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EMOTIONS
CALL FOR SPECIAL ISSUE
SENSUALLY EXPLORING CULTURE AND AFFECT AT WORK

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This special issue seeks to provoke renewed thinking and stimulate ideas surrounding how culture is experienced through the senses. As Martin (2002: 161) suggests, given the increased attention to emotion in recent organizational theory, an approach that can tackle the aesthetics, lived, experienced dimension of culture may provide inspirations for exciting new research vistas. This is especially so in light of the affective turn and interest in non-representational theory within the wider social sciences (Thrift, 2007). If we are to explore what culture ‘feels’ like for organizational members in contemporary workplaces, and their “intensities of feeling, emotional attachments and gut reactions” (Liljestrom & Paasonen, 2010: 1), we must suggest that cultural encounters are created and constituted through perceptual, cognitive, material and embodied interaction.

The concern with culture, be it organizational, subcultural, national or popular continues to linger in the academic debates within management studies (e.g. Ybema et al., 2010; Organization Science, 2011). Invited to interrogate the essence of this miasmatic concept, the ways that we share, experience, feel and embody its presence imply that the tentacles of culture go far beyond normative forms of logic and communication and implicate the sensory dimension of lived experience. Indeed, an underlying suggestion that culture cannot be grasped through logocentric accounts alone can be traced to 1980’s corporate culturism where a manufactured culture may be shared through the use of ‘artefacts’, or visible signs such as organizational traditions, rituals, heroes and stories. Simultaneously, an instantiative view of culture of various hues critiqued functionalist paradigms of culture and focused on the interactional and symbolic processes through which actors in organizations ‘accomplished’ their worlds (Chan, 2003; Frost et al., 1991; Smircich, 1983; Martin, 1992). More recently a ‘cultural studies of organization’ approach (Rhodes & Parker, 2008) has made use of popular culture resources and techniques to understand and deconstruct organizational life, focusing on the meanings of social action in both a productive or consumptive context. So too have particular forms of postcolonial analysis denaturalised the textual strategies used to organise racial inequalities and the latent imperialism of a variety of culture management and marketing activities (Priyadharshini, 2003). However, in these fields of interest, sight and vision - in line with the wider ocular bias of Western societies - remain the privileged sense for the leveraging of social control or influence implicit in culture management initiatives.

Whilst the current field of organizational aesthetics helps us focus on the ‘don’t-know-what’ of organizational life (Strati, 2007) tales of our senses being managed, manipulated and controlled remain unrecorded by scholars although are often discussed in media and practitioner circles (Tischler, 2005; Lindstrom, 2010). Sensory marketing is now estimated to be worth more than \$5 million worldwide, and with impending computer technologies such as ismell and SENX on the market within 3

years, the traditional boundaries between virtual and ‘authentic’ sensuality continue to blur in our daily experience. Within the workplace, UK travel call centres broadcast ‘natural noises’ and infuse the air with the smell of suntan lotion to motivate agents on the workfloor. Elsewhere, buildings are architecturally designed to be silent but pump in air-conditioning noises to allow confidential discussion in an open plan office, whilst music may be a ‘gift’ to workers that can be bequeathed or sanctioned (Korczynski & Jones, 2006). All this suggests that, like cultural products and objects, sensory experiences can become a ‘lubricant for the system’ (Adorno, 2001:117).

However, notwithstanding some notable exceptions that explore how knowing and competence are achieved through the senses (e.g., Strati, 2007; Candau, 2000; Hindemarsch & Plinick, 2007) less is understood about the ways in which actors in organizations feel, smell, touch, taste, hear or otherwise sensually negotiate culture and the social relations that it constitutes. Perhaps this is a consequence of the textualization and visualisation of culture that has dominated recent scholarship in a variety of disciplines, organization studies included, with “its tendency to downplay the sensory and the material in accounts of society and culture while conceptualizing cultural phenomena as discourses, texts of systems to be interpreted” (Liljestrom & Paasonen, 2010: 1). As a response, a cross-disciplinary ‘affective turn’ (Clough & Halley, 2007) has emerged to reconsider non-representational and embodiment issues in the development of theoretical and empirical accounts of work and organization.

Subsequently, we invite contributions exploring the following indicative areas:

- How might we better understand the cultural circuits that stimulate affective work through a sensory lens?
- How, and with what kinds of success, might a consideration of the senses aid the theoretical and conceptual development of culture at work?
- What might be the implications of the ‘affective turn’ in the social sciences for the study of the senses, emotion, work and organization?
- What is the sensory experience of, living in/through/by culture at work?
- In what ways is culture constructed, understood or reproduced through sensual or polysensory processes?
- How might sensual methodologies provide us with new insights into organizational culture? What ethical issues are implied?
- To what extent does organizational engagement with the senses privilege or silence particular groups, bodies, or types of work?

We particularly welcome ambitious studies that go beyond a Western/Eurocentric hierarchy of the senses and take into account thermoreception, coenaesthesia, vibration, nociception (pain), movement or proximity to other bodies. These areas are already explored in disciplines ranging from anthropology to physiology (e.g., Bessour & Perl, 1969; Stoller, 1989; Classen et al., 1994).

Anonymised full papers no longer than 7000 words (not under review elsewhere), using IJWOE guidelines for authors, should be e-mailed to sensesatwork@essex.ac.uk by 31st March, 2012. Refer to submission practices at <http://www.inderscience.com/mapper.php?id=31#submitting> for further details. Please address any queries to the special issue editors on the above e-mail.