

The Entity-Relationship Model

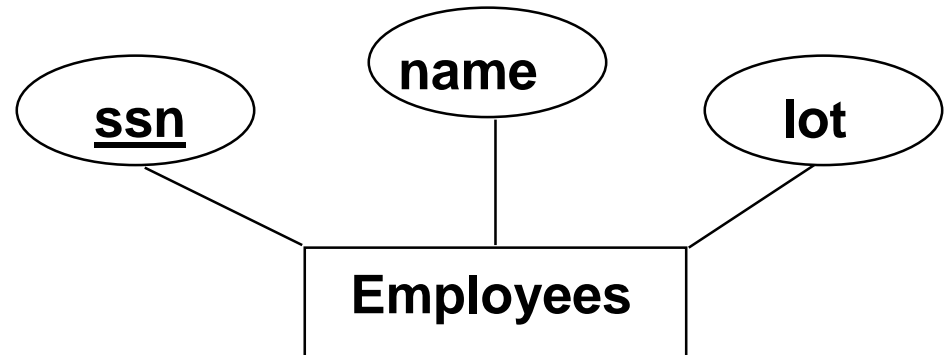
Chapter 2



Overview of Database Design

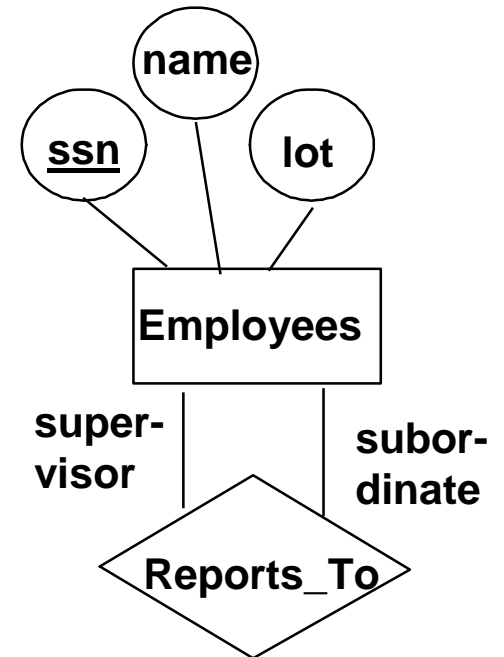
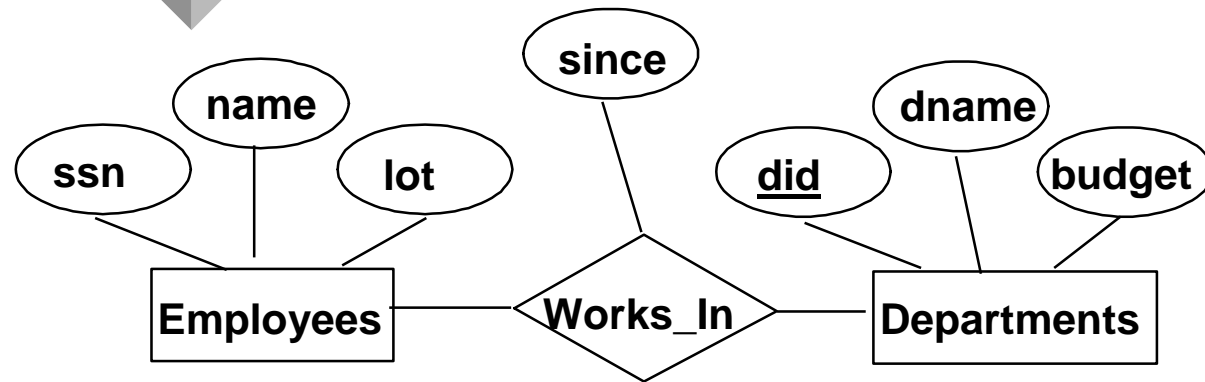
- ❖ Conceptual design: (*ER Model is used at this stage.*)
 - What are the *entities* and *relationships* in the enterprise?
 - What information about these entities and relationships should we store in the database?
 - What are the *integrity constraints* or *business rules* that hold?
 - A database `schema' in the ER Model can be represented pictorially (*ER diagrams*).
 - Can map an ER diagram into a relational schema.

ER Model Basics



- ❖ Entity: Real-world object distinguishable from other objects. An entity is described (in DB) using a set of attributes.
- ❖ Entity Set: A collection of similar entities. E.g., all employees.
 - All entities in an entity set have the same set of attributes. (Until we consider ISA hierarchies, anyway!)
 - Each entity set has a *key*.
 - Each attribute has a *domain*.

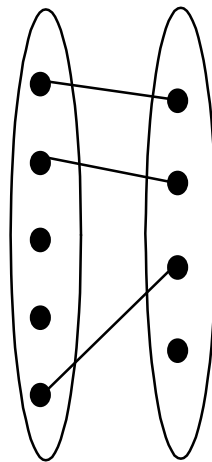
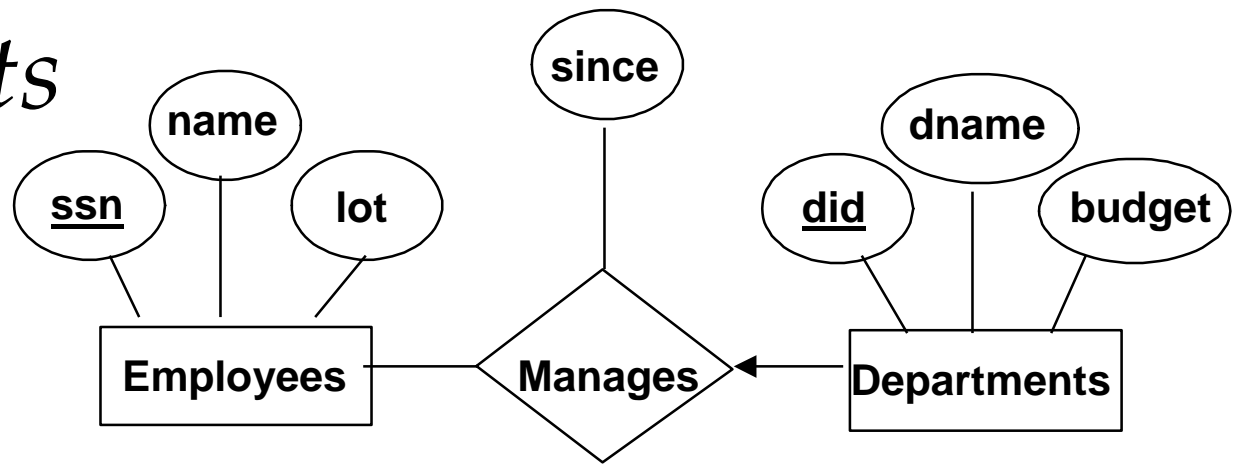
ER Model Basics (Contd.)



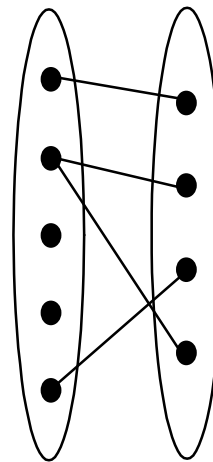
- ❖ Relationship: Association among two or more entities. E.g., Attishoo works in Pharmacy department.
- ❖ Relationship Set: Collection of similar relationships.
 - An n-ary relationship set R relates n entity sets $E_1 \dots E_n$; each relationship in R involves entities $e_1 \in E_1, \dots, e_n \in E_n$
 - ◆ Same entity set could participate in different relationship sets, or in different “roles” in same set.

Key Constraints

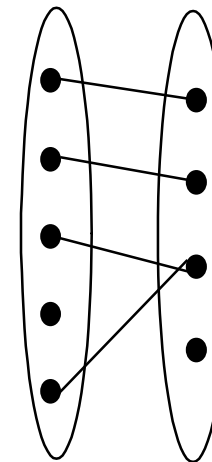
- ❖ Consider Works_In:
An employee can work in many departments; a dept can have many employees.
- ❖ In contrast, each dept has at most one manager, according to the key constraint on Manages.



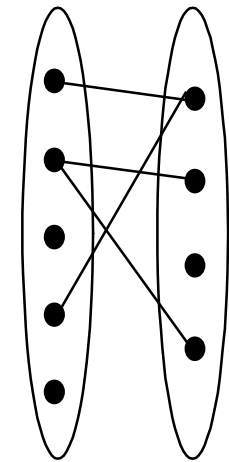
1-to-1



1-to Many



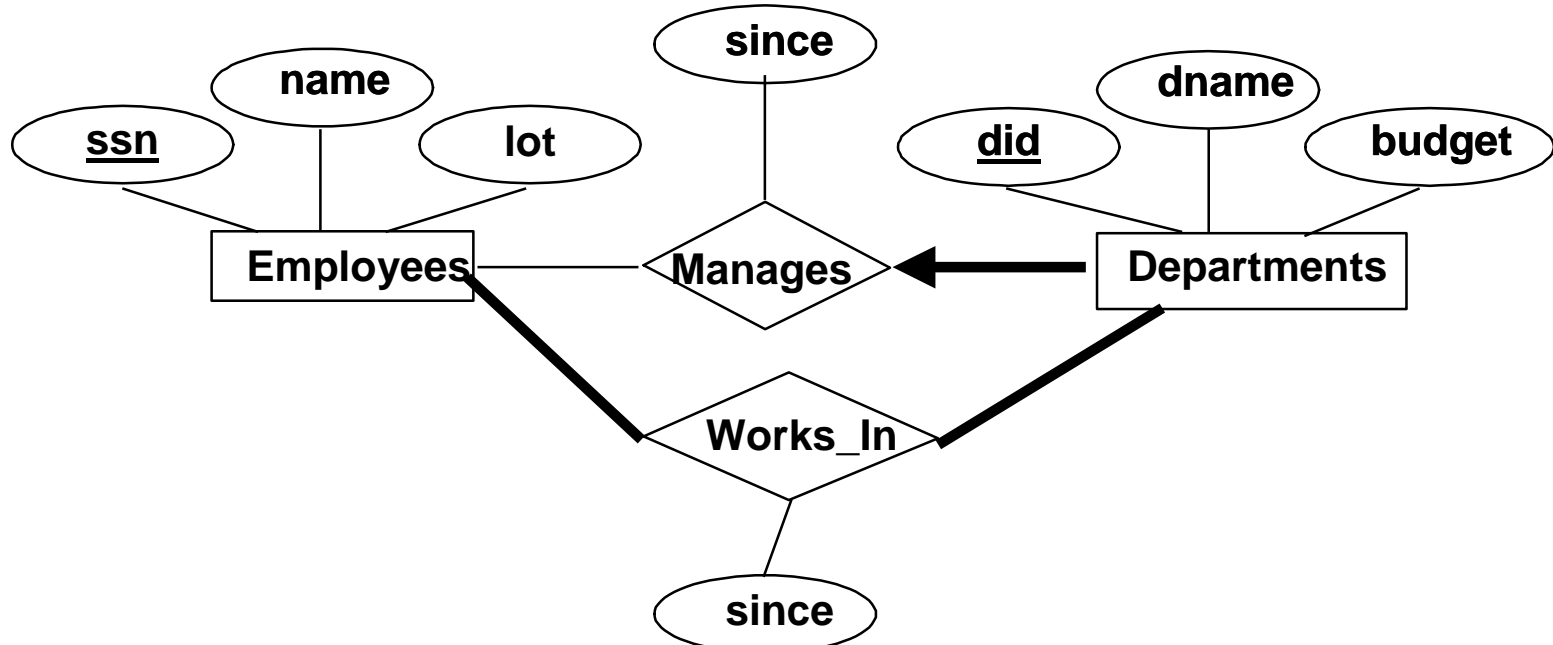
Many-to-1



Many-to-Many

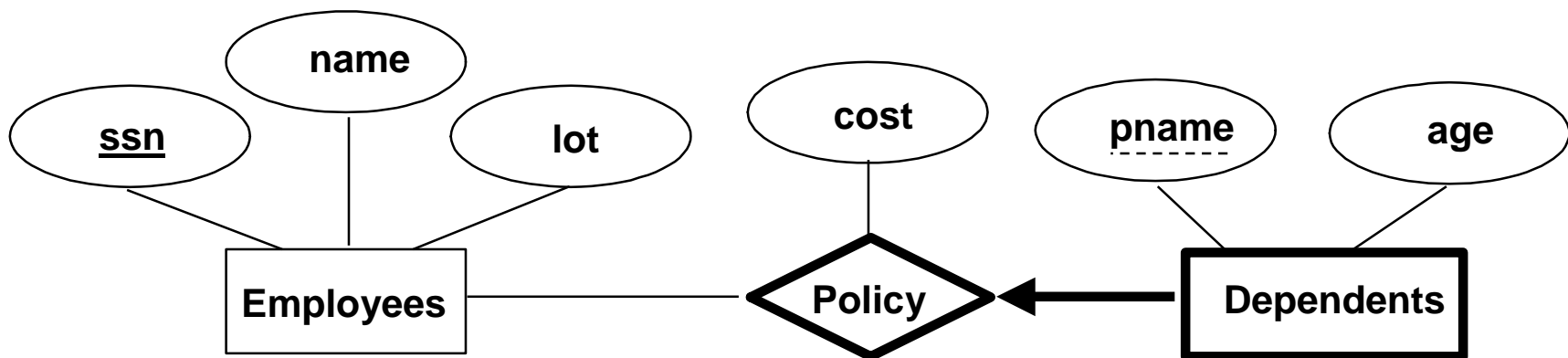
Participation Constraints

- ❖ Does every department have a manager?
 - If so, this is a *participation constraint*: the participation of Departments in Manages is said to be *total* (vs. *partial*).
 - ◆ Every *did* value in Departments table must appear in a row of the Manages table (with a non-null *ssn* value!)



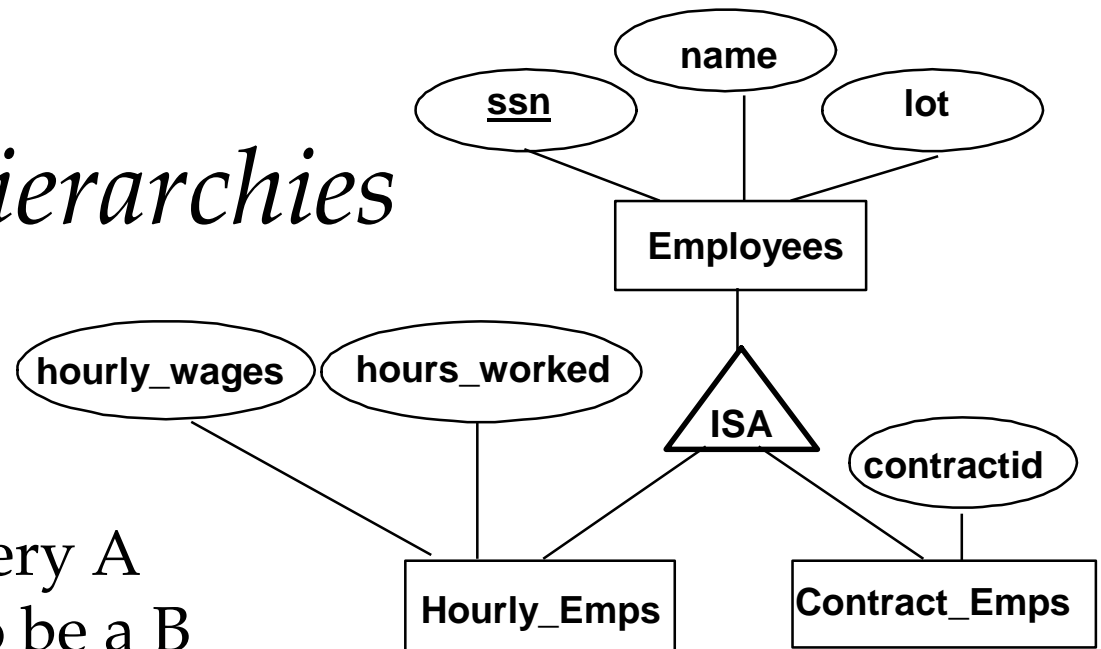
Weak Entities

- ❖ A *weak entity* can be identified uniquely only by considering the primary key of another (*owner*) entity.
 - Owner entity set and weak entity set must participate in a one-to-many relationship set (one owner, many weak entities).
 - Weak entity set must have total participation in this *identifying* relationship set.



ISA ('is a') Hierarchies

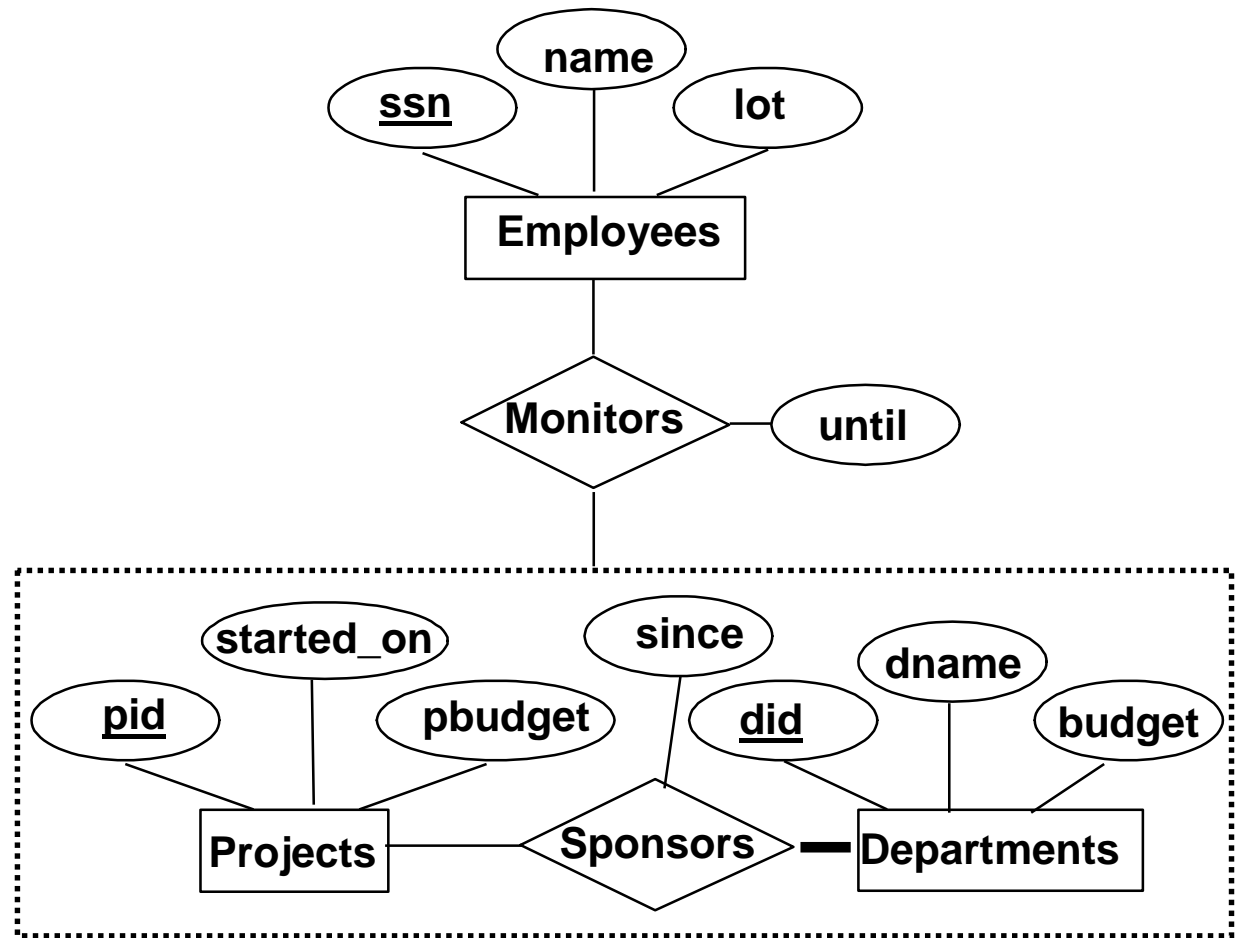
- ❖ As in C++, or other PLs, attributes are inherited.
- ❖ If we declare A ISA B, every A entity is also considered to be a B entity.



- ❖ *Overlap constraints*: Can Joe be an Hourly_Emps as well as a Contract_Emps entity? (*Allowed/disallowed*)
- ❖ *Covering constraints*: Does every Employees entity also have to be an Hourly_Emps or a Contract_Emps entity? (*Yes/no*)
- ❖ Reasons for using ISA:
 - To add descriptive attributes specific to a subclass.
 - To identify entities that participate in a relationship.

Aggregation

- ❖ Used when we have to model a relationship involving (entity sets and) a *relationship set*.
 - Aggregation allows us to treat a relationship set as an entity set for purposes of participation in (other) relationships.



- ☞ *Aggregation vs. ternary relationship:*
 - ❖ Monitors is a distinct relationship, with a descriptive attribute.
 - ❖ Also, can say that each sponsorship is monitored by at most one employee.



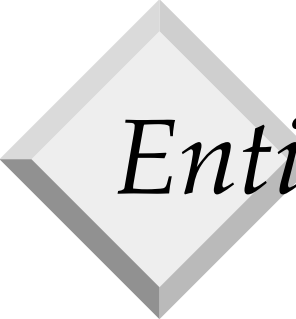
Conceptual Design Using the ER Model

❖ Design choices:

- Should a concept be modeled as an entity or an attribute?
- Should a concept be modeled as an entity or a relationship?
- Identifying relationships: Binary or ternary? Aggregation?

❖ Constraints in the ER Model:

- A lot of data semantics can (and should) be captured.
- But some constraints cannot be captured in ER diagrams.

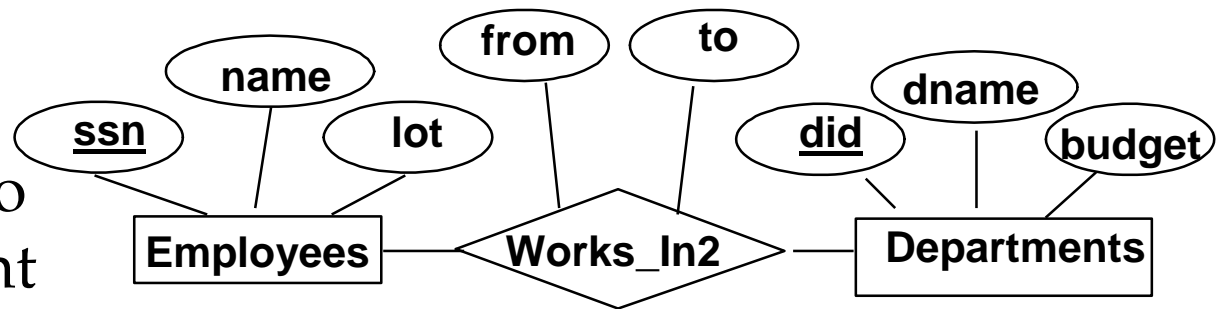


Entity vs. Attribute

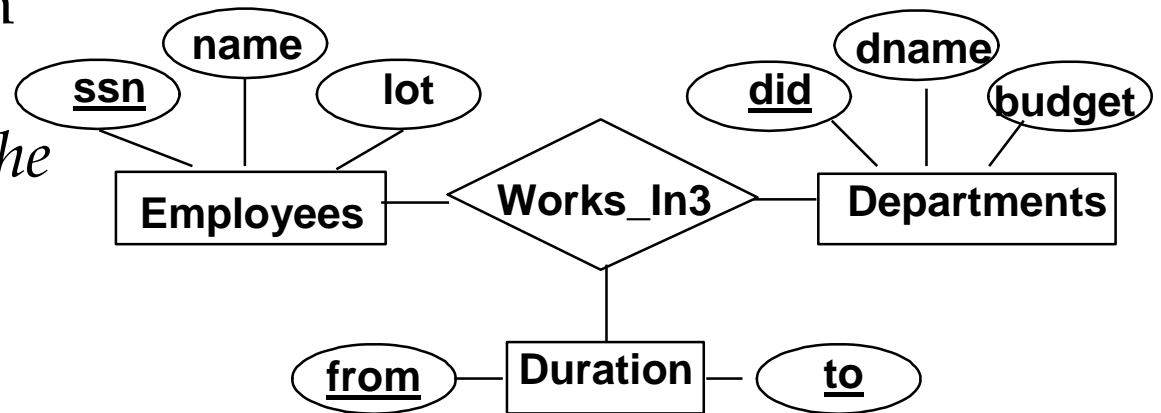
- ❖ Should *address* be an attribute of Employees or an entity (connected to Employees by a relationship)?
- ❖ Depends upon the use we want to make of address information, and the semantics of the data:
 - ◆ If we have several addresses per employee, *address* must be an entity (since attributes cannot be set-valued).
 - ◆ If the structure (city, street, etc.) is important, e.g., we want to retrieve employees in a given city, *address* must be modeled as an entity (since attribute values are atomic).

Entity vs. Attribute (Contd.)

- ❖ Works_In2 does not allow an employee to work in a department for two or more periods.

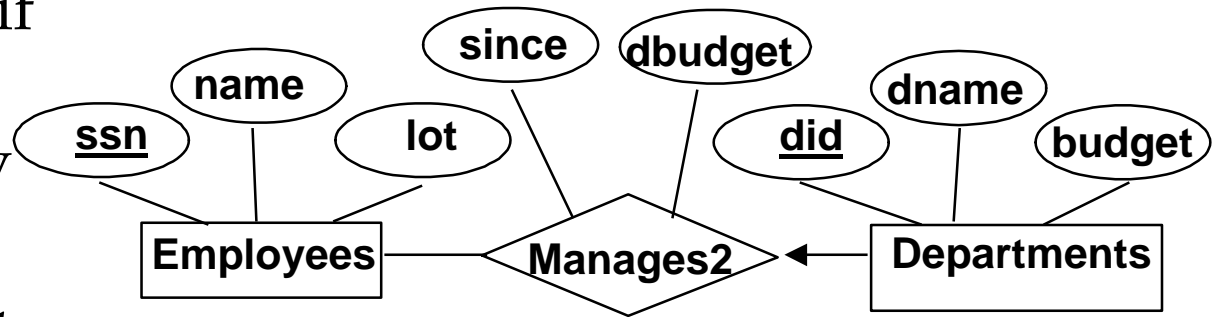


- ❖ Similar to the problem of wanting to record several addresses for an employee: we want to record *several values of the descriptive attributes for each instance of this relationship*.



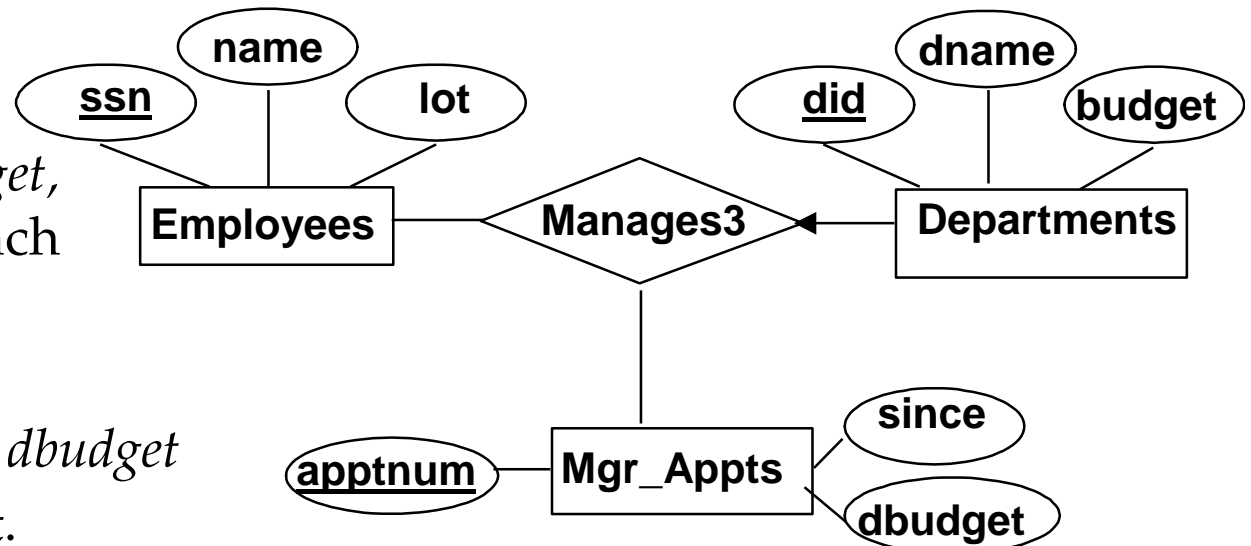
Entity vs. Relationship

- ❖ First ER diagram OK if a manager gets a separate discretionary budget for each dept.
- ❖ What if a manager gets a discretionary budget that covers *all* managed depts?



- Redundancy of *dbudget*, which is stored for each dept managed by the manager.

Misleading: suggests *dbudget* tied to managed dept.

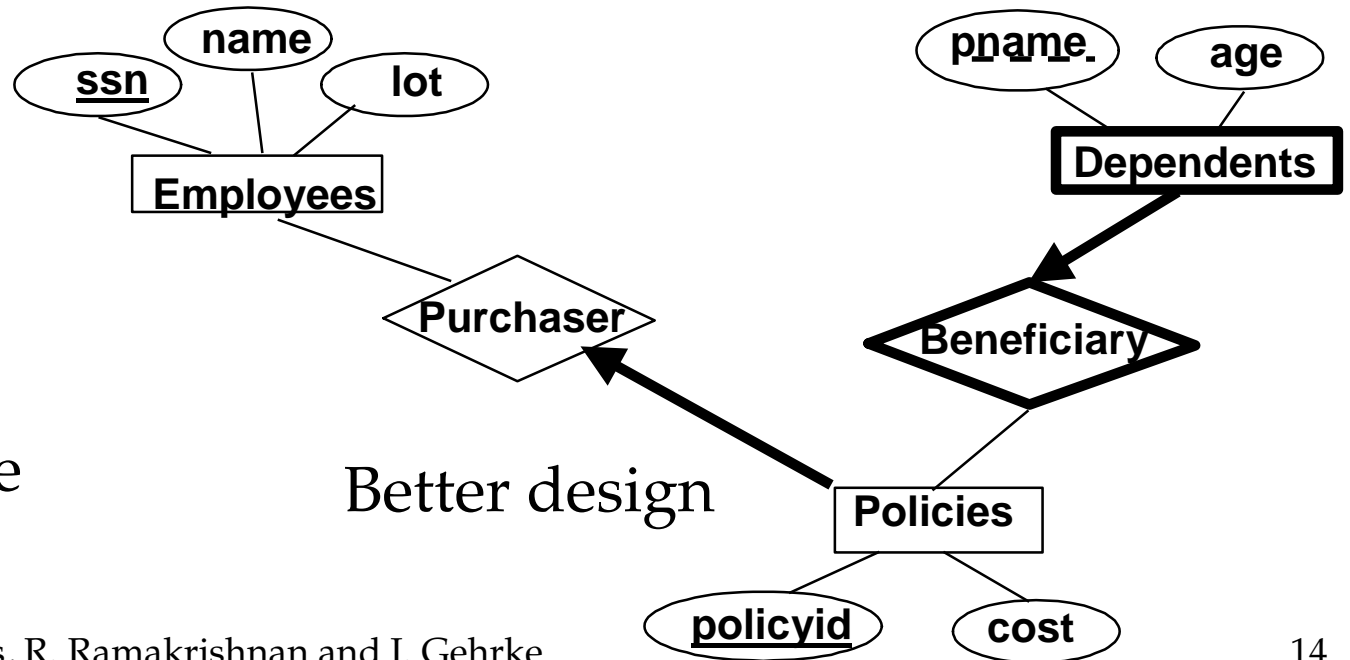
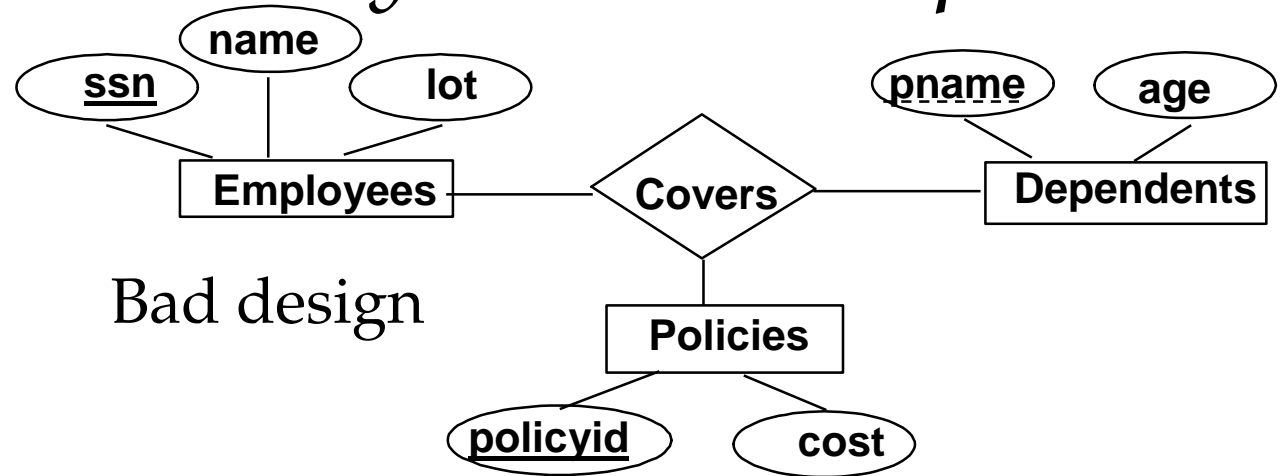


Binary vs. Ternary Relationships

- ❖ If each policy is owned by just 1 employee:

- Key constraint on Policies would mean policy can only cover 1 dependent!

- ❖ What are the additional constraints in the 2nd diagram?





Binary vs. Ternary Relationships (Contd.)

- ❖ Previous example illustrated a case when two binary relationships were better than one ternary relationship.
- ❖ An example in the other direction: a ternary relation *Contracts* relates entity sets *Parts*, *Departments* and *Suppliers*, and has descriptive attribute *qty*. No combination of binary relationships is an adequate substitute:
 - S “can-supply” P, D “needs” P, and D “deals-with” S does not imply that D has agreed to buy P from S.
 - How do we record *qty*?



Summary of Conceptual Design

- ❖ *Conceptual design follows requirements analysis,*
 - Yields a high-level description of data to be stored
- ❖ ER model popular for conceptual design
 - Constructs are expressive, close to the way people think about their applications.
- ❖ Basic constructs: *entities, relationships, and attributes* (of entities and relationships).
- ❖ Some additional constructs: *weak entities, ISA hierarchies, and aggregation.*
- ❖ Note: There are many variations on ER model.



Summary of ER (Contd.)

- ❖ Several kinds of integrity constraints can be expressed in the ER model: *key constraints, participation constraints, and overlap/covering constraints* for ISA hierarchies. Some *foreign key constraints* are also implicit in the definition of a relationship set.
 - Some constraints (notably, *functional dependencies*) cannot be expressed in the ER model.
 - Constraints play an important role in determining the best database design for an enterprise.



Summary of ER (Contd.)

- ❖ ER design is *subjective*. There are often many ways to model a given scenario! Analyzing alternatives can be tricky, especially for a large enterprise. Common choices include:
 - Entity vs. attribute, entity vs. relationship, binary or n-ary relationship, whether or not to use ISA hierarchies, and whether or not to use aggregation.
- ❖ Ensuring good database design: resulting relational schema should be analyzed and refined further. FD information and normalization techniques are especially useful.