of internalizing organization culture levels.

Figure 4  
Saiyadain’s levels of organizational culture, based on Edgar Schein’s framework



#### 4. Associating Schein’s model with nature

The influence of two perspectives may be found here:

- Shaping the structure of the model as an onion (the vegetable perspective). This choice is made deliberately, because certain constituency’s unawareness of how things are done in a target organization have the potential to cause great issues in relations between the two entities. On the other side peeling of an onion as uncovering a target organizational culture is a tedious task (i.e. provoking tears) not only for the unbiased external consultant, but also to group’s members, participating in the discussions (Michelson et. al., 2012; Renando, 2012).
- Shaping the structure of the model as an apple (the fruit perspective). This choice is made deliberately, because the apple is a symbol of temptation to knowledge in the Bible (Baker, 2002). The greater number of elements from Schein’s model brought to front as separate levels is just an expression of the author’s military career, characterized by strict and detailed rules in everyday professional life and her keen interest in the organizational culture studies in atomic electric power stations, considering the on-going fear in the safe use of nuclear energy source in the context of the serious industrial catastrophes in such plants during the last several decades.

The chosen shapes for structuring the model may refer to the whole model as far as presenting detailed segments of a separate level.

##### 4.1. Presenting Schein’s model as layers of an onion

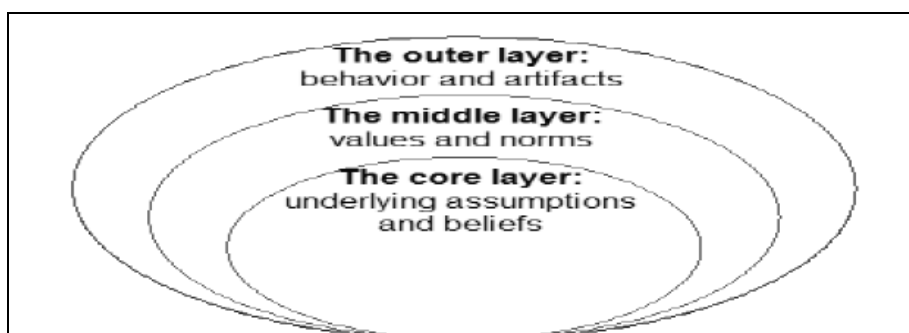
Schein’s initial view to organizational culture has passed through numerous citations and interpretations all these years that in turn enriched it. According to Michelson et. al. (2012) it bears a resemblance to layers of an onion with an outer, middle, and core layer, as follows (see figure 5) (Schein, 1985b, 1988):

- *The outer layer* encompasses behavior and artifacts, forming the observable cultural level. Arriving late to scheduled events, establishing insurmountable

boundaries between leisure time and work time, the inability to refuse or accept proposals (to say “yes” or “no”), etc., may be exemplary observable behavioral patterns. Artifacts as outward manifestations of culture may include language, food, literature, perquisites provided to executives, dress codes, level of technology utilized (and where it is utilized), and the physical layout of work spaces. The higher visibility of the attributes here is compensated by greater difficulty of their interpretation, etc. The items from this layer permit the unbiased observer finding an answer to the question “What is a group doing?”, but the reasons for doing it remain hidden. So, the question “Why does the group do this?” cannot receive a satisfactory answer.

- *The middle layer* refers to values and norms, held by the group. The difference between them is clearly defined, since values determine what is considered good or bad, and norms define how to act and what is considered right or wrong. Organizational values express shared preferences by group members for certain behaviors or certain outcomes over others. Values are not directly observable, but are used to explain to a great extent demonstrated behaviors. There exists a difference between stated and operating values in many companies that may become the primer source of disappointments, conflicts, alienation, and poor performance among group members and/or organizational constituencies. As a rule people in organizations tend to justify demonstrated behavioral patterns with stated values. Organizational norms express behavioral patterns, accepted by the other personnel members, and incarnate culturally acceptable ways of pursuing preliminary defined goals in the entity.
- *The core layer* represents the underlying assumptions and beliefs that in turn are the root causes underlying demonstrated behavior or professed (or operating) values. This is defined as the deepest cultural level which attributes originate from values that gradually become taken for granted by group members and drop out of their awareness. So, it is not surprising that people in the organization may be unaware of or unable to articulate their shared assumptions and beliefs.

Figure 5  
Schein’s levels of organizational culture through the perspective of Michelson et. al.



According to this scheme of analysis understanding of a target organizational culture means: (a) surveying all three levels; (b) defining the cultural unit that "owns" the target culture; and (c) snap shooting the efforts of organization's leaders, since they

are the driving force, generating and re-infusing organization's ideology, articulating values and specifying norms.

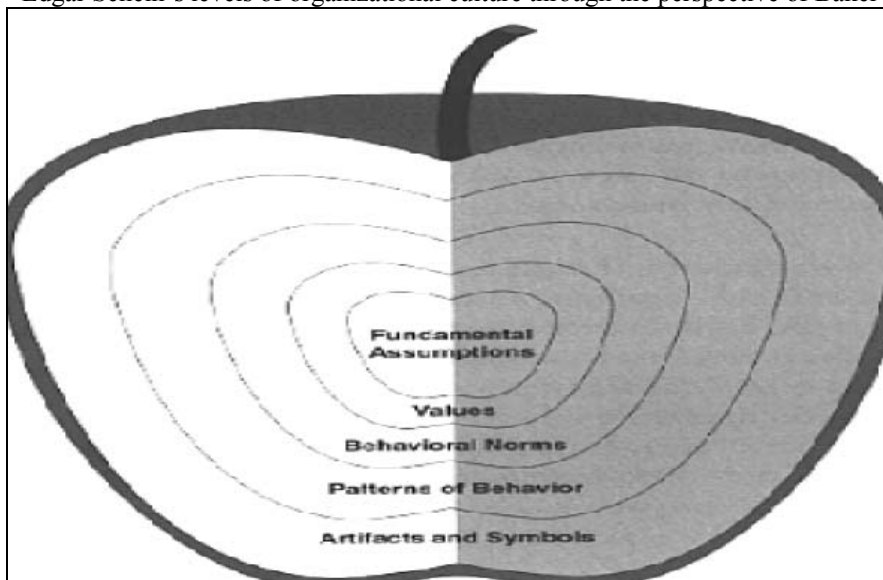
On the other side additional items, describing the contents of the outer layer, are mentioned here. First, behavior is not set up under the generalized attribute of artifacts that has survived all these years as a convenient simplification of a component in the model. Second, the used set of examples is a bit more different from the presented in the contemporary issues of Schein’s scientific production, adding richer nuances artifacts disclosure. On the middle layer the meanings, proposed for norms and values seem acceptable, although the contemporary point of view to values, provided by Hofstede et al. (2010) is much more detailed with a number of presented pairings, as follows: dirty versus clean, dangerous versus safe, forbidden versus permitted, decent versus indecent, moral versus immoral, ugly versus beautiful, unnatural versus natural, abnormal versus normal, paradoxical versus logical, irrational versus rational. Of course, it must be considered that Hofstede’s model of organizational culture groups together values, norms and basic assumption. So the greater diversity of value pairings, presented by Hofstede in comparison to Schein’s view, may be deceptive.

#### *4.2. Presenting Schein’s model as layers of an apple*

Another interesting perspective, taken over Schein’s work during the 1980s (Schein, 1980, 1985c), is demonstrated by Kathryn A. Baker who perceives the model as a multiple-level one with the form of an apple in which basic assumptions are the core and most important cultural aspect (Baker, 2002). The other cultural levels, following in-out direction are determined to be: values, behavioral norms, patterns of behavior, artifacts and symbols (see figure 6).

Figure 6

Edgar Schein’s levels of organizational culture through the perspective of Baker



The scientist considers that at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the deeper cultural levels (i.e. basic assumptions) become a bit more visible and articulated because of continuous managerial efforts and greater attention being directed at managing organizational culture. Here the author successfully searches for an analogy between development in the fields of organizational culture and knowledge management, stating that greater attention becomes directed at making tacit knowledge within an entity more explicit and accessible. Finally, she identifies a general trend toward more explicitly managing what previously was considered largely unmanageable in the organizations. Of course this conclusion became possible in a moment of time, preceded by at least two decades, overwhelmed by powerful forces, influencing growing interest to cultural studies, as continuous search for creative ways to improve their organizations' effectiveness by managers (incl. "soft factors" of success, magical or mysterious staff, interdisciplinary perspective, wider use of qualitative methods), increasing technological (scientific, research and development) complexity of all functions in the companies, intensifying global networking through information technology, growing wave of mergers and acquisitions, contributing to establishment of more multicultural organizations all over the world, the issues of global warming and sustainability that has become a matter of growing concern for leaders in organizations.

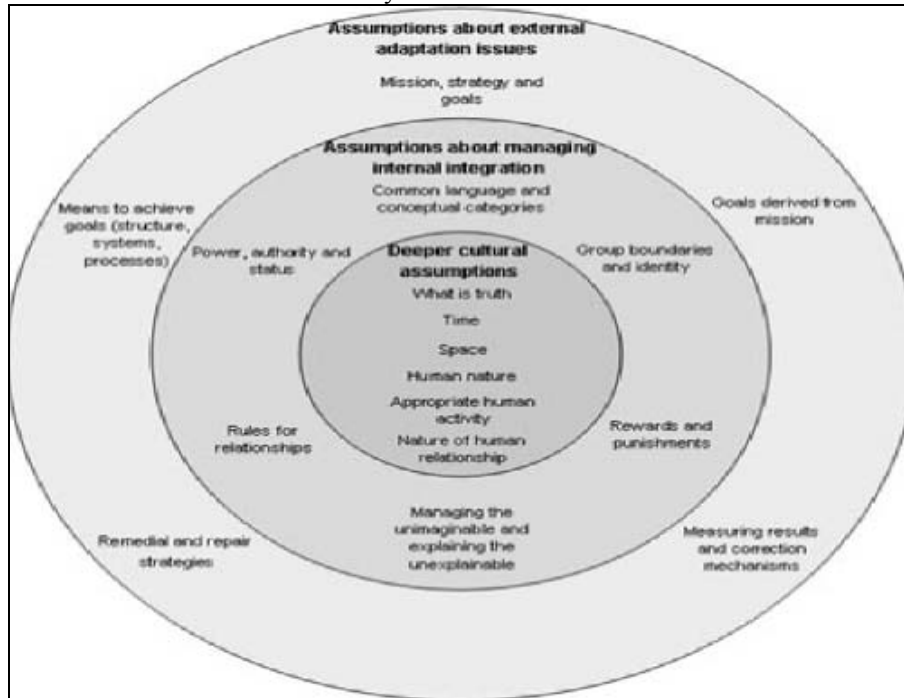
#### *4.3. Presenting Schein's set of basic assumptions as layers of an onion*

Chad Renando (2012) goes further in localizing on onion layers Edgar Schein's set of shared basic assumptions in the organization. Considering the leading role of two issues for each group – (a) dealing with group's external environment and (b) managing its internal integration, he sets up dominating assumptions about external adaptation issue as an external layer of the deepest cultural level in the organization (see figure 7).

The concrete steps of group survival and external adaptation constitute the contents of this layer. Logically, the second layer is occupied by dominating assumptions about managing the internal integration among group members. The contents in this layer are formed by sub-issues as creating a common language and conceptual categories, defining group boundaries and criteria for inclusion and exclusion, distributing power and status, developing norms of intimacy, friendship, and love among group members, defining and allocating rewards and punishments, and explaining the unexplainable (ideology and religion). The label of "deeper basic assumptions" encompasses issues, as follows: the nature of the truth, time, space, human nature, appropriate human activity, and nature of human relationship. The aforementioned issues of organization culture are clearly presented and analyzed in Edgar Schein's works (Schein, 2010, 2004, 1999, 1997, 1992), but without intentions of developing the idea of their further vertical segmentation. Instead, all these were presented as consecutive stages in a problem-solving approach that had to be applied in target groups and organizations.

Figure 7

Renando’s perspective in classifying by depth Schein’s set of basic assumptions as layers of an onion



## 5. Introducing new components into the original model

This is achieved in several ways – further segmentation of a chosen level (most frequently the surface level) or adding new cultural elements to its contents, establishing a new level or attaching a new useful element to emphasize the importance of certain cultural elements, articulating cultural processes, flowing in the organizations, creating specific infrastructure for “original cultural elements” that the respective researcher needs in his/her work.

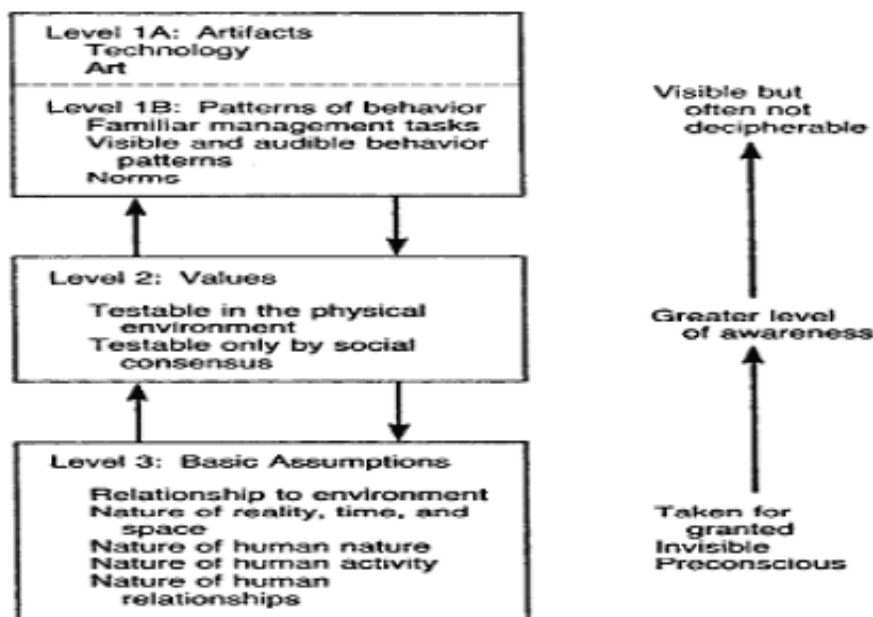
### 5.1. Additives to the first level

Steven Ott [1989] justifies the importance and higher efficiency in the application of Schein’s framework in managerial practice with ensured by its levels diverse frames of reference, determining how a person studies, manages in, and goes about, trying to change a target organizational culture. The scientist preserves the skeleton of Schein’s framework, adding to it new contents, new segments in some of the levels and proposes new application spheres. Considering the difficulty in interpreting artifacts without knowing the two deeper levels and the typical observer’s inclination to explore tangible objects, Steven Ott adds to the level of artifacts (i.e.

the first level) a new segment, called “Level 1B”, that encompasses patterns of behavior, introducing here such elements of organizational culture as habits, patterns of behavior, norms, rites, and rituals (see figure 8).

Figure 8

Steven Ott’s levels of organizational culture and their interaction



Source: Adapted from Ott, 1989.

According to Ott the second level of organizational culture – “Values and Beliefs” includes more attributes, as ethos, philosophies, ideologies, ethical and moral codes, and attitudes. It is characterized by author with useful terms as “cultural communications” and “justifications of behavior”. On this level the sense of what ought to be is deliberately differentiated from what is in reality during the great quest of revealing the ways in which the members of an organization tend to communicate, explain, rationalize, and justify their statements and deeds, and what sense they attach to the first cultural level attributes. The author takes into account that on this level it is impossible to acquire accurate information about a real organizational culture because of continuous discrepancies between espoused values (what people will say) and values-in-use in organizations (what people will do).

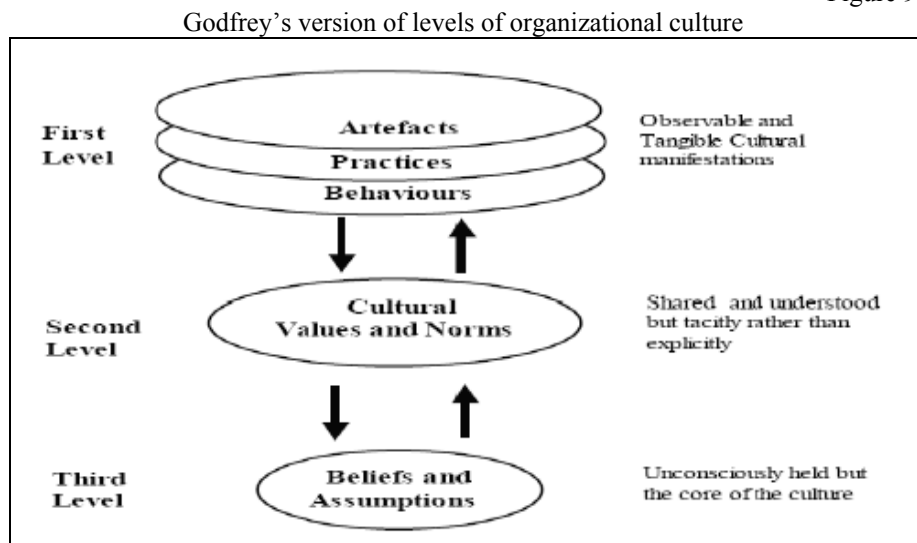
Concerning the third cultural level, Ott prefers using the term “theories-in-use” to applying Schein’s “basic assumptions”. He accepts “theories-in-use” as implicit assumptions that actually guide human behavior in terms of appropriate ways to perceive, think, and feel. Both scientists characterize the cultural attributes from the deepest level as non-confrontable and non-debatable by staff members. But Ott interprets basic underlying assumptions as “dominant values” which may differ from preferred solutions (what should be). At this level he situates cultural attributes as

spirit, truths, and “transactional analysis concept of organizational scripts”, only if “completely accepted and deeply ingrained” and existing in “members’ preconscious or unconscious” (Ott, 1989).

Elizabeth Godfrey (2003) applies Schein’s model of organizational culture levels in the sphere of education. She preserves the number of cultural levels in Schein’s model, but makes further segmentation to the first level because of identified sub-layers of cultural knowledge and understanding, as follows (see figure 9):

- *Artefacts* – cultural attributes visible to each visitor or newcomer written documents, mission statements, buildings, publications, dress, gender and ethnic composition.
- *Practices* – usually realized by the unbiased observer after a longer investigation of the structures and practices (even unwritten rules). The list of “the usual manner of doing something” encompasses curriculum and teaching practices, assessment, regular events and reward systems.
- *Behaviours*, defined as “observable responses (of human beings) as reactions to the outer environment” (other people, systems and procedures), i.e. responses to the academic environment, relationships, language, humour, and frequently “Behaviours encapsulated the “lived experience” or “enacted” cultural aspects”. Exploring behavioral patterns and standing reasons behind them requires establishing of trust among people in the organization.

Figure 9



Source: Adapted from Godfrey, 2003.

The second level of the model is directed to revealing the specific higher education as enculturation processes into a well-established system of practices, meanings and beliefs as students learn what it means to be a specialist in a certain sphere and interpret daily practices and behaviours to determine what is valued and rewarded as



academic and social success. At this level a distinction is made between clearly articulated espoused values, and tacitly understood cultural norms. Additionally, Godfrey presumes the existence of possible mismatch between cultural norms and espoused values.

According to the scientist the third level attributes represent shared assumptions grouped in seven dimensions, formed over time as educators and students together strive to find answers (first as individuals and second as a group) to basic issues of external adaptation and internal integration, interpreted successfully for the educational environment by Godfrey, and posed as questions (see table 1).

Table 1  
Godfrey's questions for classifying basic assumptions in the educational institution

Questions	Dimensions of basic assumptions
What kinds of knowledge are valued? What is seen as truth? Is there a prevalent "way of thinking?"	... way of thinking (for people with a certain profession)
What is the relationship of the culture of ... (a given professional sphere) to the rest of the university and academia in general, the profession and community?	Relationship to the environment
What is the primary task – how is it to be accomplished – is there a "right" way to teach/learn?	The way of doing (for specialists in a certain sphere)
What is considered the "right" way for people in this culture to relate to one another?	Relationships
Are there attributes and qualities inherent in being ... (a person, exercising a certain profession)? Who fits in and is successful?	Identity (for a certain profession)
Is it seen as desirable or necessary to have homogeneity or diversity in the members of the culture? How is difference accepted?	Homogeneity
How is time managed? Is the use of time seen as important?	Time

Source: Adapted from Godfrey, 2003.

### 5.2. Establishing a new level

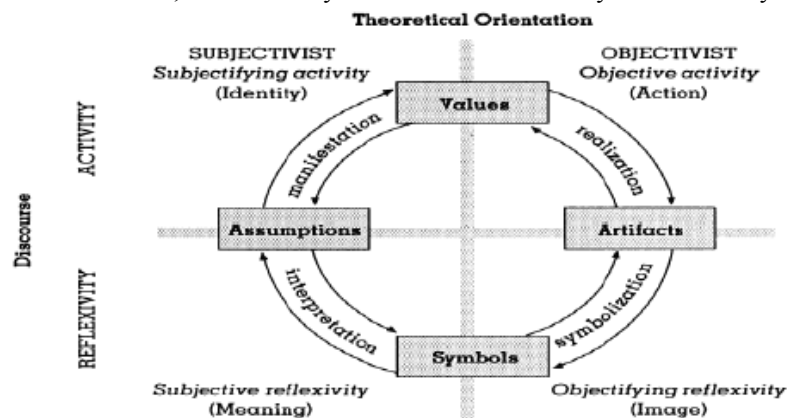
Mary Jo Hatch [1993] elaborates Schein's levels (1985a), because she identifies gaps in the model, regarding the appreciation of organizational culture as symbols and processes. In fact, she adds a new level (symbols) to the original structure (artifacts, values, assumptions) (see figure no. 10). By her variation of the model she tries to articulate the processes of cultural manifestation, realization, symbolization, and interpretation as constitutors of the aforementioned cultural elements. Thus, she creates a sound base on which a discussion of organizational cultures dynamism may be accomplished. Hatch's model is constructed as a wheel that implies availability of four points of entry to it for accomplishing a particular analysis, although the last is determined by chosen research question and method of study. Inherently, she preserves the depth and visibility structure of Schein's original model. But it has to be mentioned that the cultural dynamics model is devised for multiple use in its entirety. The scientist poses a stress on articulating the arrows linking assumptions, values, artifacts and symbols. In fact, these links represent processes, characterized by both (Hatch, 1993):

- Forward (proactive/prospective) temporal mode of operation, representing the role of activity in culture, and
- Backward (retrospective/retroactive) temporal mode of operation, representing the possibility of reflexivity and cultural consciousness.

Hatch even makes suggestions for appropriate methods of studying these four cultural processes, as follows: (a) manifestation (assumptions-values): visualization and scenarios; (b) realization (values-artifacts): ethnographic observation; (c) symbolization (artifacts-symbols): ethnographic participation, aesthetic techniques, and post-modern ethnography; (d) interpretation (symbols-assumptions): ethnographic interviews and discourse analysis;

A distinction between objective and subjective theorizing is made in the model, supporting simultaneously (bridging) the two perspectives: (a) “some things about culture can be reasonably discussed as if they exist independent of human observation”; and (b) “some aspects of culture cannot be objectified and are better theorized in terms of subjective experience”. Thus, a richer picture of organizational culture is created. The levels of values and symbols, lying on the border between objective and subjective realms, may represent qualities and characteristics of both domains, thus constituting “transformation/translation points” between them, implying the possibility of communication and coexistence. In fact symbols and values are situated between artifacts (external nature of the relationship, objectivist theorizing) and assumptions (no direct external referent, subjective theorizing). That is why assumptions are located in the quadrants of experience that have been most adequately theorized from the subjectivist perspective, whereas artifacts - from the objectivist one. The two types of theorizing may become sources of explanation for the processes, forming assumptions and artifacts, as follows: (a) assumptions, shaped by prospective interpretation and retroactive manifestation, are aligned with a subjectivist orientation; (b) artifacts, shaped by proactive realization and retrospective symbolization, are aligned with an objectivist orientation.

Figure 10  
Hatch’s cultural dynamics model, showing objectivist and subjectivist theoretical orientations, subdivided by the discourses of activity and reflexivity



Source: Adapted from Hatch, 1993.

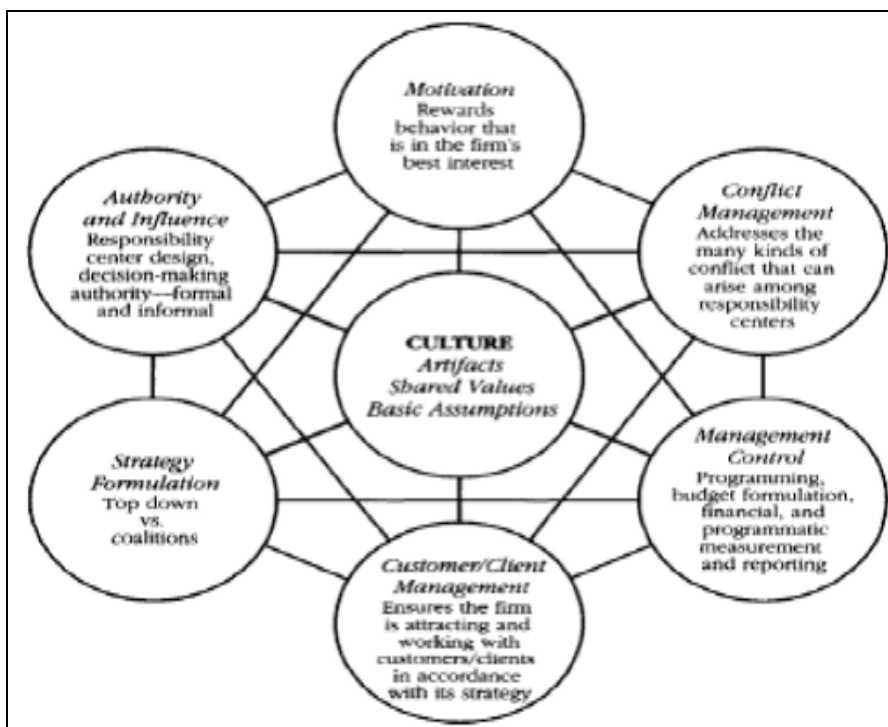
5.3. Specifying additional infrastructure for the original model

David Young (2000) concentrates his attention on the deepest level of organizational culture, especially defining the most important issue for senior management here, simultaneously relying on two approaches:

- “What it is” – the task of identifying those basic assumptions that may contribute to achieving the highest organizational performance. If these assumptions are already attributes of the dominating organizational culture, their maintenance is the next task for the leaders. In a case these assumptions are not a part of the organizational culture, then moving the firm toward adopting them represents the logical next task for the managers.
- “What it is not” – it is not choosing the "correct" basic assumptions.

Figure 11

Schein’s cultural levels under the influence of Young’s cultural levers



Source: Adapted from Young, 2000.

According to the scientist maintaining or transforming a target organizational culture at the level of basic assumptions requires addressing some of the fundamental ways in which the entity operates, incarnated in the so called “cultural levers”. The elements of this set of levers mutually reinforce their performance, if leaders in the organization apply them consistently, thus becoming important managerial tools. In the centre of influence, exerted by these levers Young situates Schein’s traditional

cultural level framework, using the more visible levels (artifacts and shared values) as keys to surfacing, and if needed changing, basic assumptions. The cultural levers represent organizational processes that senior management may use to either maintain or modify the existing culture in the entity or its target unit. The list of cultural levers included: (a) strategy formulation, (b) authority and influence, (c) motivation, (d) management control, (e) conflict management, and (f) customer management (see figure 11 for their descriptions). The difficulty in implementation of these processes as cultural levers may vary in different situations that justify the serious need of levers’ fitting together to mutually reinforce desired effects by each one of them.

By their labels the cultural levers seem similar to McKinsey’s 7-S Model, described by Peters and Waterman (1982). But there exist important differences in the contents (see table 2), and the two most important ones read:

- Several specific levers constitute the category, labeled by McKinsey’s model as “systems”.
- In their essence the cultural levers are to a greater extent process-oriented in comparison to McKinsey’s elements.

Table 2  
Comparison between Young’s cultural levers and the elements of McKinsey’s 7-S Model

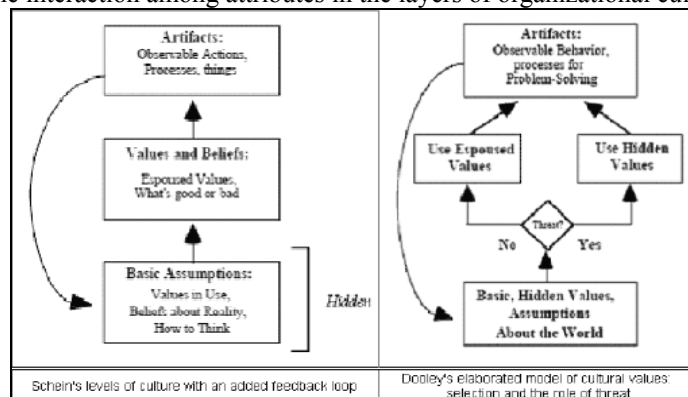
Label	Description of an element in McKinsey’s 7-S Model	Description of a cultural lever element
<i>Strategy</i>	The direction and scope of the company over the long term	Focuses on the <i>process</i> by which strategy is <i>formulated</i> , rather than on the strategy itself.
<i>Structure</i>	The basic organization of the company, its departments, reporting lines, areas of expertise and responsibility (and how they inter-relate).	Goes beyond organizational structure per se to how responsibility centers are designed and how authority and influence <i>flow</i> in the organization.
<i>Systems</i>	Formal and informal procedures that govern everyday activity, covering everything from management information systems, through to the systems at the point of contact with the customer (retail systems, call center systems, online systems, etc).	Unbundles "systems" into several key processes that constitute cultural levers, such as motivation, conflict management, customer management, and management control (programming, budgeting, measuring, and reporting).
<i>Staff</i>	The company's people resources and how they are developed, trained and motivated.	Considers staff not from the perspective of personnel categories, but from the cultural perspective. Focuses on how to imbue staff with the necessary shared basic assumptions that are consistent with the desired culture.
<i>Style</i>	The leadership approach of top management and the company's overall operating approach.	Does not consider managerial style explicitly, but rather recognizes that different managers will desire different cultures and will use the cultural levers differently to attain them.
<i>Skills</i>	The capabilities and competencies that exist within the company. What it does best.	Does not consider skills. Assumes that these will be attained via the recruitment aspect of the authority and influence process.
<i>Shared Values</i>	The values and beliefs of the company. Ultimately they guide employees towards 'valued' behavior.	Goes below shared values to shared basic assumptions, and hence to a deeper view of culture.

5.4. Inserting a feedback loop

Jeff Dooley (1995) adheres to the main concepts and contents of Schein’s organizational culture levels (1992), but poses an emphasis on adding a feedback loop suggesting that while artifacts emerge as consequences of basic assumptions and values and beliefs, they also reinforce and further embed basic assumptions within the core of culture. Additionally, Dooley pays attention to the greater difficulty in examining and understanding the deeper levels (values and beliefs, basic assumptions). His analysis of the second level starts with espoused values which are usually highly visible and often prominently posted (for example: “promote honesty,” “respect the needs of co-workers,” “strive for excellence”, etc.). Then relying on sound research results of Argyris and Schön (1978), he makes difference between espoused values and other, hidden values, guiding organizational behavior, especially under conditions of stress and uncertainty, experienced by personnel members. This shadowy, alternate group of values is rarely acknowledged openly by people in the organization and cannot be examined directly by unbiased observer, but inferred from behavioral patterns. There is often a continuous conflict between them and the espoused values and both sides may override at different times in this collision. That is why individual’s consistent acting in congruence with hidden values, maybe unknowingly, undermines the effect of other actions, adhering to organization’s espoused values, thus potentially decreasing organizational efficiency. The individual’s unconscious preference for hidden values is explained by the fact that they form Schein’s deepest cultural stratum (basic assumptions about...) which attributes frame and constrain human cognitive field, regarding everyday problem-solving in organizations. Dooley points that the main role of values is to drive undertaken action plans in congruence with the context of basic assumptions. Dooley supports Argyris’ view (1992) that such “value – assumption” contradictions intensify in situations when individuals feel the need to protect themselves from embarrassment or threat. All this urges Dooley to elaborate Schein’s model of cultural levels to depict in what way a perceived threat may lead staff members to preference of behavior, based on hidden values, although it may contradict to espoused values and in the long term – even undermine employee commitment to them (see figure 12).

Figure 12

The interaction among attributes in the layers of organizational culture



Source: Adapted from Dooley, 1995.

## **6. Schein’s Model – Preferred Application Spheres**

Differing people in backgrounds, frames of reference, aims, etc. have ensured the extensive use of the model all these years, thus deepening and in some cases even broadening the author’s original ideas of application spheres and situations for the framework.

### *6.1. The original ideas of Edgar Schein*

Edgar Schein’s view on the appropriate use of his cultural levels is inherently revealed in his book (2010), as follows:

- Directly, by presented examples of its use in several companies (p. 35-54) for studying of target organizational cultures. The reader is left with the impression that the utilization of the full potential, provided by this model is very slow and gradual process, especially for surfacing the cultural attributes from deeper levels.
- Indirectly, by the essence of needed collaboration between an external observer and focus groups during culture assessment initiative (p. 315-327), and by presenting the array of evolutionary cultural change mechanisms, applied by the leaders in the organization (p. 273-296), and a conceptual model for managed culture change (p. 299-314).

### *6.2. Schein’s framework as a criterion of classifying cultural theories*

Depth perspective in revealing organizational culture’s nature can be identified indirectly through Erets and Gatti’s classification of chosen cultural theories, constructed according to the degree of their differences in orientation to any of the three levels, defined by Schein (Erez, Gati, 2004). The researchers found that majority of studied frameworks aim at values, representing the average point on Schein’s continuum, set by the two extreme positions – respectively visible and invisible cultural elements. Second largest group of cultural theories that is identified, aimed at visible, external level, formed by demonstrated behaviors and applied practices in organizations. Negligible is the number of cultural theories, oriented to surveying the invisible and deepest level of organizational culture, embodied in the underlying assumptions (see table 3). In this way it seems that scientific community recognizes to great extent the contributions of Edgar Schein to development of cultural research.

Table 3

Classification of cultural theories according to their orientation to any of the three cultural levels, defined by Schein.

Level	Orientation of cultural theories
Artifacts	<p>House et. al. (1999) – in "GLOBE" project culture is appraised at external and visible level, embodied in demonstrated behaviors and organizational practices (author's note: as it is). This is not the only level at which the team of researchers carried out their research.</p> <p>Smith, Peterson and Schwartz (2002) – study the differences in behavioral norms used in conjunction with the applied leadership style by mid-level managers. By means of this style these managers deal with eight business situations such as formal rules, professionals who are not members of the unit, etc.</p> <p>Trompenaars (1994) – considers cultural differences, embodied in demonstrated behaviors, reflecting dominant values;</p> <p>Hofstede et. al. (1980, 2001, 2010) - six cultural dimensions which attributes are assigned in different formats - some oriented to the study of values, while others – to the study of behaviors.</p>
Espoused beliefs and values	<p>Chinese cultural connection (1987) – the values of China are explored and culture-free dimensions of culture are searched;</p> <p>Hofstede et. al. (1980, 2001, 2010) – they create the most widely recognized typology of cultural values in the context of organizational behavior. But it should be noted that the attributes that build the corresponding dimensions, are presented in different formats (e.g. oriented to values: "How important is it for you to work with people who cooperate well with each other?", and oriented to study of behavior: "How frequently, in your experience, do the following problems occur?").</p> <p>House et. al. (1999) – in "GLOBE" project culture is assessed at the value level. The orientation is toward espoused values (or aspirations) or how things should be.</p> <p>Inglehart &amp; Baker (2000) – they studied the relationship between economic development and changes in work values;</p> <p>Ronen &amp; Shenkar (1986) – grouped nations by indicators such as labor values;</p> <p>Schwartz (1992) – values represent three universal requirements for the existence of people that every individual and society as a whole need to take into account, namely: biological needs, the need for coordinated social interaction and needs for survival and prosperity of the groups. Each of the needs-based values is evaluated in order of importance.</p>
Basic assumptions	<p>Leung, Bond, de Carrasquel, Musoz, Hernbndez, Murakami, Yamaguchi, Bierbrauer, and Singelis (2002) – identify five pan-cultural factors of the social axioms, as follows: social cynicism, social flexibility, reward for application, spiritual consequence and fate control. The above mentioned axioms are taken for granted and are not subject to empirical validation.</p>

### 6.3. Person-job fit as application for Schein's model

Burk and Birk (2001) use the three levels of organizational culture as a means by which personnel selection activities in the entity may be analyzed and improved. The adaptation of Schein's model (1990) in HRM sphere becomes possible by mixing some of its elements with Ott's ideas (1989) with the main aim of boosting the performance of the organization as a whole. The scheme of three levels is used as a mapping tool for the available rich meanings, embedded within organization's

environment (see table 4). It may be used in realistic job previews, selection tests and interviews. Additionally, this tool may be applied not only by selection specialists of the company, but also by job-seekers. The logical result of the two-way deliberate efforts may be:

- *For the organization:* hiring the right people, higher job satisfaction by new staff members, lower employee turnover and lower training expenses for the organization, shorter period for reaching the required performance level by new employees, and
- *For hired laborers:* choosing the right organization, lower stress levels for new employees, and shorter socialization period.

Table 4

The list of available rich meanings, embedded within organization’s environment, by which may be assessed person-job-fit

Levels	Description
Level One: Artifacts/ Patterns of Behavior	Annual reports, vision/mission statements, artwork, office layout, where people sit and with whom, workflow, rites/rituals (e.g., company picnics, annual meetings, happy hour, promotion ceremonies), “water-cooler” talk, the language of employees (jargon, humor, metaphors), how and where daily interactions occur, etc.
Level Two: Norms/ Beliefs/Values	Hard work, long hours, creativity, quality work, seniority, longevity, neatness, work ethic, customer orientation (is the customer always right?), family orientation, gender equity, etc.
Level Three: Basic/ Underlying Assumptions	Employees can be trusted, organizational goals take precedence over employee goals, competitors are the enemy (us versus them), timeliness is next to godliness, individuals are rewarded and teams are not, etc.

Identifying some of the cues and clues in a target dominating organization culture is critical to the potential on-the-job success of each new employee. The knowledge, collected on these three levels, has to provide an explanation of what it means to be a member of a certain organization. Thus both constituencies form a baseline for assessing a job-candidate match. Such information may be acquired by internal surveys, individual interviews, focus groups, and astute observation, and using the services of an external consultant. The authors propose a sequence of five steps in integrating organizational culture into the personnel selection process of an organization, as follows: completion of an internal organizational culture analysis, distilling cultural “cues and clues”, communicating and consensus building, determining organizational culture selection criteria, and their implementation.

Here, artifacts and behaviors are considered the first cultural attributes job candidates behold in target organizations, and respectively HR specialists detect in job seekers. Both sides in employee selection process are still in the role of “outsiders” for each other, so the easy identification of artifacts is compensated by higher probability of misinterpretation. The last can be decreased, if the constituencies have the chance of going deeper to the second level, i.e. beliefs and values. But here the difficulty in surveying culture is greater, because the majority of organizational (individual) beliefs and values are not documented, although employees (or job seekers) understand them. For instance, an organization might or



might not value employees who work long hours even though this is not included in the employee orientation manual. On the other side a job applicant may accept or turn down longer working hours. Both sides want identifying sooner beliefs and values that cannot be found in the official organizational documentation in order to spare themselves futile money, time, and efforts. As a rule this is done through observation, interviews, and other qualitative methods. Spending a significant period of time in a target organization is a preliminary condition of identifying shared basic assumptions, whereby employees behave in a certain way without knowing why, because of their unconscious existence in human minds, referring to employees' orientation to time, space, the environment, and each other. The assumptions are not stated anywhere but constitute the daily routine of reaction to frequently occurring business situations without employees giving it a second thought.

6.4. Ott's view on the appropriate application of the model

Additionally, Ott shows his creativity in proposing several potential applications for Schein's model that he calls with respect "the typology of organizational culture" (Ott, 1989). First, the scientist classifies key words and phrases from diverse organizational culture definitions into the three levels in order to construct a useful matrix that may be used as a starting point for a manager to match his (or her) reasons for changing an organizational culture with the lenses for seeing it and the tools for planning and implementing appropriate change interventions.

Second, the scientist classifies various authors' writings about organizational culture (i.e. books and articles) into levels, based on set primary focus in them, which facilitates identification of their conceptual and methodological preferences (see table 5). Ott considers these cultural levels as points on a continuum, allowing him to classify different authors' works within a reasonable range, justified by dominating apprehension that study of cultures means a study of wholes.

Third, the aforementioned matrix may be used as an efficient device by a change agent to match alternative methods for changing or reinforcing a target organizational culture with his or her reasons for undertaking such initiative (see table 6).

Table 5  
Cultural levels and authors' conceptual and methodological preferences

Authors' perspective	Preferred research methods & instruments	Chosen change strategies
The level of artifacts and patterns of behavior	Behaviorally oriented methods and instruments for identifying organization culture (for instance, instruments that identify norms)	Behaviorist strategies for effecting changes in organizations (for instance, strategies for altering behavioral norms)
The level of values and beliefs	Borrowed from psychology, social psychology, and social constructionism	Strategies for changing personnel members' beliefs and values

Source: Ott, 1989.

Table 6

Matching the aims of a change agent and alternative change methods

The aims of a change agent	Preferred level for action
Achieving rapid, tangible, demonstrable, organizational changes (for instance, doubling productivity levels)	The cultural elements from the level artifacts and patterns of behavior in the organization
Attempting to understand and predict an organization’s long-term policy or strategic decision patterns	Orientation to the elements of levels “Values and beliefs’ and “theories-in-use”

Source: Ott, 1989.

#### 6.5. Hershfield et. al. ’s ideas of appropriate situations for use of the model

Hershfield et. al. (2009) propose Schein’s model (1999) as a trustworthy means by which to explore a target organizational culture. The team of researchers does not propose any elaborations of model’s structure or contents, but pays great attention to defining situations, appropriate for its use, as follows:

- The multiple use of the model over time is possible and may facilitate planning and implementation of challengeable organizational change initiatives, providing options for change agents of decomposing issues in smaller, easier manageable phases.
- Close end terms are pending.
- The needed resources, supporting the initiated change process in the organization are insufficient.
- Organization’s personnel is departmentalized to relatively small groups (units, teams) which makes it easier to explain concepts and lead discussions for surfacing basic assumptions.

#### 6.6. Godfrey’s contributions to the application spheres of the model

Elizabeth Godfrey (2003) tries to explain how things are done in the educational sphere by Schein’s model. The milestone here is that she understands education as a process of enculturation of trained people, following a top-down direction. In her variation of the model the scientist honors the contribution of typical social actors in this environment as: (a) university teachers, transmitting the academic side of culture through set curricula, pedagogical skills, demonstrated support of appropriate behaviours, given rewards to students, used assessment techniques, taught ways of thinking and reporting; (b) senior students, transmitting social values and cultural norms; (c) students’ peer group, affirming appropriate behaviours and practices through implementation of task-oriented friendships and support strategies. The author makes the conclusion that passing through a certain degree program, i.e. acquiring shared experience in what “worked” and was rewarded, helped the students learn and identify with the values and cultural norms, perceived congruent by them with the identity of a desired profession.

6.7. Pease et. al.'s contributions to the application spheres of the model

Katherine Pease et. al. (2005) uses Schein's framework [2004], considering inclusiveness perspective in the organizations. Thus, the researchers succeed in filling each of the levels with new contents, elaborating their analysis on research results by Thomas and Ely (1996) who studied organizational culture in relation to diversity and inclusiveness to identify three specific types of cultures, named: (a) discrimination-and-fairness culture (Assimilation); (b) Access-and-legitimacy culture (Differentiation); and Connecting diversity to work perspectives (Integration). Katherine Pease et. al. even specify specific cultural attributes at each level for each of aforementioned types of organizational culture (see table 7).

Table 7

Katherine Pease et. al. interpretation of Schein's framework

Cultural levels – essence	New contents, concerning inclusiveness	Types of cultures		
		Assimilation	Differentiation	Integration
Surface level – the physical environment and the symbols, language, and visible products, created by the organization.	Inclusive organizations possess physical environments, welcoming people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds; use inclusive language; and official documents for communication, containing inclusive images and language.	Images in publications and around the facility are mostly homogeneous.	Images of people of color in publications and around the facility are generally found in specific places where people of color are most likely to view them.	Images in publications and around the facility are mostly heterogeneous.
Espoused values - the values of the leadership in relation to goals and strategies.	The leaders of inclusive organizations believe strongly in developing goals and strategies that address the assets and needs of communities of color at a programmatic level.	The leader articulates a belief in a color-blind management approach and states that he or she does not see differences; encourages others in the organization to do the same.	The leader actively seeks diversity for the staff and board with the intent of having people of color work on programs, outreach, fundraising, etc., that are specifically targeted at communities of color.	The leader communicates and actualizes a clear vision of a diverse and inclusive organization where the needs, viewpoints, and assets of all people are valued and integrated into the entity.
Basic Assumptions - the beliefs, perceptions, and thoughts that are unconscious but are integral to the way the organization functions (some of them may be brought to the surface).	Inclusive organizations integrate an awareness of the assets and needs of communities of color into everything they do. Their core values include a belief that everyone has a powerful contribution to make within the organization. The extent to which an organization's basic assumptions include a commitment to inclusiveness is fundamental to the foundation of an organization's culture.	Organizational culture reflects white dominant culture; norms go undiscussed or unchallenged; people from diverse backgrounds are expected to act like the dominant culture.	Organizational culture values differences between groups, but the full contributions of people of color are undervalued except insofar as they provide access to communities of color.	Organizational culture values people from all backgrounds and encourages people of color to utilize their skills and knowledge to increase the organization's relevance to communities of color; and the organization encourages people of color to participate actively in the work of the whole entity.

Source: Adapted from Pease et. al., 2005.

## **7. The Hologram Perspective of Looking at Schein’s Model**

The use of metaphors for generating explanations of social phenomena is recognized to possess both:

- Advantages as possibilities of crystallizing complex social facticities and generating new ways of thinking about certain phenomena (Grant and Oswick, 1996; Morgan, 1996) and
- Insufficiencies as potential analytical limitations and blindspots (Mangham, 1996; Reed, 1990).

One basic rule determines the appropriate choice of metaphors, i.e. establishing an acceptable level of their congruence with a target object and the spirit of the time. As a rule the majority of new metaphors originate from technological innovations that opened new ways of seeing and of reconstructing social perception and experience (Adam, 1990, p. 157-160). So, visualizing Schein’s original model and its versions as a holograph:

- Means seeing it as a unified entity (see figure 13), and
- Permits reconciliation of its inherent confusions and contradictions, deriving from differences in conceptual-theoretic identity and empirical facticity (see figure 14).

The technical and social aspects of holograms are clearly explained by Keenoy (1999) as two distinct, discrete processes, occurring simultaneously and existing in different realms: (a) based on laser-technology; and (b) based on human perception of holographic illusions as depth, contour, shade, shape, etc. It seems the relationship between the observer and the observed object comes of great importance, since holograms clearly demonstrate that: (a) observation is a creative act in its essence; (b) humans see only this they are searching for; and (c) changes of viewpoint have to be undertaken by an individual to see shaded, deeper facets and fissures of an object's identity. That is why the hologram ensures a metaphor, illustrating social reality as a multi-dimensional, multi-causal, mutually implicated and constantly changing facticity. So it is not surprising that Schein’s model of organizational culture levels changes its appearance, as different researchers approach to it from diverse stances, with different necessities and perspectives (spheres of model application, time period of research, encountered issues in undertaken scientific projects, etc.).

This is why, conceptually, Schein’s framework appears to be a moving target that undergoes numerous empirical fixations in its forms. In holograms the observer is implicated in what is observed and vice versa. That is why when mighty social actors (scientists, consultants, managers, etc.) act in response to their perceptions, they actively constitute and (re)create Schein’s model, as if simultaneously perceiving and projecting its nature (the number of defined levels, the structure and contents of each level, the essence of relationships between the levels, etc.). This perspective of perceiving Schein’s framework supports (embraces, or dissolves) (see figure 15):

Figure 13  
The language richness in expressing the original cultural levels, proposed by Edgar Schein

artifacts	THE FIRST LEVEL
artifacts (observable actions, processes, things)	
cultural attributes	
observable culture (visible actions & events)	
superficial level (cultural symbols & shared behavior)	
The outer level (behavior & artifacts)	
artifacts and symbols, patterns of behavior, behavioral norms	
artifacts (technology, art), patterns of behavior (familiar management tasks, visible and audible behavior patterns, norms)	
The first level (artefacts, practices, behaviors)	
artifacts & symbols	
surface level (physical environment & symbols, language & visible products)	THE SECOND (MIDDLE) LEVEL
espoused beliefs & values	
values (professed culture & tacit assumptions)	
core culture (underlying values)	
superficial level (cultural values)	
The middle layer (values & norms)	
values	
The second level (cultural values and norms)	
values & beliefs	
norms/ beliefs/ values	
espoused values	THE THIRD (DEEPEST) LEVEL
basic assumptions (theories-in-use)	
norms	
core culture (underlying values)	
deeply embedded level (shared assumptions)	
The core layer (underlying assumptions and beliefs)	
(layers of) shared basic assumptions	
fundamental assumptions	
The third level (beliefs and assumptions)	
assumptions	
basic/ underlying assumptions	

- *Paradoxes* – for example, the artifacts an observer may see, smell and touch are less useful (precise in uncovering real meanings) to exploring an organizational culture, than unconscious, taken for granted, beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings; different interpreters of the model bring to front different elements from it and in varied number, etc.
- *Defining contradiction* as merely the absence of logical coherence, not of rationale, practical harmony or pragmatic accommodation. That is why according to specific application spheres for the model, specific necessities of the users, and their subjective experience with it, it may exist with varied number of levels, different contents of cultural elements in each one of them, additional specific infrastructure, etc. Even concrete spheres of application for the model are not perceived as mutually excluding alternatives to the initially proposed

universal application, but as nuances, better embracing certain investigative problems.

Figure 14

Edgar Schein’s model as a map of differing authors’ interpretations

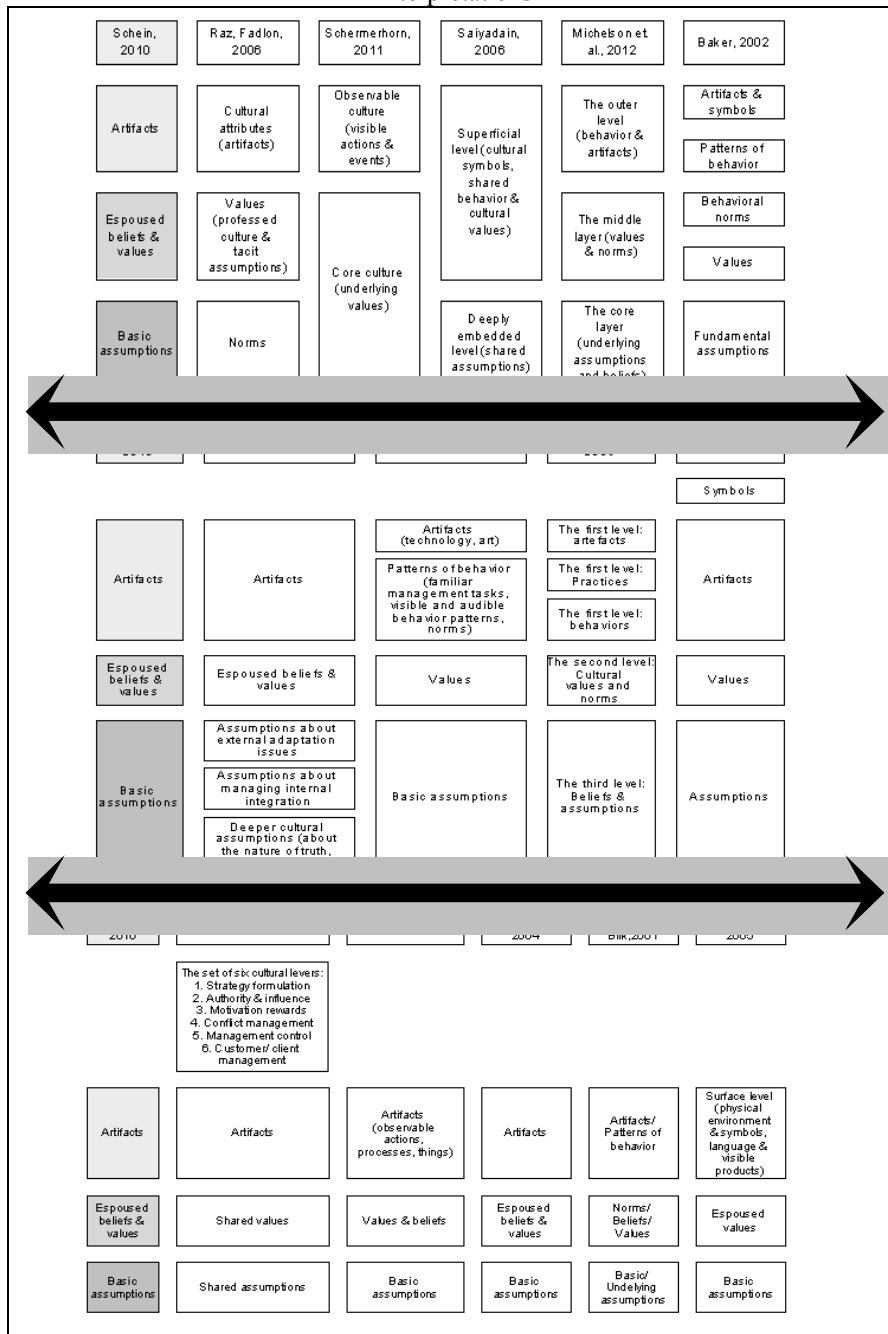
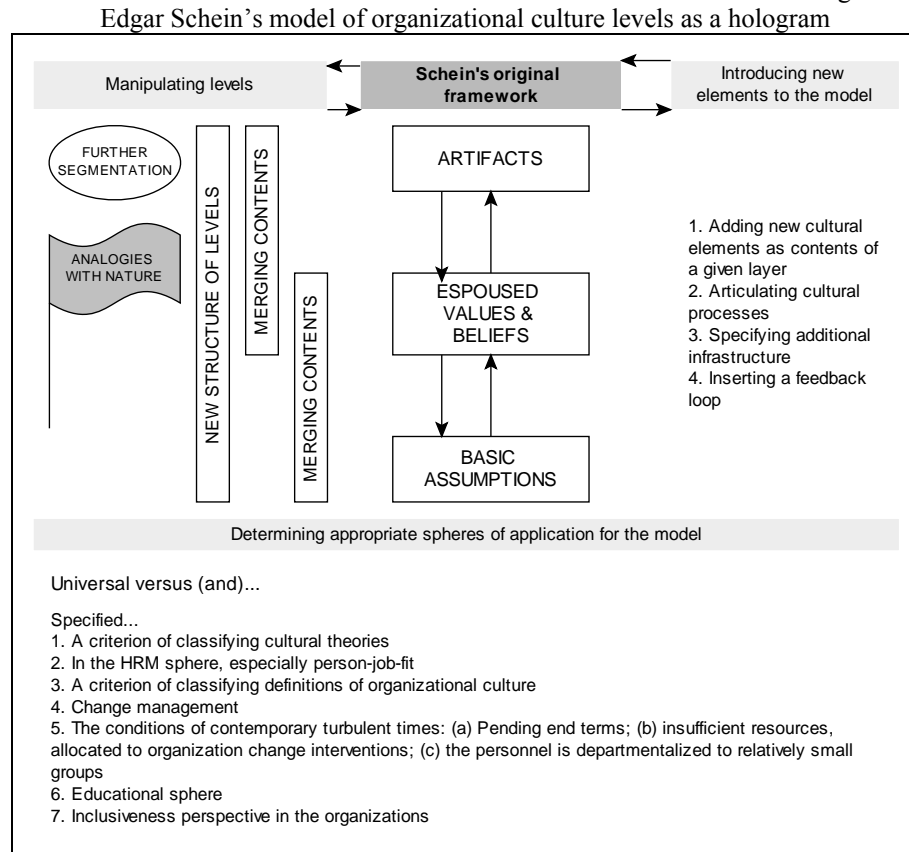


Figure 15



- *Uncertainty* – for instance, the quality of contributions by an external consultant, hired to work from the position of an unbiased observer; the engagement of the personnel members in discussions, aiming at surfacing key cultural assumptions, etc.
- *Ambiguity* – for example, it may be related to abstractness of used terms as “cultural attributes”, the extent to which the observer is unbiased, etc.
- *Multiple identity* – for instance, artifacts may be interpreted in diverse ways by an observer, but their real meanings are inferred by penetrating into the deeper levels of values and assumptions; the model may be used in organizations from different spheres: business, public sector, non-profit, etc.
- *The process of becoming rather than being* – for example the transformation of values into assumptions and vice-versa, etc.
- *The proposed versions of Schein's model* may be treated as rhetorics and critical activities by which social actors routinely try to reconstitute social reality, endeavors in which words frequently may speak louder than actions.

## **8. Conclusions**

The assembling into a whole of the presented versions of Edgar Schein’s model is not intended to cause confusions to researchers, but has to be accepted as a possibility of real enrichment of a “snapshot”, taken at a target organizational culture and a serious attempt in dissolving any subjectively identified issues or deficiencies in the original framework, based on:

- Satisfying specific needs of acquiring cultural knowledge by different constituencies.
- Specific involvement of different social actors with the phenomenon of cultural manifestations in the entities.

It seems that in this way the model attains the characteristic of resilience, justifying its ability to undergo certain rearrangements in its structure or to set in motion additional elements, that otherwise would exist passively, under the influence of specific circumstances (identified issues, specific application spheres, etc.), and again to restore its original structure for multiple and usual use.

Teaching of this model at the university is considered obligatory as regards Schein’s original framework with its contents. The insufficient social experience of students, striving for their bachelor’s degree, requires extensive use of examples from real organizations by the lecturer in order to ensure a good level of understanding the essence of this model by the audience, and makes almost impossible the task of teaching the enriched view of this framework (the original model plus identified variations). On the contrary, the students, striving for their master’s degree, possess at least several years of diverse experiences in real world organizations which makes the “talk” considerably easier and increases their interest in the cultural sphere. They have learned in their own ways that truth may be more than one, different people may hold differing stands to an issue, the most difficult task is to be in someone’s shoes, only half of their success is due to what they know and can perform (the other half is due to who they know), and learning the “unspoken rules” in an organization is a key to establishing good relations with colleagues, superiors and partners, etc. That is why they are mentally ready and motivated to exert greater efforts in order to apprehend Schein’s framework as a hologram.

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