

# Types of Cultures



## Based on:

- Implications of cultures on organizations, management, and leadership, Prof. Eila Järvenpää, HUT, Dept. of Industrial Engineering and Management
- Schermerhorn Exploring Management, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

# Relationship-oriented Cultures

## 1. Universalism vs. Particularism

- In **universalistic cultures**, the rules apply **equally to the whole** "universe" of members, **regardless** of relationships
  - General rules, codes, values and standards
  - "What is good and right can be defined and always applied"
- **Particularist cultures** pays attention to the obligations of relationships and **unique circumstances**
  - Human friendship, extraordinary achievement and situations, the "spirit of law" more important than the "letter of law"
- Universalist countries: USA, UK, Netherlands, Germany, Scandinavian countries

# **Universalism vs. Particularism Culture**

## **EXAMPLE**

You are a journalist who writes a restaurant review column for a newspaper. A close friend of yours has invested all his savings in his new restaurant. You have eaten there and think the restaurant isn't very good.

Does your friend have some right to expect you to ignore the faults in your review or does your friend have no right to expect this at all?

- Yes, he has some right to expect this (Particularism)**
- No, he has no right to expect this (Universalism)**

# Relationship-oriented Cultures

## 2. Individualism vs. collectivism

An individual or a part of a group



### ■ Individualism

- competition, self-thought, self-reliance, self-interest, personal growth and fulfilment (own goals)
- Frequent use of “I”
- Ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family

### ■ Collectivism

- cooperation, social concern, public service and social legacy (Reliance on informal controls, **team approach, group goals**)
- Frequent use of “We”
- strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (with uncles, aunts and grandparents)



# Relationship-oriented Cultures

## 3. Neutral vs. emotional/affective cultures

### ■ Neutral cultures

- Incorrect to show one's feelings openly
- Control of feelings
- Lack of emotional tone
- Hide emotion and communicate in a more subtle way and avoid physical contact which sometimes makes it difficult for members of other cultures to read between the lines and get the message. (**Japanese**)



### ■ Affective cultures

- Display emotions
- Reactions are shown immediately verbally and/or non-verbally by gestures in the form of body signals. They don't avoid physical contact (**Italian, Arabic, Spanish**)

# Relationship-oriented Cultures

## 4. Specific vs. diffuse relationships

This dimension measures **how far** people get **involved** with other's **life space**.

### ■ Specific cultures

- individuals are open to **sharing** a large public space with others and a small **private space they guard** closely and share with only friends and associates. Specific cultures like Austria, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States show a strong separation between work and private life. Invitations to public spaces are common.

### ■ Diffuse cultures

- Like most introverts, diffuse culture people **guard** both spaces carefully, because entry into public space also affords entry into private space. China, Spain and Venezuela are examples of diffuse cultures where **work and private life are closely linked** but intensely **protected**.

# Relationship-oriented Cultures

## 5. Achievement vs. ascription

What you have achieved vs. what your status attributed to you

- **Achievement oriented cultures**

- Individuals derive their status from what they have accomplished (Status linked to goals obtained or performance)

- **Ascribed status**

- What a person is and how others relate to his/her position
- Status linked to age, connections, wealth , gender, family name



# Time-oriented Cultures

Every culture has its own responses to time



- **Monochronic cultures**
- **Doing one thing at a time.** They value a certain orderliness and sense of there being an appropriate time and place for everything. They do not value interruptions. The Germans tend to be monochronic
- **Polychronic cultures**
- **Doing multiple things at the same time.** A manager's office in a polychronic culture typically has an open door, a ringing phone and a meeting all going on at the same time cultures include the French and the Americans.

## **PROBLEMS**

- Interactions between types can be **problematic**. German businessman cannot understand why the person he is meeting is so interruptible by phone calls and people stopping by. Is it meant to insult him? When do they get down to business?
- Similarly, the American employee of a German company is disturbed by all the closed doors -- it seems cold and unfriendly.

# Time orientation

## Monochronic time

- Clock time
- Appointment time
- Segmented time
- Task-oriented time

USA, Germany, Switzerland,  
Scandinavian countries

## Polychronic time

- Flexitime
- Simultaneous activities
- Relationship-oriented perspective

Arabs, African, Asian, Latin  
American, Mediterranean  
cultures

# Time-oriented Cultures

## Future vs Present vs Past Orientation

**Past-oriented societies** are concerned with **traditional values** and ways of doing things. They tend to be **conservative** in management and **slow to change** those things that are tied to the past. Past-oriented societies include China, Britain, Japan.

**Present-oriented societies** see the past as passed and the future as uncertain. They prefer **short-term benefits**.

**Future-oriented societies** have a great deal of optimism about the future. They think they understand it and can shape it through their actions. They view management as a matter of **planning**, **doing** and **controlling** (as opposed to going with the flow, letting things happen). They look try to see **long term benefits** and try to strategise for the **future**. The United States and Brazil are thought of as this.

# **Communication-oriented Cultures**

## **High-context and Low-context Communication**

**Human interaction** can be divided into two communication systems:

- **Low-context communication**
  - Intention or meaning is best expressed through explicit **verbal messages** (emphasize communication via spoken or written words)
- **High-context communication**
  - Intention or meaning is best conveyed through the **context** (e.g. social roles or positions) and the **non-verbal channels** (e.g. pauses, silence, tone of voice) of the verbal message

### **PROBLEMS**

- Japanese can find Westerners to be offensively blunt. Westerners can find Japanese to be secretive, devious and unforthcoming with information.
- French can feel that Germans insult their intelligence by explaining the obvious, while Germans can feel that French managers provide little direction

# **Low-context Communication**

- **Individual values**
- **Self-face concern**
- **Linear logic**
- **Direct style**
- **Person-oriented style**
- **Self-enhancement style**
- **Speaker-oriented style**
- **Verbal-based understanding**

Germany  
Switzerland  
Denmark  
Sweden

USA  
Canada  
Australia  
UK

# **High-context Communication**

- **Group-oriented values**
- **Mutual-face concern**
- **Spiral logic**
- **Indirect style**
- **Status-oriented style**
- **Self-effacement**
- **Listener-oriented style**
- **Context-based understanding**

Middle East  
Mexico  
Nigeria  
  
Japan  
China  
South Korea  
Vietnam

# Multi-cultural teams

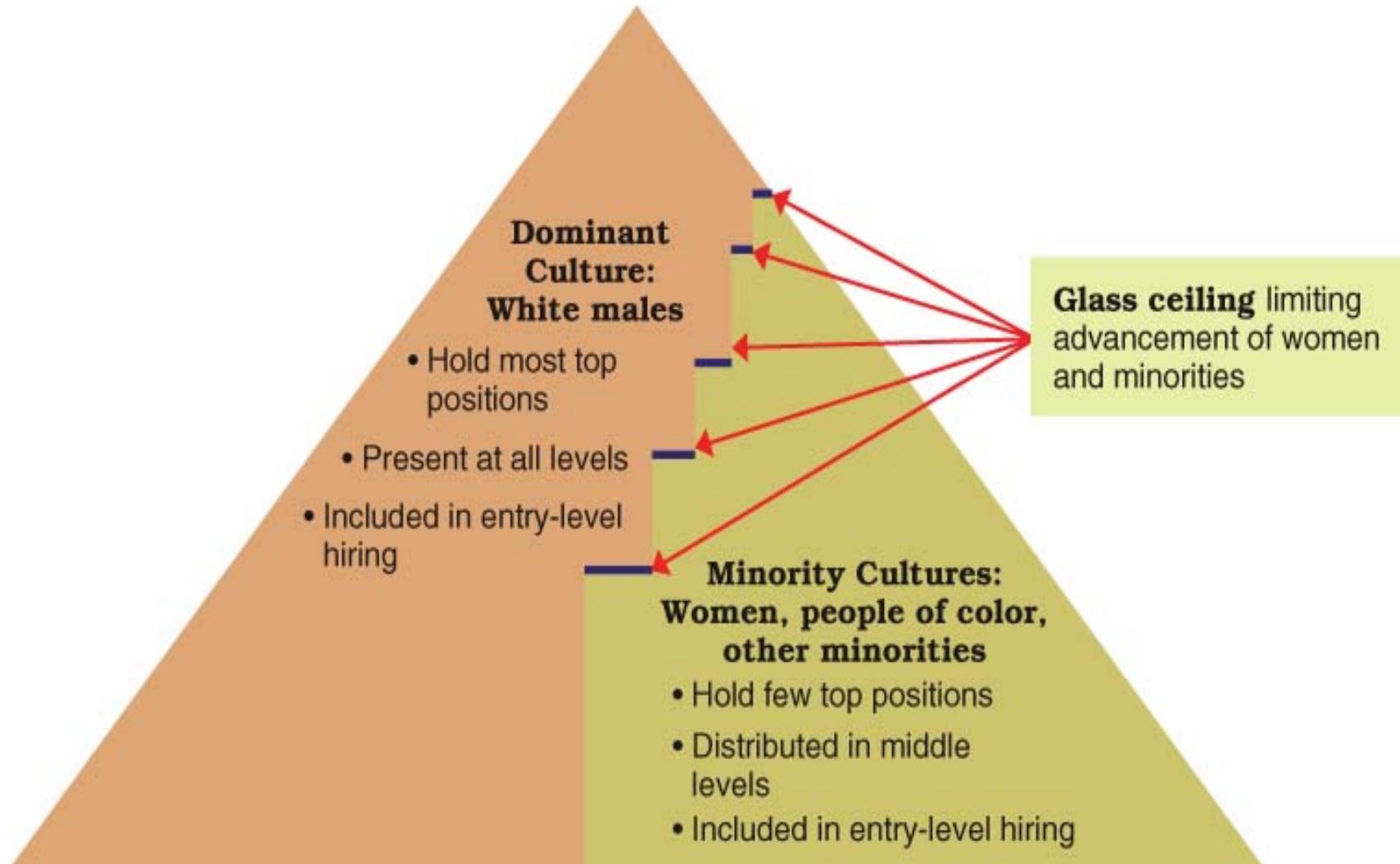
- **Definition**
  - team members are from **more than one national culture**
  - often members represent different organizational/ professional cultures
- **Communication**
  - “more to do with realizing right responses than sending the right messages” – cultural awareness and language to use the verbal and non verbal symbols
    - e.g speed of messages, context, information flow, importance of completion differ across cultures (Hall & Hall 1989)
    - attitude towards conflict and risk

# ***Glass Ceiling***

**Minorities and women suffer diversity bias in many situations**

- There is more diversity in lower and middle management **than at the top level**
- ***Glass Ceiling is a real barrier to career advancement-not publicized barrier that acts as a limit to women and minority members advancing into higher roles***

# The Glass Ceiling



# Cultural Shock

is feelings of confusion and discomfort when in or dealing with an unfamiliar culture.

## Phases of Cultural Shock

- Excitement and stimulation
- Disillusionment (Disappointment)
- Insecurity and Confusion
- Adaptation



# Stages of adjustment to a new culture

- **Confusion** — First contacts with the new culture leave you anxious, uncomfortable, and in need of information and advice to help you understand your environment.
- **Small victories**— Continued interaction bring some “successes,” and your confidence grows in handling daily affairs.
- **Honeymoon**— A time of excitement, fascination, and even infatuation (passion) with local ways viewed positively.
- **Irritation and anger**— A time when the “negatives” overwhelms and overshadows the “positives,” and the new culture becomes a target of your criticism.
- **Reality**— A time of rebalancing; you are able to enjoy the new culture and putting up with the less positive aspects.

# Virtual Team

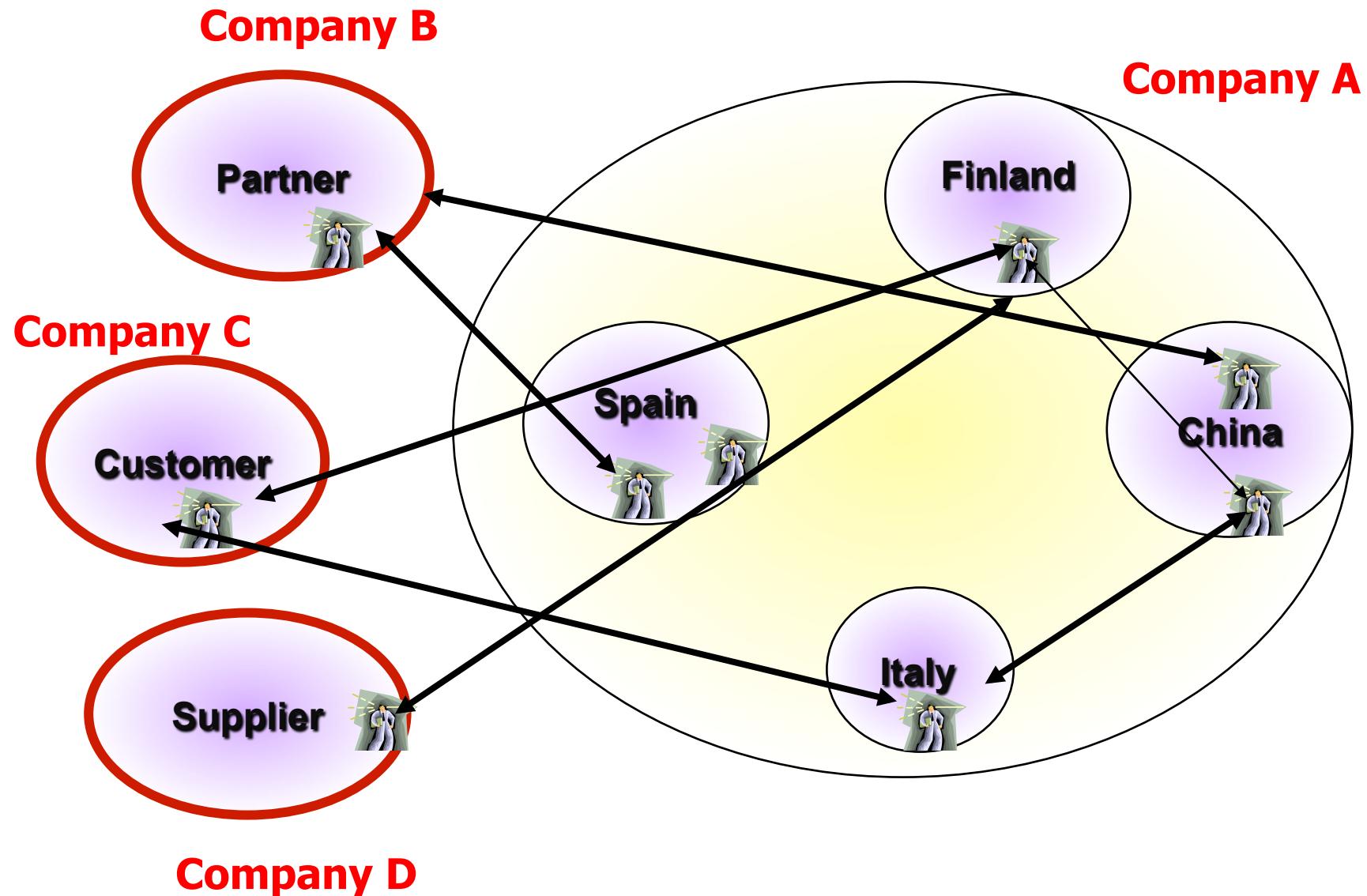
- “a group of people who interact through interdependent tasks and work across space, time, and organizational boundaries with links strengthened by **webs of communication technologies**” (Lipnack & Stamps, 1997)

## FOR EXAMPLE

**2 people in England, 2 people in America and 4 people in the UAE communicating through the internet (i.e. Skype, MSN Messenger) to mark student's presentation.**

- Common task
- Located in different places
- Often located in different time zones
- Often established for a common task; temporal

# Virtual team in product development



# Multicultural, global (virtual) teams

- flexibility, responsiveness in global market
- for addressing problems, integrating processes, learning new methods
- If various customer groups in companies
  - diversity in workforce helps organizations develop their understanding about customer needs

# FINLAND, JAPAN, MAINLAND CHINA, AND USA: COMPARISONS

<b>DIMENSION</b>	<b>Finland</b>	<b>Japan</b>	<b>Mainland China</b>	<b>USA</b>
Management style	More participatory	Hierarchical Traditional	Hierarchical Traditional	Rather hierarchical
Communication style	Direct	Indirect	Indirect	Rather indirect
Concept of time	Time is money	Time a resource	Time a resource	Time is money, effectiveness
Networks	Importance not perceived	Very important	Very important	Very important
Business ethics		Different from Finnish	Different from Finnish	Not mentioned
Contracts vs. relationships	Contracts	Relations more important	Relations more important	Not mentioned

# Example: Communication in a virtual team

- A multicultural team with 208 employees in **4 sites, 3 countries and 3 continents**
- Developed software products for electronics industry
  - Team-based work
    - teams were specialized on different tasks,
      - e.g. testing, user-interface, and architecture
    - team members located often on different sites
- Data collection with a questionnaire and interviews
- Data analysis: social network analysis, content analysis

(Mäki, Järvenpää and Ziegler, 2004,  
Järvenpää, Mäki and Ziegler, 2005)<sub>22</sub>

# Challenges due to cultural differences

- Misunderstandings due to the **language problems**
- Misunderstandings with the meanings of agreements, e.g. how soon is “as soon as possible”
- Uncertainty with the correct **communication style**, e.g. how polite you need to be
- Importance of empathy/understanding in communication situations
  - unwritten rules for communication in different cultures