

Cultural Value Orientations

How people relate to each other

The seven dimensions of culture from Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner.

RELATIONSHIPS AND RULES

UNIVERSALISM ----- **PARTICULARISM**

- focus is more on rules than relationships
- there is only one truth which has been agreed to
- planning and task orientation
- a deal is a deal
- focus is more on relationships than rules
- several perspectives on reality and truth
- flexible time management; atmosphere important
- relationships evolve

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE GROUP

INDIVIDUALISM ----- **COLLECTIVISM**

- more frequent use of “I” form
- people achieve alone
- competition, career
- personal growth and fulfillment
- more frequent use of “we” form
- people achieve in groups
- focus on harmony and cooperation
- selflessness and social responsibility

FEELINGS AND RELATIONSHIPS

NEUTRAL CULTURES ----- **AFFECTIVE CULTURES**

- you do not reveal what you are feeling
- physical contact and gesturing often taboo
- statements read out in monotone
- you reveal your emotions verbally and non-verbally
- touching and expressive gesturing common
- statements declaimed fluently and expressively

HOW FAR WE GET INVOLVED

SPECIFIC CULTURES ----- **DIFFUSE CULTURES**

- direct and to the point, purposeful in relating
- analytical, transparent and precise
- indirect, “aimless” forms of relating
- evasive, tactful, sometimes even ambiguous

HOW WE ACCORD STATUS

STATUS ACHIEVED ----- **STATUS ASCRIBED**

- titles are relevant to the task assigned
- “what you do” is important
- position in organization by effective performance
- titles are relevant in general and clarify status
- “who you are” is important
- position in organization by hierarchy

HOW WE RELATE TO TIME

MONOCHRONIC ----- **POLYCHRONIC**

- one activity at a time
- schedules and appointments are important
- relationships are subordinate to schedules
- more than one activity at a time
- schedules and appointments are approximate
- relationships lead, schedules follow

HOW WE RELATE TO NATURE

INTERNAL CONTROL ----- **EXTERNAL CONTROL**

- environment should be controlled
- focus is on self, own group and function
- strong convictions
- flexible attitude, willingness to compromise
- focus is on other, customer, partner, colleague
- harmony and responsiveness

Geert Hofstede (www.geert-hofstede.com) defined more dimensions, especially relevant in the working environment:

UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE

HIGH ----- **LOW**

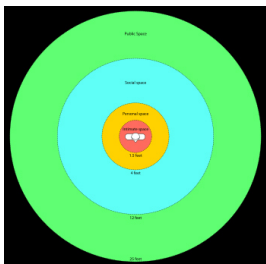
- tradition oriented “we always did it like this”
- what is different could be dangerous
- change is threatening
- open for change
- what is different could be interesting
- change could lead to improvement and progress

Power distance

HIGH ----- **LOW**

- hierarchical order”
- equality

Edward T. Hall has defined – among others – the concept of **PROXEMICS**:



all numbers for most Europeans / US citizens:

INTIMATE SPACE: 46-50cm

PERSONAL DISTANCE (e.g. hand shake): 0.5-1.2m

SOCIAL SPACE (for more formal business): 1.2-3.7m

PUBLIC SPACE (belongs to no one): > 3.7m

Literature:

- Hall, E. T. (1990). *The hidden dimension*. New York: Anchor books.
- Hofstede, G. (2021). National culture. <https://hi.hofstede-insights.com/national-culture>
- Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner, C. (2012). *Riding the waves of culture. Understanding diversity in global business (revised and updated 3d. Ed)*. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.