



Organizational Trauma and Healing

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Definition of Culture

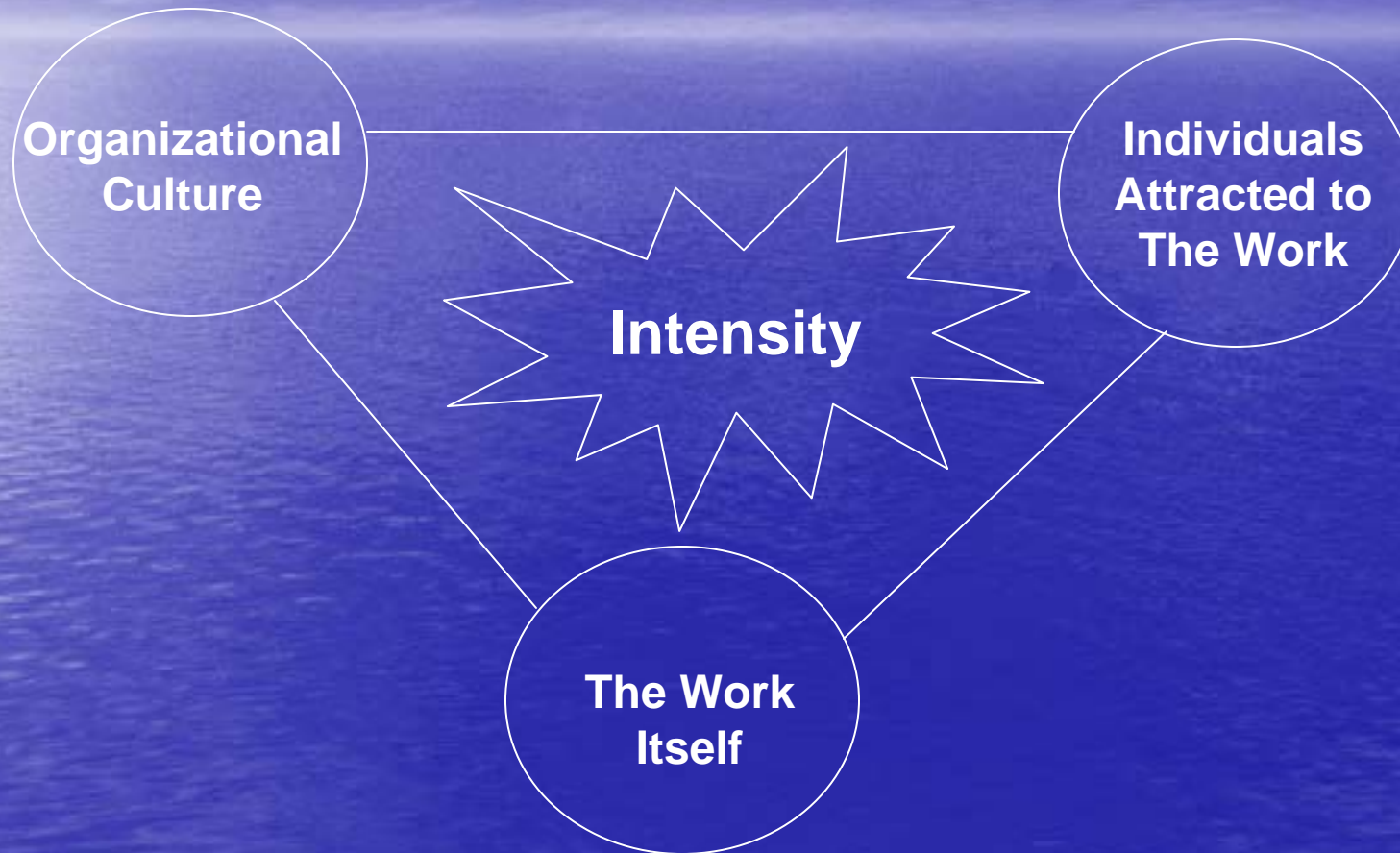
Edgar Schein defines culture as:

“The deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic ‘taken for granted’ fashion an organization’s view of itself and its environment.”

The Work Influences Culture

- Creation story and rationale for organization's existence
- The "struggle" and formation of individual and collective identities
- Relationship of the organization to society
- Internal dynamics

Individual-Work-Culture Connection



Organizational Trauma

An injury to an organization resulting from a single event or the impact of an accumulation of events.

Severe distress from experiencing a disastrous event outside the range of usual experience.

Sources of Organizational Trauma

- Single or cumulative injurious event(s)
- Origins of organization
- Redemptive nature of the work
- Empathic nature of the work
- Resulting internal dynamics
- On-going trauma may result from interaction of all of the above

Characteristics of a Traumatized System

- Closed boundaries between organization and external environment
- Centrality of insider relationships
- Stress and anxiety contagion
- Loss of hope

Intervening in Organizations with Unresolved Trauma

- Name the trauma and normalize individual and collective responses
- Contain the anxiety and allow emotional expression
- Understand the experience at the organizational level

- Make meaning collectively
- Ask for outside help if necessary
- Identify priority actions

Intervening in Organizations At Risk for Cumulative Trauma

- Understand the organization's identity and culture
- Open system to outside information and energy
- Build and strengthen relationships with the external environment

- Develop a learning organization
- Surface organizational strengths
- Create norms for organizational resilience
- Nurture the organization's spirit and engage in renewal

Thank you!

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