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The Role of Organizational Culture in Process Improvement

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Tutorial Goals and Objectives

- Introduce concepts of culture and organizational culture
- Introduce and define terms associated with culture
- Develop cultural knowledge and skills
- Identify behavioral aspects of culture
- Understand the role of culture in process improvement



Background of Presenters

Fred Valdez – Professor of Anthropology and Director of MARL, The University of Texas at Austin. Holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from Harvard University and has been active in the field of anthropological archaeology for over 35 years.

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Agenda

1. Why is Culture Important in Process Improvement?
2. Concept of Culture
3. Organizational Culture
4. Communication and Culture
5. Identifying and Understanding Culture



Why is Culture Important in Process Improvement?

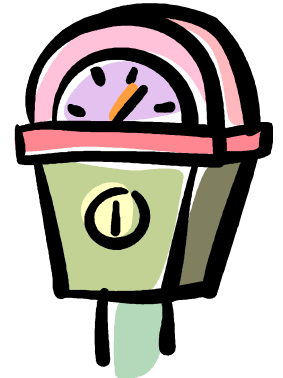
Why is Culture Important? 1



1. Process improvement is a global concern.
2. Many organizations have divisions, units, and projects that span time-zones, cultures, languages, and continents.
3. The culture of the organization, its divisions, units, and projects is the context in which process improvement occurs.
4. The organizational culture impacts the day-to-day activities and actions of the workforce and management.
5. The workforce that builds products and delivers services represents a variety of cultural backgrounds.
6. Successful and lasting process improvement requires cultural and behavioral changes.

Why is Culture Important? ₂

7. The work of lead appraisers and process improvement professionals often occurs in unfamiliar cultural settings.
8. Individuals leading process improvement initiatives need to identify cultural and behavioral issues that may be barriers to successful and lasting improvements.
9. Lead appraisers need to identify cultural issues or conflicts that may impact appraisal activities.
10. SCAMPI Lead Appraiser Body of Knowledge (SLA BOK).



Park your culture
at the door

"I came to see, in my time at IBM, that culture isn't just one aspect of the game - it is the game." Lou Gertsner, former CEO and Chairman of IBM Gertsner 2002



Concept of Culture

Concept of Culture

- Culture represents the way of life of a group of people.
- It is a complex system of socially transmitted **behavioral patterns**, **norms**, **symbols**, **values**, and **ideas** that human beings acquire to become members of a society.
- Culture is **learned**, **shared**, and is **essential** to human life and is found **universally** throughout the world.



Culture is fluid

Defining Cultural Terms: Behavior

Behavior

1a: the manner of conducting oneself; b: anything that an organism does involving action and response to stimulation; c: the response of an individual, group, or species to its environment; 2) the way that someone behaves (2008 Webster's online dictionary)

Ideal

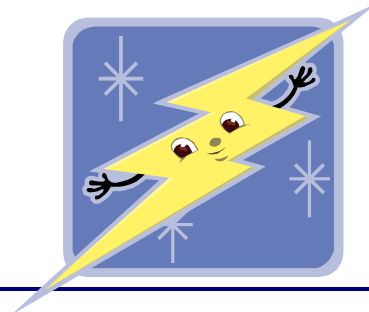
How we think we should behave or act and what we want others to think we are doing.

Believed

What we think we are doing or how we are behaving.

Actual

How people actually behave and what they really do.



Defining Cultural Terms: Behavior Example

Requirements Management SP1.2. *Obtain commitment to requirements from project participants.*

Ideal

All project participants agree and officially commit to the activities they must carry out in order to implement the requirements. If changes occur, participants recommit.

Believed

All project participants participate in a meeting where requirements are presented and discussion leads to commitment.

Actual

All project members participated in the meeting and commitment was voiced and inferred. Because the culture of the organization does not tolerate descent, participants do not voice issues/concerns. Thus, commitment was inferred by their silence.

Defining Cultural Terms: Values

Values

Shared understanding (principal or quality) of how people should behave.

Stated

Values that are explicitly communicated through writing and are often linked to laws, rules, and policies.

Unstated

Values displayed by members of a culture that are not put forth in writing, but are supporting in practice.

“In all our activities we seek to display some unchanging, fundamental qualities – integrity, honest dealing, treating everyone with respect and dignity, striving for mutual advantage and contributing to human progress. ” – **BP Value Statement**

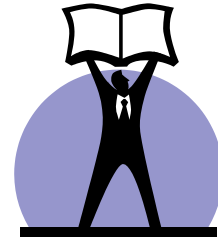
“Integrity, Entrepreneurial Environment, Customer Focused, Results Oriented, Employee Development, Disciplined Risk Taking ” – **AIG United Guaranty Values**

Misaligned Values and Behaviors



Expressed Values

A value that is communicated in writing and or verbally; policies, organizational values, vision statements, and organizational communications.



Demonstrated Values

The actual behaviors and actions of executives, management, and the workforce...people are watching, observing, and learning.



Reinforced Values

The actual behaviors and actions that are reinforced through rewards and positive sanctions.



Misaligned Values and Behaviors Examples:

Expressed Values



“schedules are important”

“we value our employees and ensure they have a work-life balance”

Demonstrated Values



“nobody shows up to meetings on time including management”

“we don’t care how long it takes to get the job done, just do it...”

Reinforced Values



“Hitting a milestone at the end, but not paying attention to those in the middle.”

“getting the job done even if it requires excessive overtime and cutting corners”

Misaligned Values and Behaviors Exercise:

Expressed Values

A value that is communicated in writing and or verbally: policies, organizational values, vision statements, and organizational communications.

Demonstrated Values

The actual behaviors and actions of executives, management, and the workforce.

Reinforced Values

The actual behaviors and actions that are reinforced through reward or positive sanctions.

1. In groups; discuss examples of misaligned values and behaviors that you have experienced in your organization or a previous organization.
2. List an expressed value, note if it is a stated or unstated value, then describe how that value was demonstrated and by whom, and finally describe what values and behaviors were reinforced and how. Prepare to discuss your findings.

15 minutes

Defining Cultural Terms: Norm

Norm

Shared understanding of appropriate and expected behavior; usually unwritten and learned unconsciously

Mandatory

Dictated by law and violation may lead to formal sanctions

Preferred

Violation may lead to informal sanctions



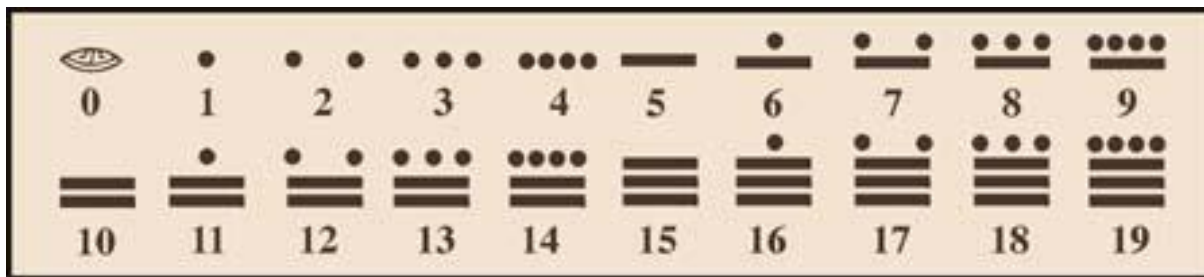
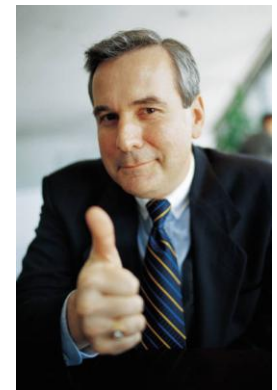
Violating NORMS

- Talking to yourself in public
- Wearing your clothes backwards
- Wearing pajamas to work
- Eating soup with a fork

Defining Cultural Terms: Symbols

Symbols

Language and artifacts that are assigned meaning by the user(s)



“Spoken language is an abstraction of an event that happened, might have happened, or is being planned. The writing system is an abstraction of the spoken system and is in effect a reminder system of what somebody said or could have said”. Hall 1981:87



Norms and Symbols Exercise:

Norms

Make a list of some of the unwritten norms in your organization. Think about a time that you unintentionally violated an unwritten norm. Note how you knew you had violated the norm and how others around you reacted.

Symbols

Make a list of some of the symbols unique to your organization. Was there ever a time you misinterpreted a symbol? If so, note how you knew you had misinterpreted the symbol and how others around you reacted?

Time: 15 minutes

Defining Cultural Terms: Beliefs/Ideas

Beliefs/Ideas

Shared assumptions of reality that can be used to rationalize behavior. Beliefs and ideas can be perpetuated by folk tales and myths.

POSITIVE

“We provide outstanding products and unsurpassed service...”

“We are the best at...”

“The organization values its employees”

NEGATIVE

“We don’t have time to do Process Improvement...”

“You have to give up your personal life to get ahead in this organization”

“Executive Management does not care about its employees...”

Rituals

Rituals

- Express, communicate, and reinforce values, beliefs, and behaviors.
- Standardized ceremonies/rituals are part of our daily lives.

Examples

- Company meetings and picnics
- Award ceremonies
 - employee of the month
 - service awards
- Appraisals
 - opening briefing
 - final findings



वेद्यार्त्तिनां तान्ते वेद्यार्त्ति



Culture and You

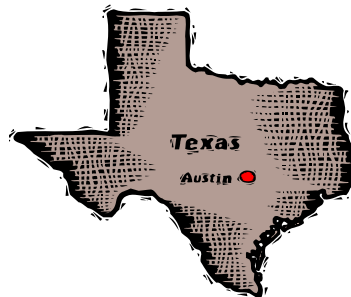
Everyone is part of a **complex cultural system** and as individuals we are shaped by that system.

Members of the same culture share knowledge that enables them to behave in ways that are meaningful and acceptable to others (**cultural knowledge**).

The **enculturation** process begins at birth.



**Primary
Culture**



**Regional
Culture**



**National
Culture**

Learning Culture: The Enculturation Process

Culture is learned and shared through a process of enculturation:

Observation

&

Participation



What is learned:

Behaviors

Norms

Values

Beliefs/Ideas

Symbols

that individuals acquire to become part of the society.

Enculturation: *the way we learn the language, symbols, behaviors, norms, and values of our primary birth culture and other cultures within which we interact.*

Reinforcing Culture: Positive & Negative Sanctions

Positive Sanctions: *reinforces ideal behaviors, values, and norms*

Formal

Official awards, recognitions, and honors, (e.g. *employee of the month, bonus, increase in annual compensation, etc.*)



Informal

Praise, encouragement, and recognition, typically spontaneous responses (e.g. *“Good Job”, movie tickets, t-shirts, etc.*)



Negative Sanctions: *reinforcement by punishing the opposite*

Formal

Fines, imprisonment, alienation, or removal, as dictated by laws and policies (e.g. *breaking the law, company policies, and termination*)



Informal

Unofficial punishment for violations of social norm, through gossiping, ridiculing, teasing, looks (e.g. *informal comments regarding clothing*)



Ideal Culture vs Real Culture

IDEAL CULTURE

The way things are supposed to be done

- **stated values**
- **ideal behaviors**
- **unwritten norms**

VS

REAL CULTURE

“Practice” -The way things are actually done

- **unstated values**
- **actual behaviors**
- **unwritten norms**

Culture Exercise 1

Imagine culture as an iceberg. An iceberg has a **visible** section above the waterline and a larger, **invisible** section below the water line. Culture has aspects that are **observable** and others that can only be **suspected** or **imagined**. Also like an iceberg, that part of culture that is visible (observable behavior) is only a small part of a much bigger whole.



On the next slide is a list of cultural features. Keeping in mind that **observable behaviors belong above the surface of the water**, while the **invisible aspects of culture belong below the surface**, decide for each cultural feature whether it should be "above" or "below" the water line.

Adapted from: Paul D. Coverdell: Culture Matters

Culture Exercise 2

	Feature		Feature
	Facial Expressions		Foods
	Religious Beliefs		General World View
	Religious Rituals		Concept of Beauty
	Importance of Time		Work Ethic
	Art		Eating Habits/Customs
	Concept of Self		Rules of Social Etiquette
	Values		Concept of Leadership
	Literature		Gestures
	Nature of Friendship		Music
	Concept of Personal Space		Concept of Fairness
	Styles of Dress		Child Raising Beliefs
	Notions of Modesty		Understanding the Natural World

Culture Exercise: Answers

	Attribute		Attribute
Above	Facial Expressions	Above	Foods
Below	Religious Beliefs	Below	General World View
Above	Religious Rituals	Below	Concept of Beauty
Below	Importance of Time	Below	Work Ethic
Above	Art	Above	Eating Habits/Customs
Below	Concept of Self	Below	Rules of Social Etiquette
Below	Values	Below	Concept of Leadership
Above	Literature	Above	Gestures
Below	Nature of Friendship	Above	Music
Below	Concept of Personal Space	Below	Concept of Fairness
Above	Styles of Dress	Below	Child Raising Beliefs
Below	Notions of Modesty	Below	Understanding the Natural World

Culture and Color

Western: excitement, danger,

Eastern : worn by brides

China: good luck, celebrations

India: purity

South Africa: color of mourning red

Western: spring, birth, money

Eastern : eternity, family, prosperity

China: exorcism, green hat
signifies infidelity

India: Islam

Japan : life green

Western: brides, angles, hospitals

Eastern: funerals

China: death, mourning

India: mourning, unhappiness

Japan: white carnation
symbolizes death white

Western: hope, hazard, coward

China: nourishing

Egypt: mourning

India: merchants

Japan: courage yellow

Individualism and Collectivism Aspects of Culture

Individualism - *broad value tendencies of a culture to emphasize the importance of individual identity over group identity, individual rights over group rights, and individual needs over group needs.*

“Autonomous Self”

United States

Great Britain

Canada

Australia

Netherlands

New Zealand

Collectivism - *broad value tendencies of a culture to emphasize the importance of the “we” identity over the “I” identity, group obligations over individual rights and in-group oriented needs over individual wants and desires.* **“Connected Self”**

Indonesia

China

Taiwan

Korea

Japan

Mexico

Source: Hofstede 1980

Individualism and Collectivism Country Rankings

Argentina	23	Hong Kong	32	Portugal	30
Australia	2	India	21	Singapore	34
Austria	18	Iran	24	South Africa	16
Belgium	8	Ireland	12	Spain	20
Brazil	25	Israel	19	Sweden	10
Canada	4	Italy	7	Switzerland	14
Chile	33	Japan	22	Taiwan	36
Columbia	39	Mexico	29	Thailand	35
Denmark	9	Netherlands	5	Turkey	26
Finland	17	New Zealand	6	U.S.A.	1
France	11	Norway	13	Venezuela	40
Germany	15	Pakistan	38	Yugoslavia	31
Great Britain	3	Peru	37		
Greece	27	Philippines	28		

A high score indicates countries which tend to promote collectivism.

A lower scores is associated with countries that promote individualism.

Source: Hofstede 1980, Samovar and Porter 2001: 66;

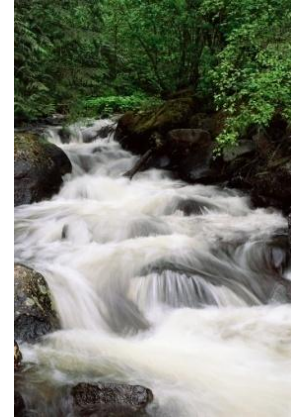
Culture and the Concept Time

Polychron (P-time)

Time is:

- continuous or cyclical, with no particular structure
- characterized by several things happening at once
- limitless and unquantifiable
- is adjusted to suit the needs of the people

Latin America, Arab part of the Middle East, or sub-Sahara Africa....



Monochron (M-time)

Time is:

- discrete, not continuous
- divided into fixed elements, seconds, minutes, hours, days,,
- quantified and scheduled
- a commodity that is limited, wasted, lost, made up, accelerated, etc....



United States, Canada, Germany, Northern Europe...

Source: Hall 1976: 17-14

Culture and the Concept Time

Polychron (P-time)

Time is:

- continuous or cyclical, with no particular structure



"It is impossible to know how many millions of dollars have been lost in international business because monochronic and polychronic people do not understand each other or even realize that two such different time systems exist" (Hall & Hall, 1989, p.16).

- discrete, not continuous
- divided into fixed elements, seconds, minutes, hours, days,,
- quantified and scheduled
- a commodity that is limited, wasted, lost, made up, accelerated, etc....



United States, Canada, Germany, Northern Europe...

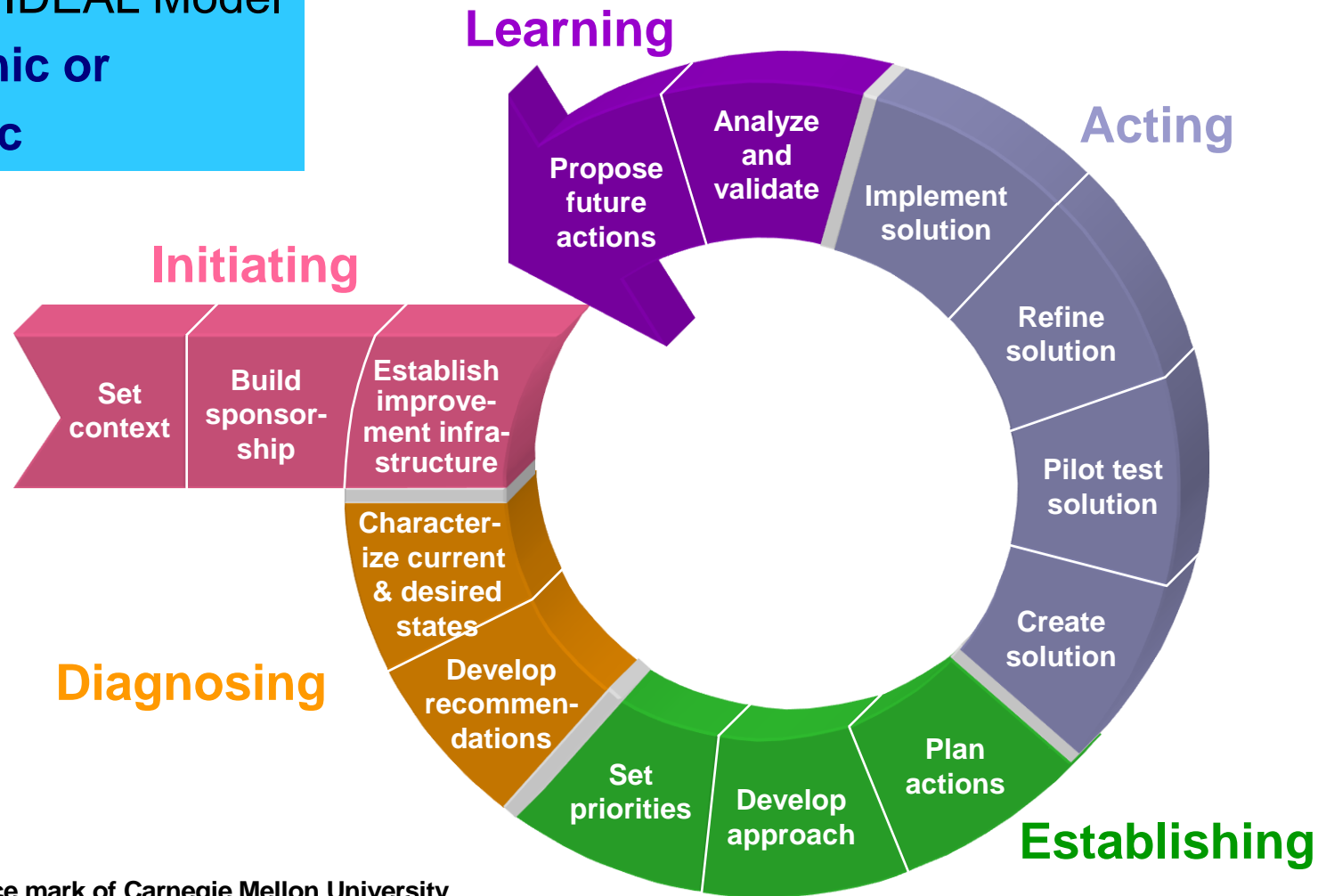
Source: Hall 1976: 17-14

Are you Monochronic or Polychronic?

Attributes	Attributes
Time is money	People follow an internal clock
Being late to a meeting is rude	Meeting start times are flexible
Focus on the task, get the job done	Focus on multiple things at one time
Plans are fixed once they are agreed upon	Plans are always flexible
Committed to the job	Committed to people
Everything depends on the circumstances	The rules of situations are understood
Concerned about not disturbing others; Follow rules of privacy and consideration	Interruptions are a part of life, rules of privacy and consideration are flexible
Seldom borrow or lend things	Borrow and lend things often and easily
Unexpected things are an annoyance	Unexpected things are part of life
Having to wait for things is annoying	Having to wait for things is normal
Have many short-term relationships	Have many long-term relationships

SEI's IDEALsm Model

Is the SEI's IDEAL Model
Monochronic or
Polychronic



SM IDEAL is a service mark of Carnegie Mellon University



Organizational Culture

Organizational Culture: An Anthropological Perspective

The organization **IS** viewed as a complex culture system with

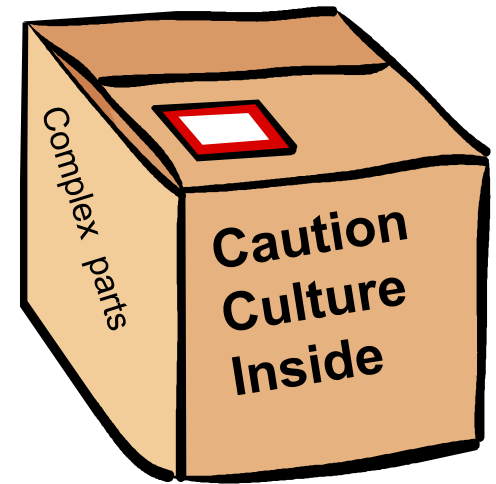
structure, rules of behavior, norms, values, beliefs, and ideas

An organization's culture is **NOT**

perfectly integrated, clearly bounded, or an isolated entity

The organization is part of a larger cultural system

regional culture, national culture, and industrial culture



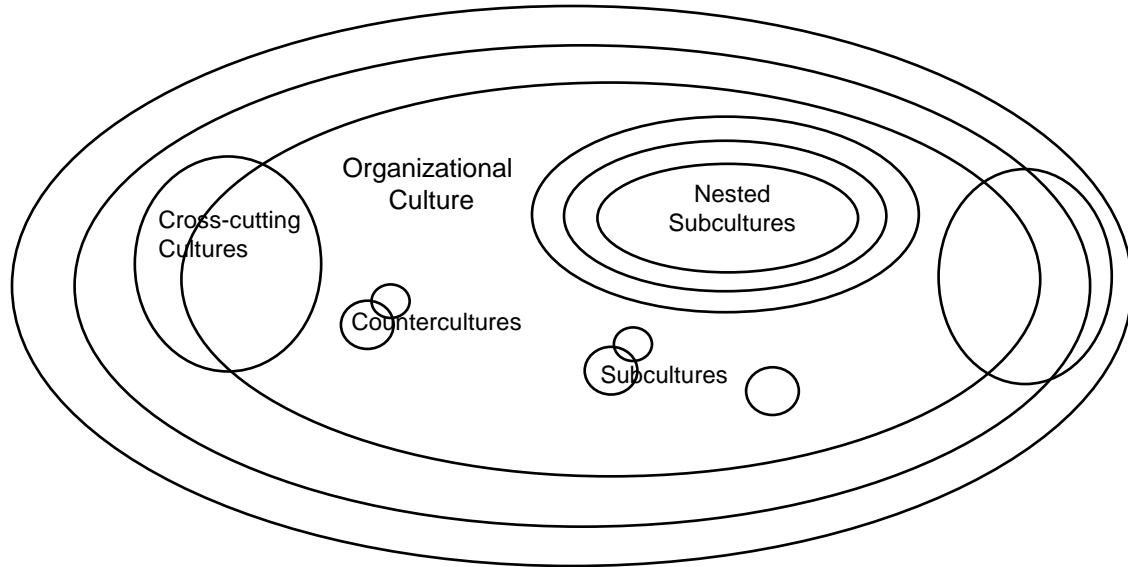
Organizational Culture Breakdown

Subcultures

- ☐ Divisions
- ☐ Business Units
- ☐ Management

Nested Subcultures

- ☐ Consulting Division
 - Process Improvement
 - Accounting



Crosscutting Cultures

- ☐ Gender
- ☐ Ethnic
- ☐ Occupational Cultures (Engineers, Accountants, etc.)

Countercultures

- ☐ Cultural Deviance

Adding to the Organizational Mix

The workforce and/or projects of an organization represent a mix of complex cultural systems:

- ethnic
- gender
- educational background
- regional culture
- national culture



Adding to the complex mix:

- organizational culture from the previous employer
 - CMMI Level 3?
 - People CMM Level 3?
 - Agile?



Culture Change

All cultures change and adapt, but the catalyst, cause, and process of change are varied.

Culture change can be:

planned or accidental

obvious or invisible

slow or rapid

beneficial or detrimental

forward-looking or backward-looking

There is typically a catalyst for change:

merger or acquisition

change in leadership

change in business conditions

shift in technology

compositional shift of the workforce

cultural differences

customer demand

economics

Culture Adaptation: Example



Floor-mounted dimmer



Japanese Palanquin

Acculturation: represented by the changes that occur when one or more cultures interact and aspects of one or both of the cultures change. The cultural changes incorporated or borrowed are often from the larger and dominant culture.



Communication and Culture

Communication and Culture

Communication is key to

- effective working relationships
- avoiding miscommunication
- avoiding conflict



Open Doors



Close Doors

“When elevated to its highest level, intercultural communication becomes an act in which participants make simultaneous inferences not only about their own roles but also about the roles of others” (Samovar and Porter 2000:371)

Low Context and High Context Cultures



Low Context: visible

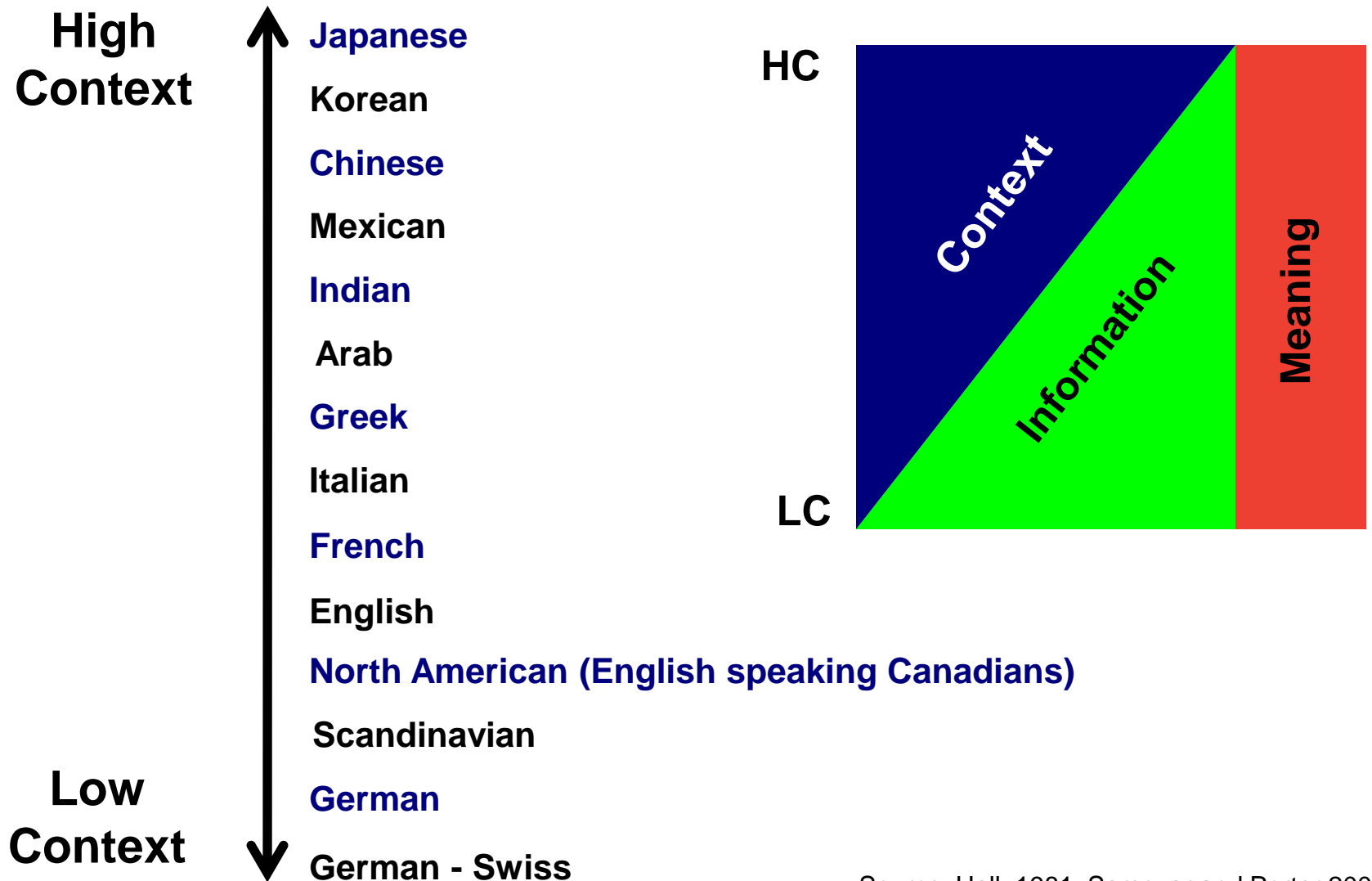


High Context: invisible

Low Context: Cultural knowledge is visible or explicit; behaviors and beliefs are communicated verbally and visually, so you know how to behave; less reliance on context for explanation.

High Context: Cultural knowledge is implicit; many aspect of behaviors and beliefs are not spelled out because most members know what to do and think from years of interaction; more reliance on context for explanation. Verbal messages have little meaning without context.

Low Context and High Context Cultures



Source: Hall: 1981; Samovar and Porter 2001

SEPG NA 2009

Valdez, Buttles & Mogilensky

Low Context and High Context: Comparisons

	Low-Context/Individualistic Monochronic	High-Context/Collectivistic Polychronic
Countries	US, UK, Canada, Germany, Denmark, Norway	Japan, China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, France, Italy, Spain
Business outlook	Competitive	Cooperative
Work approach	Task-oriented	Relationship-oriented
Work style	Individualistic	Team-oriented/collectivistic
Employee desires	Individual achievement	Team achievement
Relationships	Many, looser, short-term	Fewer, tighter, long-term
Decision process	Logical, linear, rule-oriented	Intuitive, relational
Communication	Verbal over Non-verbal	Non-verbal over verbal
Planning horizons	More explicit, written, formal	More implicit, oral, informal
Sense of time	Monochronic	Polychronic
View of change	Change over tradition	Tradition over change
Knowledge	Explicit, conscious	Implicit, not fully conscious
Learning	Knowledge is transferable (above the waterline)	Knowledge is situational (below the waterline)

Adapted from K. Beaman 2008

Intercultural Communication: Conflict

Individualistic, Low Context

What is important:

- sense of self respect and ego
- in control of one's autonomy
- freedom, territory, and individual boundary

Conflict arises from the violation of autonomous space, privacy, power, and sense of individual fairness and equity.

Collectivistic, High Context

What is important

- sense of self respect
- being accepted and approved by one's peers, superiors, and/or family members.

Conflict arises from the violation of boundaries, norms of group loyalty and commitment, and reciprocal obligations and trust.

Intercultural Conflict

Individualistic LC– “Problem Solving”	Collectivistic HC- “Face Saving”
Conflict is viewed as an expressed struggle to air out differences	Conflict is viewed as damaging to social face and relational harmony and should be avoided as much as possible
Conflict can be both dysfunctional and functional	Conflict is for the most part, dysfunctional
Conflict can be dysfunctional when it is repressed and not directly confronted	Conflict signals a lack of self discipline and self-censorship of emotional outbursts, and hence, a sign of emotional immaturity
Conflict can be functional when it provides an open opportunity for solving problematic issues	Conflict provides a testing ground for a skillful facework negotiating process
Substantive and relational issues in conflict should be handled separately	Substantive conflict and relational face issues are always intertwined
Conflict should be dealt with openly and directly	Conflict should be dealt with discreetly and subtly
Effective management of conflict can be viewed as a win-win problem-solving game	Effective management of conflict can be viewed as a win-win face negotiation game

Communication and the Process Professional

Myers-Briggs Cognitive Style Type Indicator (MBTI) applied to 1,341 participants in SEI courses

		Sensing Types		Intuitive Types			
		Thinking	Feeling	Feeling	Thinking		
Introvert	Judging	ISTJ N=341 25%	ISFJ N=56 4%	INFJ N=27 2%	INTJ N=172 13%		
	Perceptive	ISTP N=69 5%	ISFP N=17 1%	INFP N=41 3%	INTP N=91 7%		
Extravert	Perceptive	ESTP N=29 2%	ESFP N=12 1%	ENFP N=35 3%	ENTP N=67 5%		
	Judging	ESTJ N=162 12%	ESFJ N=40 3%	ENFJ N=30 2%	ENTJ N=152 11%		

Analysis of MBTI Data



- Mean Type: ISTJ
- Modal Type: ISTJ
- Percentage of sample in ISTJ or within one preference (i.e., ESTJ, INTJ, ISFJ, ISTP): 59%
- Preferences and strengths of ISTJ form an excellent profile for software engineers, but a weak profile for:
 - Organizational change agents

Development of Non-preferred Functions

Significant effort to develop non-preferred functions may help many organizational change agents (and would-be “anthropologists”) to improve their skills:



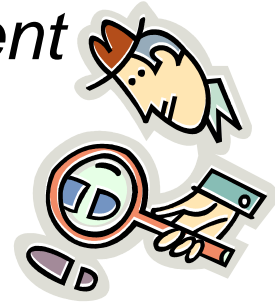
- I-preference people (Introverts) may want to learn to spend more time interacting with others, without exhausting themselves
- S-preference people (Sensors) may want to learn to identify and recognize broader patterns in the details they observe
- T-preference people (Thinking decision-makers) may want to learn to better understand, and give higher priority to, people issues and concerns
- J-preference people (Judgers) may want to learn to expand their awareness of more possibilities before making decisions



Identifying and Understanding Culture

It's all in the Patterns

What do Anthropologists and Process Improvement Professionals have in common?



Anthropologists (Culture Detectives)

Look for patterns in the life of human populations or groups: beliefs, values, customs, ideas, and behaviors.

Process Improvement Professionals (Process Detectives)

Look for patterns of behavior and artifacts that support sound development and maintenance activities.

SLA BOK

Understanding the common cultural patterns typically found in specific industries or regions.

SCAMPI Lead Appraiser Body of Knowledge (SLA BOK)

- Provides a multi-dimensional view of the competencies and associated skills that are needed to be a successful SCAMPI Lead Appraiser.
- The SLA BOK is a driver for the SEI Appraisal Program's approach to ensure quality of SCAMPI appraisals.
- It establishes a comprehensive basis for curriculum, training, certification, observation, and quality assurance program.

SCAMPI = Standard CMMI Appraisal Method for Process Improvement

*SCAMPI Lead Appraiser Body of Knowledge SLA BOK – Technical Report –
CMU/SEI-2007-TR-019*

SLA BOK

SCAMPI lead appraisers must be:

- well versed in the current version of the model for which they will appraise against (CMMI-DEV, SVC, ACQ, People CMM)
- able to lead appraisals using SCAMPI tools and methods (SCAMPI and MDD)
- skilled in a range of areas that are important when conducting appraisals
 - ☐ planning
 - ☐ interviewing
 - ☐ managing a team
 - ☐ judging a process
- One major Competency Cluster: Understanding and Adapting to Organizational Context

Understanding and Adapting to Organizational Context – CC 6

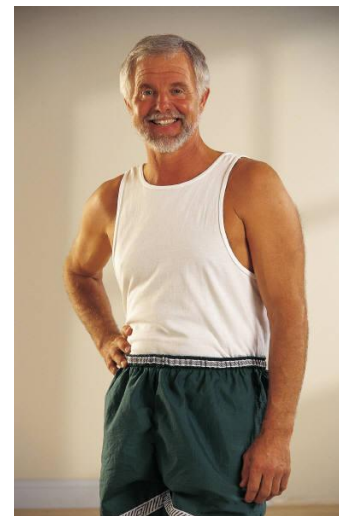
- Is the ability to **identify** and **understand** defining aspects of an **organization's culture**, and to adjust behavior to more effectively operate within that culture.
- May also include indentifying key questions and key observations that highlight **cultural issues**, making appropriate personal adjustments such as attire, terminology, and speech patterns.
- Understanding the common **cultural patterns** typically found in specific industries or regions.
- A Lead Appraiser is expected to work flexibly and effectively within the context of an organization to ensure appraisal results that are accurate, understood, and accepted.

Examples of Understanding and Adapting to Organizational Context

- CMP 6.1.3** Understanding the OU's business context and drivers for process improvement
- CMP 6.2.1** Identifying and managing language issues
- CMP 6.3.1** Accommodating the local culture when conducting interviews
- CMP 6.4.1** Understanding the OU context and the culture's impact on process judgments
- CMP 6.4.4** Recognizing mature organizational behavior
- CMP 6.5.3** Determining the most effective means of delivering results
- CMP 6.5.4** Recommending the next steps for process improvement to the OU

Patterned Behavior: Cultural Clues

- Descriptive Patterns – “What” Characteristic of a population
“Most male employees wear blue or white dress shirts and khaki pants”
- Associational Patterns – “Why”
“Upper management wears blue or white dress shirts and khaki pants ”
- Normative Patterns – The “right” thing to do
Mandatory
Business casual clothing
Preferential
Blue or white shirts and khaki pants



Understanding Culture: Etic vs. Emic

Etic

Outsider's interpretation of beliefs, customs, and behaviors



Emic

Insider's interpretation of beliefs, customs, and behaviors



Understanding Culture: Cultural Relativism

Cultural relativism: to understand cultures in terms of their values and beliefs and not judging them by the standards of another culture.

The instrument for collecting cultural data is YOU!

1. Am I judging this idea, practice, situation, or person?
2. Has my judgment limited or colored my understanding or interpretation?
3. By what criteria do I judge it?
4. If I do judge it, what am I going to do about it?



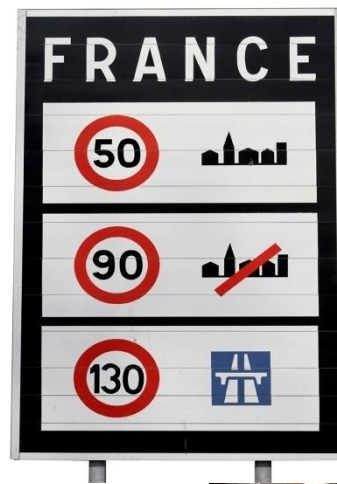
Reflexivity & Cultural Shock

Encountering new “cultures” causes comparisons with the known as a means of rationalizing one’s own culture and the new cultural experiences.

Culture Shock

1. disorientation
2. dissociation
3. reconnection

Reverse Culture Shock



Encountering New Cultures: Don'ts

Behaviors, actions, and attitudes that may possibly offend:

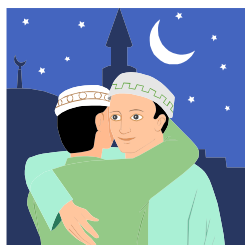
- People should adapt to me, I should not have to adapt to their culture
- Making assumptions or instant judgments
- Speaking louder to be understood
- Relaying a sense of superiority
- Making negative “faces” or gestures to new or different experiences such as food selection...gestures can carry meaning



Encountering New Cultures: Do's 1

Cultural sensitivity and awareness will avoid situations that may be awkward for you and your host(s).

- Research the culture you are traveling to or interacting with: **local customs**, **beliefs**, **dress**, and **business etiquette**. Are they monochronic, polychronic, high-context, low-context?
- Email exchanges can give clues regarding the formality of a business situations and relationships.
- Observe behavioral patterns of the members of the organizations' "**greetings**", **dress**, **arrangement of office space** (is there a big space divide between management/employees?)



Encountering New Cultures: Do's 2

- Find a Culture Broker - *Individuals who function as mediators or translators between members of two cultures.*
 - Relay the norms, values, and rules of behavior
 - help to determine monochronic or polychronic
 - help to determine high-context or low-context
 - Can help to interpret communications and situations thus avoiding conflict or confusion
 - Assist in sending communications that are meaningful and understandable
- NOTE:** It is best to locate a culture broker that not only understands the host culture, but the organizational culture as well
- Approach “new culture” with cultural relativism.



Negotiating Cross-Cultural Working Norms

Stages of balancing power and building relationships

- Stage 1:** Learning about values, priorities, similarities, and differences. Learn that there may be cultural differences but there is a common goal. **This goal needs to be communicated in a way that is understood by all parties involved.**
- Stage 2:** **Setting expectations:** negotiating how you will work together; **rules of engagement that do not violate cultural norms.**
- Stage 3:** Adjusting and strengthening the partnership.
- Stage 4:** Shared partnership culture is established that enables an effective working relationship.

Adapted from: Gluesing et al. 2008

Example of Crossing Cultural Boundaries Effectively

- Identify and describe instances of effectively crossing cultural boundaries in your organizational work
 - ☐ What was the situation?
 - ☐ What did you do?
 - ☐ Why do you think it worked?

Summary

- Provide definitions of cultural elements
 - Provide new ways of describing and communicating culture
- Broaden the understanding of culture and its complexity
 - Develop cultural knowledge and skills
- Provide new ways of thinking about intercultural communications and conflicts
- Expand the ability to identify and describe cultural elements that may impact appraisal and process improvement activities





Software Engineering Information Repository

This presentation will be available to download March 26, 2009 on SEIR, a web-based repository

URL: <http://seir.sei.cmu.edu>

- Need to use Web-browsers that support tables and frames.
- Use is free, but you need to register for complete access

Or

You can request that a copy be email to you by contacting Palma Buttles at pjb@sei.cmu.edu

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