INTEGRATING SOCIETAL CULTURE AND CORPORATE CULTURE THROUGH WORKPLACE DESIGN

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of Cornell University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

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January 2005

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the connections between societal culture, corporate culture, and workplace design, highlighting the importance of employees' societal culture to the effectiveness of design within multinational corporations (MNCs). Models of culture, behavioral theories, and research on workplace design are reviewed to explore their inter-relations. An exploratory case study using the narrative method, describing the design process of a new office facility for the Latin American division of Discovery Networks International, is presented to illustrate the salient points discussed. Findings from this study support related research conducted by such as Lincoln, Hanada, and Olson (1981); England (1983); Erez and Earley (1993); and Mendenhall, Punnell, and Ricks (1995) that the consideration of contextual societal culture is relevant in managing human resources and promoting employee satisfaction and efficiency. The considered case illuminates certain conflicts that arose when traditional corporate-culture-influenced design clashed with the societal culture of the new office's denizens. These conflicts manifested in areas involving (a) private space, (b) worker autonomy, (c) personal expression, and (d) hierarchical reinforcement. The narrative also illustrates how resolution of the issues was possible through an integrated approach that took into account aspects of both societal culture and corporate culture in the design.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lulua was born on August 7th, 1977 in Calcutta, India. Born and bought up in Secunderabad - a city in southern India, she completed her high school in 1993. Always fascinated with design and problem solving she proceeded to Bombay to pursue her diploma in Interior Design. She has been the recipient of many awards at inter-college design competitions including the 'best design of the year award' for her design project in her final semester. After graduating from P.V.P Polytechnic, S.N.D.T University in December 1998 she worked in Bombay before moving back to Secunderabad, her hometown in May 1999. From May 1999 to June 2000 she worked in an architectural and design firm called 'Kasim Ali Khan & Associates.' She also worked and assisted in 'Nandita-Vikas's' glass artist studio on the weekends. Lulua, began her graduate studies in fall 2000, at Virginia Tech., VA. She transferred to Cornell University in the fall of 2001 and continued her graduate education towards a Master's degree.

To my husband and best friend Murtaza,

for his love, support, patience and sunny disposition.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank many people that have played a role in helping me achieve my Maters degree.

A special thanks to my family for their love. My parents, ShaikAhmed and Batul Khambaty deserve a special credit for raising me to achieve my best and their trust in me. My second set of parents my in-laws; Maleka and Yusuf Khorakiwala also have been extremely encouraging and supportive towards my graduate studies and career. I thank them immensely for this. Rashida and Fatema - my sisters for always being there for me and my friends – Sameena, Arshad, Deepa and Dharmesh.

My thesis and graduate degree would not have been possible without the endless support and love of my husband. Inspite of the long drives he had to undertake every weekend to visit, his weekend visits kept me focused on working hard during the week and helped me discipline myself to take time off work and studies during the weekend – a challenge for any graduate student who has tons to do.

I would also like to say a special thank you to Sheila Danko - my committee chair and thesis advisor for her guidance and help during my thesis process. Her balance of mentoring and pushing me to explore alternative ways of thinking about design will help me become the person I hope to become. I would also like to thank Prof. William Sims - my committee member for all his useful advice, kind support and being a wonderful teacher. A special thanks to Christopher Budd. His insights are key to the research in this thesis. My thanks also go to Prof. Gary Evans, whose teaching taught me a great deal about research methods and principles; Prof. Jan Jennings for being an inspiring teacher whose class discussions not only taught a great deal about the course matter but also helped her students ‘see beyond’ the subject at hand.

My thanks also go to Prof. Paul Eshelman, Prof. Alan Hedge, Prof. Kathleen Gibson, Prof. John Elliott, Prof. Franklin Becker, Prof. Nancy Wells, Prof. Lorraine Maxwell,

Prof. Mark Pierce, my friends and colleagues who have made my graduate experience at Cornell exceptionally rewarding. It indeed has been a priveledge to work with the best professors and among talented colleagues here at Cornell University.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MNC – Multinational Corporations

DNI – Discovery Networks International

DNI-LA - Discovery Networks International – Latin America