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# Network-Domains in Combat and Fashion Organizations

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Abstract. *This article adapts and extends the 'network-domain' concept from Harrison White's* Identity and Control *in order to consider how social ties are interwoven with domains of meaning in organizations. Our interpretation claims that modalities of behaviour in organizations are consequences of identities' persistent movements among positions in network-domains as well as organizational efforts to manage these movements. This idea is outlined through discussion of two organizational antipodes: combat operations and fashion design. While combat operations require internal group cohesion and constrained individuality, the fashion industry is based on the distinctiveness of designs and the display of personal tastes. Despite clear differences, however, we trace how attempts at managing movements among network-domains are central to identities in both contexts. This effort builds on the generally accepted understanding of identities in organizations as labile and socially constituted and thereby contributes to bridging micro/macro and structural/cultural gaps in organizational theorizing.* **Key words.** *culture; fashion; identity; military; social networks*
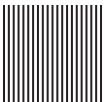
All work in organizations is performed under conditions of ambiguity and limited resources. Despite dramatically different settings, sizes and

specialties, basic activities are carried out across organizations in order to sustain intended efforts. Whether in highly regulated state sectors or highly volatile cultural markets, performance metrics are designed and disseminated, qualified personnel are recruited and retained and some sense of collective belonging is created and cultivated. Insights into these activities have emerged from a broadly framed research agenda anchored in the study of social networks, whether focused on internal ties among personnel or ties in an industry among organizations themselves (e.g. Burt, 1992; Castells, 2000; Cook, 1977; Dodds et al., 2003; Nohria and Eccles, 1992; Powell et al., 2005; Stark and Vedres, 2006; Tsai, 2001). Despite these advances, theoretical work linking macro-level network relations and micro-level identity formation across diverse organizational settings has lacked consistent development (Doreian and Fararo, 1998; Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1994; Fuchs, 2005). To help bridge this gap between structural form and cultural content in organizational theorizing, we adopt and develop a multilevel framework articulated by sociologist Harrison C. White in *Identity and Control* (1992, 2008), the first edition of which has been called a 'significant' theoretical statement of social network analysis (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1994).

We outline an account of identities in organizations spun out from the concept of a *network-domain*, abbreviated as *netdom*, a term that attempts to capture the interweaving of network ties with domains of meanings and, as Grabher (2006) notes, is central to the entire *Identity and Control* framework. White defines an identity as 'any source of action not explicable from biophysical regularities, and to which observers can attribute meaning' (1992: 6). We use the network-domain concept to discuss how identities emerge and evolve according to their position in networks of social ties and cultural domains embedded in organizations. While it is generally accepted that identities are socially constituted, our perspective implies that identities and netdoms arise interdependently and are therefore 'co-constitutive' in ways comparable to Bourdieu's 'theory of practice' (e.g. 1977), Giddens's 'structuration theory' (e.g. 1984) or Weick's 'enactment' theory (e.g. 1979). An important premise of this perspective is that identities continually seek control in their environments and thus establish and re-shape ties to other identities. This is similar to Stryker's understanding of the 'self' as a 'structure of identities' that emerges from social interactions (2007: 1092). Identities are not, however, isolated 'Leibnizian monads' reducible to a set of innate proclivities or 'self-subsistent entities which come preformed', as in certain rational-actor approaches, but are instead 'relational' (see Emirbayer, 1997: 283). A consequence of this relational context is that identities may be transient, as in the temporary coalescence of a political campaign or a project team. Even if identities seek stability, they are dependent on stochastic movements across networks (Watts, 2002) and emerge from contexts largely beyond their control. Note that this per-spective is not incompatible with the 'identity control' approach (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Although this latter view conceives of control as the

regulation of identities by organizational managers, we see attempts at control as endemic to all identities in organizations, regardless of rank, and across seemingly disparate domains of collective activity.

The first objective of this article is therefore to outline one account of how modalities of behaviour in organizations are derived from identities' movements among netdoms and attempts at managing these movements. This analytic goal requires a multilevel perspective applicable to the variety of activities that are carried out in organizations, thereby beginning to address the micro/macro and structural/cultural gaps in theorizing. The second goal of the article is to specify how the network-domain concept can build on the generally accepted understanding of how identities in diverse organizational settings are socially constituted. Like White (2008: xvii), our motivation is less *why* than *how*. As our review of relevant studies shows, we claim that micro-level dynamics of identity, control and netdoms drive broader changes in organizational behaviour.

Since revisiting empirical material can be well-applied for the purposes of theoretical elabouration (Vaughan, 1992), we refer to two instances of organizational activity, combat operations and fashion design. Also, because 'varying both organizational form and function is crucial' for this exercise (Vaughan, 1992: 176), we select organizational activities that are theoretical antipodes. Combat and fashion organizations are extremes of a continuum in terms of how identities emerge and evolve from network-domains encompassed by organizations. In addition to the fact that both cases are regularly discussed and even caricatured in the popular imagination, we exploit clear differences in scope, setting and size to show how our framework can build on the now generally accepted idea that identities are socially constituted. Discussing concrete instances of organizational activity will clarify the utility of *Identity and Control* concepts and reveal an important analytic consonance between how identities are socially constructed from netdom dynamics. Because the aim of our article is theoretical, we revisit published empirical work, an exercise used in theory development by White himself (2008) and also in Dutton et al. (1994), as examples. The latter work, for example, discusses the '3M salesman' detailed by Garbett (1988), among other cases, to develop the authors' theory of 'organizational images and member identification'.

We begin by framing combat operations as predicated on group cohesion, the limitation of individuality and the search for potential threats, whereas fashion is grounded in designs' distinctiveness, the assertion of personal tastes and the search for new modes of stylistic expression, at least in industrial and post-industrial societies (Wilson, 2003). Military units in some battlespace seek to disable the expression of an enemy's hostile intent through the disruption and neutralization of its integrity as an armed threat. In turn, fashion houses enable the expression of consumers' taste through the organized production of sartorial appearance, as expressed on the catwalk and in fashion magazines. Combat capability is built through carefully crafted training programs, group rituals and appearances, e.g.

uniforms, rank and branch insignia and idiomatic expressions. In contrast, Benjamin notes that fashion is the 'antithesis of uniforms' (quoted in Molotch, 2003: 259) since there is no bootcamp to tell people how to dress, although conventions and trends are observed. Therefore, the volatility and dynamism of fashion markets, alongside the unpredictability and complexity of combat operations, offers fertile ground for exploring the interpenetration of social structure and meaning as basis for identities in organizations.

To accomplish our objectives, we introduce two sets of concepts derived from *Identity and Control*. The first set, *disciplines* and *rhetorics*, embeds identities in concrete and routine work activities oriented toward some goal. These two mechanisms provide a sort of common organizational netdom through which collective goals can be posited and pursued. The second set of concepts, *styles* and *regimes*, links identities to their socioeconomic and historical contexts. These mechanisms delimit, constrain and enable identities' movements among different netdoms that are deemed desirable in an organization. By using these two sets of concepts in order to show how an understanding of netdoms can enrich organizational theory, we adapt and develop the ideas in *Identity and Control*, which does not include extensive discussion of organizations (White, 2008: 210–212). Although the entire conceptual framework applies fully to our two instances of organizational activity, space concerns restrict the discussion of the first set (disciplines and rhetorics) to combat and the second set (styles and regimes) to fashion. We then conclude with a summary of our contribution to organizational theory and discussion of directions for further exploration of these concepts.

Netdoms from Catwalks to Battlespaces

Positions in networks of social ties imply access to certain sets of meanings, e.g. the parlance of a certain workplace or the sartorial expressions associated with a particular lifestyle. Identifying the appropriate mode of interaction for social situations is not necessarily a straightforward task. Everyday life is therefore abundant with instances of strangers trying to establish some common points of reference, as in queries about where one is from, where one went to school and so on. These instances reflect efforts at mitigating ambiguities in an interaction by identifying a common netdom and thereby understanding how an interaction should unfold. For example, at the beginning of the current war in Afghanistan, a senior US commander recounts that highly sensitive discussions with then Pakistani leader Pervez Musharraf were smoothed by shifting to a common and familiar netdom: 'This was a soldier-to-soldier exchange, and Musharraf fell naturally into the idiom of military acronym and jargon' (Franks, 2004: 227). Although perhaps not in situations of such gravity, identities are nonetheless regularly challenged to find viable ways to move among netdoms as required by workplace demands.

Stryker's work captures the network basis for the multiplicity of identities to the extent that people may have 'as many identities as there are organized systems of role relationships in which they participate' (2007: 1092). It is important, however, not to reify network ties and their respective domains of meaning but to instead focus on how information derived from a netdom is regularly deployed by an identity, as in cases where familiarity with a domain of meaning eases certain interactions. In this sense, our use of netdoms is comparable to the 'frames' of Goffman (1974), the 'orders of worth' that coexist, sometimes in rivalry, in organizations (Girard and Stark, 2003), the 'justification regimes' of the French conventionalists (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006) and the source of a person's habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). Our approach is distinct but not incompatible with the social psychological perspective that describes an identity in organizations as a 'self-concept', which is defined as 'an active, interpretive structure that is continually involved in the regulation of on-going behavior' (Markus and Wurf, 1987: 328). In an extension, Dutton et al. (1994) study the dynamic relationship between the self-concept of an organizational member and the images this member has of an organization. The 'perceived organizational identity' is how internal members see the organization and the 'construed external image' is what internal members think external actors think about their organization. In a similar vein, Hatch and Schultz (2001) describe the consequences of mismatches or 'gaps' among the perceptions of an organization held by employees (culture), managers (vision) and external stakeholders (image).

Central to our view of netdoms is the idea that any 'actor must continuously address both commensurability and mismatch of different meanings implied by positions in these networks' (Corona, 2007: 122). Negotiating interests associated with multiple identities is a key feature of social life to the point that discussion of a person's multiple identities is 'now commonplace' in sociology (Markus and Wurf, 1987: 301). Consider contentious public debates as collisions of meanings derived from different netdoms, as shown by research on post-9/11 deliberations on the future of the World Trade Center site in Lower Manhattan (Corona, 2007; Girard and Stark, 2007; Polletta and Lee, 2006). The challenge here was to craft some mechanism for the organized expression of competing meanings tied to the netdoms of Lower Manhattan constituencies. A clash of netdoms is also discernible in a more recent controversy regarding the acceptance of US Defense Department funding by social scientists (Social Science Research Council, 2008). Although important issues of professional autonomy emerged in this debate, it is interesting to note very clear differences between the netdoms of social scientists at elite universities and military officials managing defense research initiatives.

Contact among very different domains may also generate intensely felt ruptures in micro-level interactions. Bearman states, 'When new network underpinnings intersect with conversation domains, situations can arise … if the discussants are imagining that they are in different

"domains", difficult and embarrassing situations occur' (2005: 162). But such 'situations' and moments of friction can also lead to innovation, as expressed in the 'sense of dissonance' described by Stark (2009). In a convivial setting, for example, American writer Nathaniel West created 'a considerable stir' in the Paris of the 1920s by wearing a bowler hat and tuxedo at a party of his 'coarsely clad bohemian writer friends' (Davis, 1992: 65–66). A visible tension emerged between netdoms associated with the party's social circle and West's formal dress, thereby triggering a new fad of wearing bowler hats and tuxedos at bohemian parties in Paris.

Other work argues that concepts of 'the individual' or 'the organization' should be understood dynamically since identities negotiate and traverse boundaries. Burt, for example, claims that such a dynamic view should be seen as an alternative to category-based approaches: 'attributes aren't ruled out as a useful guide for discovering structural processes. They are ruled out as an explanation' (1992: 191). Similarly, the post-bureaucratic literature emphasizes how intra- and inter-organizational boundaries become blurred as a response to the uncertainties yielded by rapid technological change (e.g. Kellogg et al., 2006; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2005). Stark and colleagues (Beunza and Stark, 2004; Stark, 2009) show that innovative practices emerge from 'heterarchical' organizational forms that distribute authority laterally and organize a diversity of 'coexisting logics and frames of action' (Girard and Stark, 2003: 1929).

Constraining tensions or clashes is necessary for collective action. Concatenations of ties become consolidated to perform tasks, be they immediate needs like the provision of food and the construction of shelter or more complex activities like the defense of a nation-state and the production of status markers. According to this view, certain robust concatenations of social ties become organizations (White, 1992, 2008), which we view as formally constituted networks of identities that are bound together through specific sets of shared meanings and that act upon other identities in their operating environments. The need to control constant movements among netdoms is the context from which organized activity emerges. Therefore, if markets emerge from signals across networks (White, 2002), we explicitly extend the *Identity and Control* account to say that organizations emerge from movements, managed or not, across netdoms.

Disciplines and Rhetorics for Mobilizing Identities

Disciplining Identities at Work

In facing the turbulences of social life, identities in organizations strive to navigate ambiguities in interactions with peers, superiors, subordinates, clients and others whom they encounter throughout the course of their career. As attempts to manage these relationships, rules, practices and tools are implemented to add structure to identities' 'contending efforts at control', attempts which together constitute what can be called a discipline (White, 2008: 81). Organizational goals are pursued by coordinating and

orienting—that is, disciplining—ties and exchanges among personnel. This is not to say that efforts at management are always successful but rather that the ambition is to lend structure to internal operations in pursuit of a desired end, e.g. profit-making in firms. Consider the plethora of performance metrics used to assess and manage the careers of personnel or an organizational chart as two examples of efforts to discipline organizational ties. From this perspective, bureaucracy itself can be seen as a managerial innovation fundamental to the institutions of Western modernity since it created a distinct netdom that decoupled and delimited a structural position in an organization from the private netdoms of a person occupying it (Weber, 1922/1968). We do not imply that organizations and their personnel always act rationally or even seek to do so, but that they must continually anticipate and address ambiguities in their environments.

There are perhaps fewer organizational contexts characterized by pro-found ambiguity than a battlespace and its 'fog of war'. Identities of friendly forces and civilians must be protected while attempting to ascertain and neutralize enemies' identities and intentions. It is not surprising, then, that research on military organization since World War II has increasingly paid attention to how robust combatant identities emerge as a product of social ties, as opposed to political attitudes (Janowitz, 1960; Moskos, 1970; Stouffer et al., 1949). Training programs and informal rituals are at the core of this purposeful attachment of identities to organizational netdoms throughout a military career. Commanders recognize that combatants' will-ingness to effectively engage an enemy combatant is ultimately anchored in the strength of ties to their peers, what has become popularly understood as the closeness shared by a 'band of brothers'. Marshall's work on combatants' willingness to fire on the enemy notes the 'inherent unwillingness of the soldier to risk danger on behalf of men with whom he has no social identity (…) However much we may honor the "Unknown Soldier" as the symbol of sacrifice in war, let us not mistake the fact that it is the man whose identity is well known to his fellows who has the main chance as a battle effective' (1947/2000: 153). Disciplining movements among netdoms in military organizations must therefore nurture this kind of strong group cohesion if operational readiness is to be sustained.

The intensity of unit cohesion is a vital and recognized organizational value, so while patriotic rhetorics remain salient, interpersonal ties to group netdoms appear to ultimately sustain the coherence of such organ-izations. This concept of unit cohesion is a well-studied aspect of military organization, described by one commander as the 'psychological glue that held an outfit together' (Franks, 2004: 79). Such cohesion requires a strong embedding of service members into organizational netdoms and its associated meanings and values. These processes of embedding must overcome other salient identities and meanings for a combatant. If a service member is not effectively decoupled from netdoms that are not compatible with organizational ends, defection or deviant behaviour may be the result.

For example, in a study of Confederate desertion rates during the US Civil War, Bearman (1991) found that a locally based identity became more salient than a national Confederate identity, thus leading to desertion. This was a case of a failed attempt at disciplining ties that led to severely impaired operations.

As we have suggested, organizations attempt to orient interpersonal behaviour toward ends that have been posited as desirable. Leaders mobilize personnel through status and material rewards in order to extract useful labour. As White writes, 'Each discipline is a mechanism of social action that configures an identity, but only as adapted to some context' (66). As a result of this disciplining, certain identities in organizations emerge as roles and are tasked with performing activity valued by the organization, whether formally prescribed or informally emerging. Such identities can occur informally yet still exert a strong force on how a combat organization seeks to achieve its goals. Consider group behaviour in a Marine company preparing for deployment:

> … As with any warrior culture, leaders emerged, lines of loyalty around those leaders were drawn, separations developed among the followers (…) and tribes were born. [The tribes'] longevity was a function of the loyalty toward their respective leaders… It was not so much the position of the Marine that mattered, as it was the loyalty of this following. This loyalty was the air that breathed life into the lungs of the tribes. (Williams, 2005: 81)

In this case, the role prescribed by official protocols, e.g. tasks delegated to a platoon sergeant, is not the primary determinant of interpersonal tie formation among combatants. Rather, loyalties bind certain subgroups of identities together and constrain their interactions with others. Such roles are labile insofar as they may be re-shaped to discipline identities that perform valued work. Similarly, one journalist traveling with a Marine reconnaissance battalion during the Iraq War noticed that, '[The gunnery sergeant] and [the lieutenant] function not so much like autocrats but like parents. At times, [Gunnery Sergeant] Wynn almost seems like a worried den mother, whose role is to soften the more aggressive messages [the lieutenant] gives the men' (Wright, 2004).

Despite a discipline that de-emphasizes *difference*, militaries must leave room for the possibility of *distinction* in order to motivate valour and sacrifice among personnel. Military organizations therefore award decorations for meritorious service while chevrons and insignia denote rank. Subordinates are supposed to know that they are addressing a superior by the rank insignia on their uniform, while particular certification badges, like the famous black and gold Ranger tab in the Army, add a distinct layer of prestige. As symbols of rank, they also become important symbolic elements in settings where identities collide. According to a Marine infantryman during the first Gulf War, after his superior commits a serious error, his chevrons are ripped off and 'stomped (…) into the sand' by the captain, symbolizing an impending demotion (Williams, 2005: 219). In this case, militaries are special cases of organizational activity in the sense that rank

insignia worn on apparel are perhaps among the most straightforward ways through which to determine one's position in an organizational context. The device immediately communicates the status of a service member and how he or she must be addressed.

Rhetorics Guiding Movements among Netdoms

Within an organization, rhetorics are discourses that guide how identities attach meaning to the practical everyday activities they undertake and how they negotiate competing demands emerging from the netdoms in which they are embedded. When crafted and deployed by leaders, they are used to mobilize identities in pursuit of some organizational goal (White et al., 2007). Consistent with the framework of Meyer and Rowan (1977), rhetorics can be seen as the means through which institutions are gradually made durable and legitimate as social formations (White, 2008: chapter 5). As applied to our cases, White's conception of rhetoric deals with how organizations guide movements by their personnel among netdoms, as in how they should interact with colleagues, clients and others. This view dovetails well with how other scholars have understood the 'process of fitting work into a meaning system' (Fine, 1996: 90). Fine's analysis of restaurant kitchens focuses on rhetorics deployed by personnel themselves rather than those consciously disseminated by employers. He writes, 'Through occupational rhetoric, workers justify their work and explain to themselves and their public why what they do is admirable and/or necessary, a form of impression management' (1996: 90).

   Green et al. explain that 'although rhetorical theory is broad and complex,' a distinction can be made between the 'classical rhetoric' approach which is focused on the 'rhetor' and the 'new rhetoric' approach focused on the audience (2009: 13). It is particularly this latter instance that we see as crucial to describing how netdoms in organizations guide identities. As a discursive construct that is available to both rhetors and audiences in organizations, rhetorics enable and sustain the disciplining of social ties by enacting what is often referred to as 'framing' in journalistic accounts. Since rhetorics are crafted to guide identities' action, they may be invoked most vividly during crises and during seasonal or contentious rituals like anniversaries, budget negotiations or investitures of new leaders. Rhetorics can also be deployed in lower-level contexts such as project teams or in higher levels, as in the narratives that frame the creation of a nation-state. Perhaps most relevant for organizational studies carried out during a deep economic recession, the rhetorics of elites can themselves become fads and their adoption fashionable among organizational consultants, as in total quality management, known as 'TQM' (e.g. Abrahamson, 1997; Barley and Kunda, 1992; Zbaracki, 1998). The salience of these rhetorics for personnel should not, however, be dismissed as mere posturing by a few ambitious cheerleading personnel since they can 'provide the ideas and vocabularies with which managers can communicate legitimate accounts of how they manage their employees' (Abrahamson, 1997: 492).

In military units, rhetorics are usually associated with widely held beliefs about the defense of a nation, its geopolitical roles and its 'way of life'. Rhetorical explanations for combatant motivation may be associated with both a general appreciation of the nation's geopolitical interests and meanings of personal courage and duty. To foster the embedding of organizational members, rhetorics are strengthened through references to belonging in certain netdoms, usually expressed as a 'family' or acting as 'one' in pursuit of some overarching goal. A recent edition of the *Army Officer's Guide* describes institutional improvements made in the Army's 'extended organizational family' and states that, 'in many important ways, the Army itself is a family; in fact, it is a family of families' (Bonn, 2005: 408, 410). This is an instance in which rhetorics help reproduce netdoms that strengthen the collective identity of the organization.

Military units can also craft rhetorics for describing 'how things get done' in a particular setting and how they distinguish themselves from other groups. Consider inter-service differences in tactics and structure, as in the perceived contrast between a corporate-like Air Force and the more tribal-like Marines. Rhetorics usually involve widely promulgated statements about the vision, mission, values, history and future of an organization, crafted and reinforced by both leaders and subordinate personnel. Rhetorics in this regard enable the reproduction of an organization's set of netdoms. In US military academies like West Point, for example, continuous assessments and various exercises are designed to imbue cadets' actions with the rhetorical meanings of official values of 'Duty, Honor, Country'. Different rhetorical terms also illustrate how cadets' positions in Academy networks are perceived by their peers and superiors. For example, a cadet who decides to leave or is asked to resign is officially 'separated' from the Academy, while being caught for violation of the 'honor code' is referred to as being 'found' (Lipsky, 2004: 35; see also Ruggero, 2002). Similarly, one can detect rhetorics in the structures of careers since organizational values related to performance expectations are encoded in career systems.

As Fine's analysis suggests, rhetorics of organizational personnel, especially those in the lower levels of an organization, need not be consistent with the official dictates of leaders. In one case, a Dartmouth-educated Marine lieutenant serving in Iraq perceived the plainly articulated rhetorics through which his subordinates interpreted their roles in toppling a foreign regime. When queried by a comrade about the drive behind US-led Operation Iraqi Freedom, a Marine corporal responds, 'I guess I'm fighting for cheap gas and a world without [terrorists] blowing up our fucking buildings' (Fick, 2005: 251). Similarly, contrasting the sophisticated geopolitical rationale of elite policy-makers with the less refined yet often more zealous rhetorics of the enlisted military, the journalist Kaplan notes, '… like all militaries, its ranks required a more aboriginal level of altruism than that of the universalist society it sought to bring about' (Kaplan, 2005: 247).

Rhetorics as discursive accounts for and of organizational action can certainly fail, as in the untenable and ultimately glaring discrepancy between

the realities of deprivations in the Soviet bloc and official pronouncements about 'real, existing socialism' and Communist Party achievements. In other cases, rhetorics cannot meaningfully influence the behaviour of personnel because of the absence of other discourses to sustain them. In the early American officer corps, for example, professional rhetorics could not effectively influence behaviours without certain netdoms to sustain them as they did in other national militaries. Skelton writes, 'The clause prohibiting conduct 'unbecoming an officer and a gentleman' may have had meaning in the British service, with its commonly accepted aristocratic values, but it was too vague to serve as a normative guide for a body of men as heterogeneous as the American officer corps. Although not without influence, the mere existence of regulations and manuals could not produce uniformity and cohesion' (1992: 39). This discrepancy could also be observed in Congressional debates over 'benchmarks' set for the US-backed Iraqi government during the last years of the George W. Bush administration: could (or should) American-born rhetorics of democracy and progress be applied to a dramatically different sociopolitical context and political tradition? In considering the role of netdoms in organizations, attempts to extract purposive behaviour from groups must be understood in the context of rhetorical systems designed to mobilize identities.

Rhetorics thereby provide guidance for identities' interactions and traces of their performance over time, as observed in a career. Like disciplines, rhetorics can be used by well-positioned identities, e.g. officers or managers, to assert their interests and shape other identities, as in the 'identity control' approach (Alvesson et al., 2008). A degree of rhetorical flexibility is, however, useful in situations that demand distinct and potentially conflicting kinds of roles. While such experiences are not necessarily harmful, their successful negotiation requires some kinds of cues or guidance as to how an actor should proceed. As Danna Lynch notes, a 'management of inconsistencies between cognition and behaviour' is required in order to respond to the 'implied threat to the coherence or integrity of the self' (2007: 392). An example of this rhetorical flexibility in a military context involves a shift from large conventional operations to missions that involve peacekeeping and nation-building capabilities. The nature of modern military roles has increasingly been characterized as one adapted to the 'three-block war', one in which 'Marines could be passing out rice in one city block, patrolling to keep the peace in the next, and engaged in a full-scale firefight in the third. Mental flexibility was the key' (Fick, 2005: 48). Rhetorical flexibility entails a recognition that different identities may be responsive to different exigencies.

Sensibilities and Templates for Control in Netdoms
Interweaving Styles in Fashion

Patterns may be discerned among identities' movements among netdoms and labelled as styles. They can be understood as shared 'sensibilities'

that determine the 'interpretive tone' of some social setting, with actual practices as the 'signature' of this tone (White, 2008). Since styles are associated with personal, organizational or even national identities, they are 'scale-free' or 'self-similar' (Abbott, 2001). The *Identity and Control* concept of style is not incompatible with colloquial understandings of style, as in art for example. Because groups of artists often move among netdoms in similar ways, they can generate artistic styles that become labelled as artistic movements like Impressionism. Given this analytical proximity between the two uses of the word, changes in the fashion industry during the 20th century afford an excellent opportunity for the study of organizations and their environment (Djelic and Ainamo, 1999). Different levels of styles in fashion can be illustrated by the existence of different sensibilities at the level of a fashion house, a city, a country or even globally.

A fashion house's organizational style emerges from sensibilities developed and shared with surrounding organizations in a certain operating environment. In this sense, the stylistic identity of a fashion house is influenced by surrounding fashion houses' styles. Consider the case of the haute couture field in Paris during the 1970s (Bourdieu and Delsaut, 1975). It can be understood as a clash between two distinct styles: the conservative and traditional fashion houses of the 'right' bank and the more innovative and iconoclast fashion houses of the 'left' bank. Each fashion house is constrained by the houses of its own bank (which it tries to imitate) and by the houses of the other bank (from which it tries to distinguish itself). However, although these old guard and avant-garde fashion houses compete in the field of fashion, the identities that constitute them still share a common adherence to the value of Parisian haute couture. Style is therefore comparable to the Bourdieusian concepts of a macro-level field with a habitus as its micro-level expression. Styles can recombine networks of fashion houses and consumers around common sets of meanings in what Bourdieu (1996) would call a homology between a space of producers and a space of consumers.

Each of the four fashion capitals—London, New York, Milan and Paris—exhibits a uniquely local fashion sensibility observed in at least two contexts: the Fashion Week events held twice a year and through three distinct 'organizational forms', identified by Djelic and Ainamo (1999). In their view, French 'umbrella holdings' like LVMH and PPR group together fashion houses that share certain corporate functions, Italian 'flexible embedded networks' use local industrial districts to secure a seamless production process and, lastly, US 'virtual organizations' focus on brand management and subcontracting. The emergence of these new forms is related to dramatic industry changes like mass-production, offshoring of production sites and evolutions in customers' tastes. These forms reflect a sensibility born of each country's industrial history, corporate ownership patterns, trade networks and consumer taste trends. Each country or city thus provides a series of historically constructed netdoms and patterns of movements among them which characterize the identities of the fashion houses tied to these countries or cities.

Local ways of controlling netdoms are, however, subsumed within an overarching fashion sensibility. As fashion capitals are connected through the circulation of talents and trends, local fashion sensibilities merge into a larger global sensibility, informed by other cultural industries. The late French designer Yves Saint Laurent, for example, evoked Mondrian's paintings in his 1965 collection. The idea that styles diffuse among social groups in certain patterns has been expressed by the first fashion scholars, who argued that styles diffuse from upper to lower classes (Simmel, 1904/1957; Veblen, 1899/1994). This traditional 'trickle-down' theory of fashion diffusion has since been complemented by both a 'trickle-up' approach in which fashion diffuses from lower to upper-income social groups (Crane, 1999) and by a 'trickle-across' perspective that considers stylistic exchanges among similar status groups (Kawamura, 2005). Patterns of fashion diffusion have also led to some notable modelling attempts that try to capture how consumers respond to the sartorial evolution of other identities around them (Watts, 2002). Diffusion also involves a dynamic of 'translation' (Callon, 1986) since it is dependent on fashion's ability to convey meaning for identities across various netdoms. The fashion industry as an overarching style diffused among netdoms defines the identities of organizations participating in the industry.

Despite these robust industry characteristics, designers themselves can also seek control over fashion house styles, which reflect the historical continuity of in-house designs. There is a certain stability in the meanings attached to a fashion house's brand, creating a brand 'personality' or 'identity' (Aaker, 1997; Kapferer, 1992). Fashion houses do not generate identities, but rather produce elements of clothing to which meanings are affixed through a brand and specific designs. These meanings are then attached to consumers' various status groups and lifestyles, sometimes constituting their own 'territories' in symbolic and economic social spaces in interaction with customers (Thoenig and Waldman, 2006). Karl Lagerfeld is an example of a designer who has been able to construct his own 'territory' by controlling existing styles, notably the historical style of the famous Chanel fashion house for whom he has been lead designer since 1983. In sum, the identity of a fashion house is influenced by surrounding styles that span multiple levels of netdoms, from the micro-level of local competition to the macro-level of the global industry. These styles influence the movements of this fashion house among netdoms, but can also in turn be controlled by new emerging styles.

Therefore, organizations in a field like fashion can be clustered around styles. In fashion, this occurs at the level of a city, a country or any other level deemed relevant by participants or observers, as in the example of Parisian haute couture in the 1970s. Since each fashion house is characterized by a stylistic je-ne-sais-quoi that is unique to a house, marketing campaigns try to convince customers of the continuity and ineffable qualities of a brand. Consequently, if neo-institutionalists are right to describe isomorphism as a convergence of organizational forms (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 1977), it is possible that this convergence

does not happen at the level of the whole 'organizational field' but rather around localized styles or 'niches' in markets, such as haute couture or sportswear in fashion (White, 2002). Similarly, the selection process described by organizational ecologists (Hannan and Freeman, 1977) may operate differently if styles act as organizational buffers against selection out of the population based purely on inefficiency. So-called failures may be overlooked if they are consistent with the styles to which organizations have become committed over time. For example, it is appropriate for haute couture houses to lose money for a period of time in order to distance themselves from 'business' and to build an artistic image around their brand that enables them to increase the sales of their ready-to-wear and cosmetic lines (Kawamura, 2005). Even if organizations compete according to clear metrics of fitness, e.g. profitability, organizational styles invoke different ways of interpreting their performance in an operating environment.

Regime as Template for Management

Macro-level patterns in movements among netdoms according to the three interacting processes described so far can endure long enough that they become widely diffused, enmeshed in routine behaviour and therefore difficult to change. The result is a historical trace of attempts to manage tensions among contentious rhetorics or styles, which White labels a regime, since it 'manifests a template/blueprint' for managing tensions (2008: 220). Regimes are the collection of past efforts at reconciling potentially conflicting spheres of social activity and delimiting boundaries among them. As examples, consider a constitutional regime for subordinating military power to civilian authority or federalist arrangements for distributing political power among a central government and states, provinces and territories. A regime can therefore span disciplines, rhetorics and styles and manage tensions among the levels of interaction described throughout this article. In the realm of fashion, vestimentary regimes delineate the circumstances in which a style might be deployed, as in clarifying the situations in which different types of attire are appropriate or not, e.g. casual-weekend wear or formal business attire.

As noted by Bourdieu and Delsaut (1975), a central tension found in fashion is between the respective styles of designers and managers. While creativity is posited as the designers' primary goal, performance metrics promoted by managers are more clearly defined indicators like sales revenue and operating income. Recognizing that commercial profitability is at the real core of the enterprise, this perspective unravels an image that hides financial interest behind the veneer of an enterprise driven purely by its aesthetic content. The concept of regime can be used to show how this apparent tension is resolved in an organizational context through the management of 'identities struggling around to get joint action' (White, 2008: 220). Regimes are therefore similar to disciplines in that they are focused on imposing constraints so as to channel social activity toward
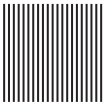
desired ends. As Currid notes in the case of cultural production, 'creativity would not exist as successfully or efficiently without its social world—the social is not the by-product, it is the decisive mechanism by which cultural products and cultural producers are generated, evaluated and sent to the market' (2007: 4). Regimes therefore constitute a basic way in which this 'social world' helps define a system of production and diffusion of cultural goods like fashion.

Unlike disciplines, regimes are usually explicitly recognized by participants and observers through imposed constraints on behaviour, as observed in the perennial debates in many countries over separations between religious and state affairs. As White describes, 'a control regime is a constraining discourse. Narrative must be evoked and reinforced that establishes a contrast of values that is binding. The configuration in the template inhibits deviations' (2008: 220). Contention about such prohibitions is usually the substance of legislative battles over the respective powers of governmental branches. Regimes span multiple styles and mitigate conflicts that can arise among them, although this creates a difficulty in breaking away from the established way of doing things. Any would-be organizational reformers are soon made aware of this apparent institutional inertia when it comes to affecting change. Thus, while a regime is essentially a macro-level concept, the constraints that it imposes have effects that trickle-down to a micro-level. Table 1 summarizes two regimes prevalent in the fashion industry and their relationship to the prominent styles of designers and managers. The two regimes are 'personal labels' and 'business groups', with the latter encompassing two sub-regimes.

In the case of the personal label regime, creativity prevails. Business is dominated by creative concerns and the financial survival of the enterprise can be threatened by this preeminence of creativity over business. The regime of personal labels can occur when designers create their own label. One example is Karl Lagerfeld and his Lagerfeld Gallery. In this case, Karl Lagerfeld does not want to create profitable designs, which he does with his Chanel or Fendi creations, but rather experiments with original designs. In the above scheme, business groups may also prevail as the dominant mode of organization and have been an important area of organizational research (Granovetter, 2005; Smångs, 2006). PPR in France, Tommy Hilfiger in the United States or Armani in Italy are known as fashion houses that

Table 1. Distinct fashion regimes as examples

	Personal label	Weak brand business group	Strong brand business group
Styles	Creativity > business	Creativity > business	Creativity < business
Tensions	Styles become incompatible, designer fails as manager	Designer's celebrity overshadows brand success	Management dominates, distinctive design weakens
Examples	Karl Lagerfeld creating Lagerfeld Gallery	Karl Lagerfeld working for H&M	Karl Lagerfeld working for Chanel

have adopted a strong profit-driven approach (Watson, 2004). Managers and designers are clearly distinguished.

Two sub-cases can be further differentiated. In a 'weak' brand business group, the designer may have a high status, gained through previous professional experiences, while the management team uses the designer's status to increase its own. Alternatively, in a 'strong' case, the brand already has a high status and management has enough latitude to treat the designer like any other employee. In the first case, the designer can overshadow the brand, while in the second case creativity can be 'suffocated' by business concerns. An example of the first case can be Karl Lagerfeld working for H&M and an example of the latter case may be Karl Lagerfeld joining Chanel. Regimes influence the identity of fashion houses and designers by resolving tensions among network-domains associated with creativity and business.

Each of the organizational forms distinguished by Djelic and Ainamo (1999)—umbrella, network and virtual organizations—could belong to one of these regimes. As we have already suggested, each of these organizational forms is the formal expression of a specific national style although the forms do not imply the preeminence of either the business or the creative style. Within the French fashion system for example, LVMH is known to favor fashion 'superstar' designers while PPR has a very business-driven approach (Hass, 2007). These 'umbrella holdings', which share the same 'French style', belong to different regimes since they display different ways of dealing with the central tension in fashion between business and creativity.

Discussion

Our aim in this article has been to extend and expand the *Identity and Control* framework in order to show how the network-domain concept can do three things: (1) build on the accepted idea that identity is socially constituted by describing how this may occur through consistent movements among networks of ties and domains of meanings; (2) contribute to bridging the macro/micro and structural/cultural gap in organizational theorizing through a multilevel framework and (3) encourage more cross-industry and cross-sector studies that explore how organizations attempt to manage movements among netdoms through similar mechanisms despite operating in dissimilar organizational contexts. These goals all hinge on our discussion of how organizational attempts at managing movements among network-domains are central to aggregate patterns in personnel behaviour. We developed this argument by discussing two organizational antipodes, combat operations and fashion design, since each implies very distinct settings for the building of identities, to say nothing of differences in their respective settings, scopes and organizational sizes. Although one of the intended contributions of *Identity and Control* is to suggest a set of social mechanisms that can bridge the micro-macro gap, White himself

does not systematically specify how these mechanisms are inter-related in the case of organizational activity. In making this argument, we therefore flesh out threads of White's theory by explicitly applying them to persistent questions in organizational studies.

The multilevel approach developed in this article uses as its basic premise the idea of imbricate netdoms as bases of social behaviour. The starting point is how identities seek some stability or control in their movements across netdoms. In order for collective action to be directed toward some end in formal organizations, these movements require some constraining. Stemming from this basic concept of movement among netdoms and the need for some control, four dimensions of organizational activity may be discerned. Disciplines coordinate and evaluate identities' daily work, usually leading to the consolidation of organizations as identities of their own. Rhetorics are organizational efforts to mobilize identities for some goal and thus strengthen netdoms, as in the social relations of a shop floor. Styles are the tacit means by which actors know how and when to move among netdoms, while regimes partition whole domains of social action.

Our aim in this article has therefore not been polemical but rather integrative, especially since we build on an interdisciplinary tradition in organizational studies developed at the crossroads of economics, management studies, political science, psychology and sociology (Augier et al., 2005). Our hope is that the recent surge of interest in culture and identity in organizations can benefit from this attention to the multiple levels at which organizational identity is enacted. As noted by Alvesson et al., '... rising interest in the construct of identity can scarcely be denied. Identity has become a popular frame through which to investigate a wide array of phenomena' (2008: 5). We join in contributing to the development of this frame by focusing on the sets of netdoms from which identities in organizations emerge.

Our comments on military organization suggest that mitigation of battlespace ambiguity is inextricably linked to the ties that bind combatants together in a common operational netdom. The ideational component of this dynamic is driven by the rhetorics that sustain strong group cohesion, while the relational structure of combat units is held together by some disciplinary scheme for binding personnel together, as in metrics for evaluating performance in career management systems. Future studies of rhetorics may shed light on how social ties endure during unpopular deployments. The colloquial understanding of discipline in military life has been well studied but may be re-conceptualized according to the conditions in which intra-organizational ties become robust bases for unit cohesion. Additional research might highlight potential organizational challenges to this cohesion if combatants are drawn from only certain backgrounds instead of being nationally representative.

Our discussion of fashion indicates that designs are selected and re-arranged by consumers who use sartorial combinations to signal identities. The recurrent tension between the creative and commercial sides of fashion

is the basis of different fashion regimes since economic activity in markets of cultural goods requires close interactions among different styles. Such styles form complex systems at different levels, from local sensibilities emerging from firms, cities or countries, to their global counterparts. Understanding how these different levels are related could also lead to studies of how regimes are transformed by stylistic changes or analyses of the historical development of organizational sensibilities.

Illustrations of the main concepts drawn from discussions of combat and fashion reveal how comparable forms of activity occur at multiple levels in seemingly disparate organizational fields. Disciplines and rhetorics attempt to build a common netdom through which work can be accomplished. Styles and regimes link identities to their broader contexts by delimiting and channeling the kinds of movements among netdoms that are organizationally sanctioned. In developing this Whitean theoretical framework, we hope to contribute to research on social behaviour in organizations grounded in sociological understandings of identities, networks of relations and meanings. Ongoing topological work on the social dynamics of tie formation can be complemented and enriched by this attention to the relationship between the structure of relationships and the structure of meanings.

Note

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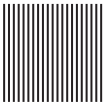
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