

Cross Cultural Leadership – 15.996

Lecture Notes

Class Two – Cultural Styles

- *Universalism vs. Particularism*
- *Individualism vs. Collectivism*
- *Neutral vs. Emotional*
- *Achievement vs. Ascription*
- *Dialogue: making a joint hiring decision including compensation*

Read:

- *Trompenaars, Fons and Hampden-Turner, Charles. Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Cultural Diversity in Global Business (2nd edition). New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998, pages: 1-10, 29-36, 49-53, 68-75, 80-81, 105-111, 121-122.*

Agenda

- Welcome. Explanation of End of Course Paper Assignment
- Theories and Themes
- Universalism vs. Particularism
- Individualism vs. Collectivism (Communitarianism)
- Neutral vs. Emotional
- Achievement vs. Ascription
- Cross-Cultural Dialogue
- Next Week's Assignment

Theories and Themes

A brief overview of the theorists whose ideas are the framework for this course.

Late 1950s – Edward Hall

- Anthropologist. World War II -- U.S. Army in Europe and the Philippines. Later, Director of the Foreign Service Institute training program. He observed first hand the many difficulties created by failures of intercultural communication.
- Proxemics – human use of space within the context of culture
- Personal space and community (town) space
- Also looked at monochronic and polychronic time

Late 1960s – Geert Hofstede

Founded and managed personnel research dept of IBM Europe.

- Surveyed 116,000 IBM employees in 40 countries on preferences around management style and work environment
- 4 dimensions where differences by country were significant
 - power distance
 - uncertainty avoidance
 - individualism/collectivism

- masculinity/femininity
- later discussed a 5th dimension = long term view (Asia)

Late 1980s Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner

Consultants

By 1998: 15 years of research – questionnaire based. Framework from Talcott Parsons, US Sociologist (Harvard 1927-1973)

- 30 companies, 50 countries, 30,000 people
- 7 fundamental dimensions of culture:
 - relationships with people
 - universalism vs. particularism
 - individualism vs. communitarianism (collectivism)
 - neutral vs. emotional
 - specific vs. diffuse
 - achievement vs. ascription
 - understanding of time
 - attitudes toward environment

Late 1990s Robert J House et al – Project GLOBE

Professor at Wharton since 1988.

- by 2004: 10 years of research, 150 researchers, 18,000 managers in 62 countries. Questionnaire. A few industries.
- 9 cultural dimensions
 - assertiveness
 - future orientation
 - gender differentiation
 - uncertainty avoidance
 - power distance
 - collectivism vs. individualism
 - in-group collectivism
 - performance orientation
 - humane orientation
- Plus looking for leadership traits that are consistent across cultures - charisma

Today's topics:

Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner

- 4 of their 7 fundamental dimensions of culture:
 - relationships with people
 - universalism vs. particularism
 - individualism vs. communitarianism (collectivism)
 - neutral vs. emotional
 - ~~specific vs. diffuse~~
 - achievement vs. ascription

Process:

I use flip-chart sheets. I post four sheets, one for each dimension. I draw a line at the top of each page indicating a continuum for a dimension, for example from universalism to particularism. I then label the ends of each line.

As part of the discussion I expect each team to tell me where their country/region falls on each continuum. I also expect each team to tell me a story that illustrates why that point of the continuum is appropriate. For example the US team may point to the how contracts are used and how pervasive they are as illustration of the universalist nature of the US culture.

I look to hear from each team for each dimension. The more stories the better. The more the students are querying each other, the better.

Before we start, I reiterate some caveats:

- There will be anecdotes and stereotypes. Show each other respect. Try not to offend each other.
- This is about NOT making assumptions!!!
- These continua are frameworks. Lenses through which you can assess a situation AND yourself. Do not expect your own experiences to map perfectly to the anecdotes you hear.
- This course looks to build your awareness that the same action/activity/situation may very well have different meanings. (Is stating your earned degree appropriate or rude?)

Content:

Universalism vs. Particularism -- universal standards and rules vs. particular people and particular situations. Contracts vs. relationships.

Individualism vs. Collectivism/Communitarianism – the wants and needs of the individual vs. the interests of the group. Your group can be local or more general. Community = classmates, left-handers, US. I vs. we. Pervasive teamwork of hi tech consulting is at odds with “watching out for #1” tradition in US.

Neutral vs. Emotional – show little emotion vs. show emotions readily in many different situations. Controlled vs. animated. Humor gets very tricky here...

Achievement vs. Ascription – what you have done vs. who you are. The importance of the right school in France (Ascription) vs. the importance of what you did yesterday (US - achievement).

Cross Cultural Dialogue

Each lead team does a presentation. Five minutes plus Q&A is fine. I look for themes and variations. Then I lead a discussion – looking for similarities across cultures as well as differences. And always – stories, stories, stories.

If there is not enough time for discussion, I will hold that over for the next week.