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Building Bridges across Cultural Differences

Why don't I follow your norms?

Charlotte Wittenkamp

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Building Bridges across Cultural Differences: Why don't I follow your norms?
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Contents

	About the Author	**8**
	About the reader	**9**
1	**The Golden Circle**	**10**
2	**What is culture?**	**12**
3	**Values and Norms**	**14**
4	**The Learning Curve**	**17**
4.1	The U-curve	18
4.2	Value clash	20
4.3	Going back	22

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5	**Adapting – or not**	**23**
5.1	Assimilation	23
5.2	Bi/Multi cultural	24
5.3	Rejection	24
5.4	Culture loss	25
6	**Don't jump this chapter as much as you may want to**	**26**
6.1	Questionnaire confusion	27
6.2	What does Statistical Mean mean?	27
6.2	Variance	28
6.3	What can you infer from knowing the mean?	28
6.4	Correlations and Causality	29
7	**More about Values**	**30**
7.1	Schwartz's Value theory	31
7.2	Values according to Hofstede	40

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8	**Other Models**	**44**
8.1	World Values Survey	44
8.2	The Lewis Model	45
8.3	GlobeSmart	47
8.4	Missing values	49
9	**Egalitarianism / Hierarchy / Patriarchy**	**50**
9.1	Status and Respect	51
10	**History**	**55**
10.1	The Protein Theory	55
10.2	The Xenophobe Theory	56
10.3	Rice/Wheat theory	57
10.4	Imperialism/Colonialism	59
10.5	Is this still relevant?	60
11	**Systems**	**62**
11.1	General legalities	62
11.2	School Systems	65

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11.3	Taxes	68
11.4	Public accounts	69
11.5	Other Systems	71
12	**Blueprint of the World**	**73**
13	**Communication**	**74**
13.1	Language	75
13.2	Other Communication Pitfalls	77
13.3	Communication Filters	86
14	**Concluding Comments**	**89**
	Appendix: Additional Resources	**90**
	Acknowledgements:	**92**
	Endnotes	**93**

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About the Author

After having worked in Denmark with organizational development in the financial industry and with companies such as IBM and Motorola, my family moved to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1998 with a small startup. Several startups later, we still live here.

Without a work permit the first years of our life in the US, I went back to school to study psychology with a focus on cultural differences. I have since assisted numerous transfers, students, and au pairs with their transition in and out of the area and with their practical and emotional adjustment to the changed surroundings and expectations.

Did I experience culture shock? Yes indeed. The egalitarian Scandinavian mindset is very different from highly competitive USA.

Did I get back to my old self after recovery? No, I got back to my new self. Where my old self was focused on processes and data analysis, my new self is more focused on the person in front of me. (I still like to know what the data says. In some contexts, to me numbers speak louder than words.)

To all who have helped me in that transition, my heartfelt thanks. That is, by the way, part of the Silicon Valley culture: Pay it forward. So let me pass my experience on to you.

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Los Altos, CA, September 2014

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About the reader

Who are you?

Most of the people I have been in contact with became interested in cross-cultural questions because they suddenly were part of an international transfer where they were the minority, the person who moved. There is nothing like being on the outside of a group to feel a need to understand those who are in the majority. Adapting to their behavior is a choice, but we can't make the choice until we have some understanding of the group we are watching. Whether they will let us in is their choice – but the chance is greater if we know how to play by their rules.

If this describes you, please read on.

Some people are already "part of the group" but are interested in bringing some of us strangers in. They can be employers, or in-laws, or friends, or providers of services and goods, or just be plain kind hearted and curious.
If you already are – or are likely to get – in contact with one of us temporary or permanent immigrants, this book will also have something for you.

And finally, there are people who think of starting exporting or who have already had professional contacts making it clear that there are many locally determined ways of doing business just as there are many ways of being social.
While you will also benefit from learning much more about local customs, do's, and don'ts in the markets you want to address, reading this book could make it is much easier to remember those rules[1]. So you, too, may want to join me through the following pages.

I have tried to address issues that will arise from "westerners going east" as well as "easterners going west", "northerners going south", and "southerners going north" but naturally my own background has colored both style and content.

The book has endnotes that sometimes have extra examples or additional comments, sometimes references to linkable online articles, or just regular references. You should be able to jump freely to the endnotes and back by clicking on the number.

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1 The Golden Circle

Some years back Simon Sinek promoted the concept of *The Golden Circle* in customer communication[2].

The message was that if we want to connect with our client base it is less important *What* we do or *How* we do it – what really counts is *Why* we do it. Based on this *Why* we can make others part of our movement.

Does this thinking apply to understanding culturally different people, too? Will we be more motivated to connect with other people, if we understand *Why* they do what they do?

Science seems to think so, at least when we talk about individuals[3]. When we understand "where somebody comes from", what their experiences have been, what their story is, we are more likely to feel empathy and to engage. Even in the courtroom, erratic behaviors are sometimes attributed to peoples' stories: "If that is how she grew up, little wonder she didn't know any better."[4]

Most people understand intellectually that people who grew up in different countries have experienced totally different circumstances, norms, and behaviors. But they have often little idea what these circumstances, norms, and behaviors actually are and consequently they don't know what to expect. They don't know if the "erratic behavior" is just another cultural norm; they just experience the consequence: that they feel hesitant about trusting the other person because that person evidently is unpredictable.

Much of this happens without we are even aware of it. If the body language is slightly off, the person stands a little closer to us in the elevator than we are used to, someone is a little more loud or quiet; all spells "Beware!" to our super sensitive "stranger sensors".

The only way to effectively quell the "stranger sensors" is through repeated exposure with positive outcomes. Short of that, we can try to be more mindful about these feelings. If the "Beware"-reaction can lead us to become curious instead of vigilant (or at least along with vigilant), interactions tend to be smoother.

Just like in Sinek's circle, when we learn about other cultures we first notice *What* they do. It is a rather superficial first glance, some times referred to as "the tip of the iceberg". As mentioned, it can be difference in personal space, or that Japanese people bow to each other, not just as a greeting but sometimes while they talk as well. We may notice that Americans smile more or that Koreans smile less. We see what the other people wear, what they eat.

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If we need to interact with foreign nationals, we may try to be accommodating by learning *How* they do things – not the least how to speak their language – but also how they treat each other.

But *Why* do they do what they do?

This book is more about the *Whys* than about the *Whats* or the *Hows*. One reason is that the *Whats* and the *Hows* depend on which country you will be focusing on – it may even depend on which region in the country since many countries have distinct subcultures. To cover this it would have to be a really big book – of which you would need to read only the 2% related to the culture you want to know more about.

There are other resources available either online or through many cross-cultural coaching agencies spanning the world if you want to learn the *Whats* and *Hows* of national customs. There are whole books on some of the practical differences – f.ex on how to apply for jobs in different countries.
All the same, to illustrate points or concepts there are some *Whats* and *Hows* in examples throughout the book. (And I have added a list of websites and other reading material I have found useful in the Appendix and in the references. In the interest of full disclosure, I have no professional relationships with the companies referred to in the text.)

This book is a recipe for where to look for answers to the *Whys* so you can better coexist harmoniously and productively with people from other cultures – may you live in their country or they in yours. The answers are found in neuroscience, psychology, history, religion, geography, politics… But the most important part is to ask *Why*. Just asking the question is half the effort. It is a willingness to engage deeper with people not like you.

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2 What is culture?

One definition of culture is something with pottery and dance and architecture, Hollywood and rock bands. That is not what I am primarily discussing in this book.

Culture is here defined as a mental programming that we inherit from our ancestors and pick up from the people around us.[5]

Fig. 1 is a model of factors influencing culture in a society.

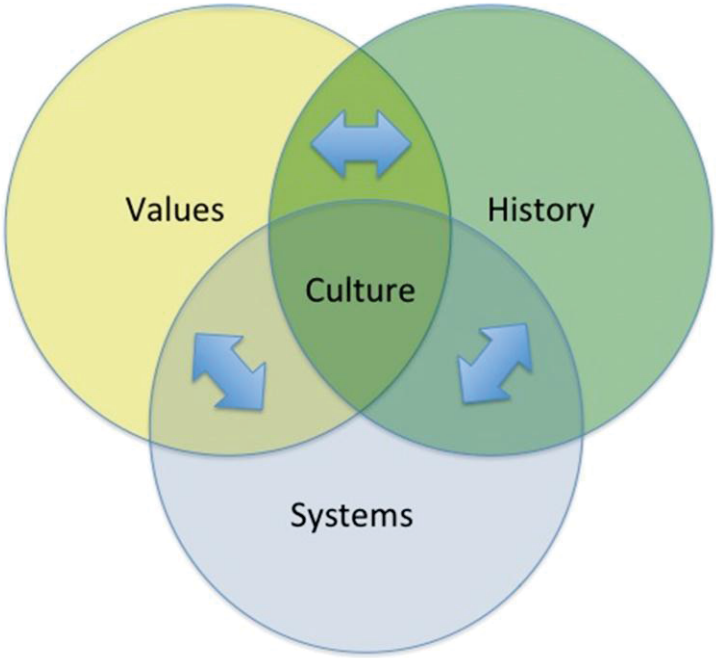

Fig. 1: Culture Bases

The first basis is made up by **Values**. Which sentiments does the majority of the population share about power, gender roles, risk, autonomy etc.? Much more will be discussed about Values in the following chapters.

The next element is **History**. This is this very boring subject you slept through in 4th grade. But a country's history has a huge influence on how its people do things today. So knowing not only about your host nation but also your own country's history can be a great help.

Finally there are **Systems**. These are not (only) computer systems but the way a society organizes its commons. How is law and order organized? How do we provide for the poor? Education? Environment protection?

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All three factors influence one another. Our history plays a role in how we address societal problems (The Netherlands have an active approach to rising sea levels.) Our systems influence which problems will contribute to our history books tomorrow (Education systems or lack of same influence social stability). Our values are formed by events in our past – and *because* of our values, we will take actions that will influence history (Signing International treaties.) The systems we put down are formed by which priorities we have, and in turn systems will assure that these priorities are harder to change (Health Care Systems.)

Collectively they contribute to the dominating culture of a country. (Values and history also shape subcultures, but the systems generally are decided by the dominant cultural group.)

The three factors may not be all aligned: Our values may change over time but because it is so hard to change the systems, societies don't necessarily live their values. Some fractions of society may have bigger influence on how things are done than other fractions. We may have imported some systems from colonial powers, as a consequence of war, or by being members of international organizations like the UN or EU. Or we do it this way because we have "always done it this way" without even thinking that there may be other ways.

Sometimes change happens gradually so we hardly realize that something important has shifted and when we finally wake up, it takes a national discussion to either align systems accordingly or decide to move back towards different value priorities. Sometimes changes come like the proverbial ketchup – suddenly and in a big mess. These sudden changes may cause civil unrest – and unrest may cause changes.

The distinction between how society works and the people living in this society is important to bear in mind. We don't want to let our challenging interactions with new systems color too much the impression we have of new neighbors. Highly functional people can live in countries with abysmal systems and totally dysfunctional people may live in highly organized countries. You can't know in advance whom you will come across, so have an open mind.

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3 Values and Norms

What are *your* values?

We are not always aware of our own value system. Some values are obvious to us but most are like water to fish, something we take for granted. We may not even be aware that other people think differently. Or we may be aware intellectually – but until we are in the situation, we don't realize that we can have a physical reaction when our values are implicitly questioned.

Values influence the norms: *how* we are expected to behave. When we behave differently, most of us feel a sting of disapproval from our surroundings. We may even have internalized this disapproval and feel a bad conscience when we break the rules – regardless that there were nobody around watching us disapprovingly.

It has been found that the pain of feeling excluded from the group travels the same neural pathways as when we suffer a physical malady[6]. Your stomach does hurt – even if there is nothing wrong in your organs.

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If you lived in a stone-age tribe, you would need to be socialized to the tribe's norms because if you were thrown out, you would likely die. Thus, people not willing to live by the norms were weeded out of the gene pool. In that context it makes perfect sense that feeling marginalized by the group should induce strong warning signals through physical discomfort: We needed to change our behavior and get invited back in the circle around the fire before we became somebody's dinner.
It doesn't matter in evolutionary terms if we today find this a bit harsh; we are already genetically predisposed to care about other people's opinions.
People who don't care about any of the norms are called sociopaths or psychopaths and no, you really don't want to share your campfire with them.

Read the paragraph above again and think of yourself being 1–2 years old. That is when your "tribe" began teaching you their norms. They probably wouldn't have feed you to the wolves if you acted out – but their displeasure was horrifying all the same. That is when you started learning their norms. (And when you feel marginalized it is your two-year-old self, panicking inside.)

If you come from my part of the world, "tooting your own horn" would be a breach of norms. If you want to strengthen your "personal brand", you have to go about it in a very indirect way. In other countries it is more accepted to draw attention to work you have done, accomplishments, rewards. So if I travelled there, I would likely come across as unaccomplished if I didn't change my behavior, while they – if they came to my country and behaved like they would have done at home – would be seen as immodest boors.

This is an example of different norms. The underlying values would have names like Modesty or Egalitarianism or the opposites, Mastery and Hierarchy.

Reflect for a minute about situations where *you* may have had this feeling in your stomach that you were just about to be thrown out of the group; that you were the odd one.

Can you identify which norms you broke?

It is not a very pleasant exercise, is it? Perhaps it is so unpleasant that you skipped the reflection part? Yes, YOU! I am talking to you.

Are you thinking: "She is not ordering me around, I will think as I d… well please!"

Either way, we are having a conversation where your values about shame, authority (and/or women) are coloring your response. All these areas are influenced by your culture[7], so if I got you either reflecting or riled up (or laughing), we have connected.

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But let me warn you: If you want to move to a different country, be prepared to become an expert on how to handle this feeling in your stomach. You can skip an exercise in a book; you can't jump to the next paragraph in your life abroad.

Back to the "horn-tooting" example: This *Why,* the living the value of Mastery or Modesty, will probably transfer to other situations: How you behave in a meeting (talking vs. listening), what you can discuss on a date (is your trip to the Maldives appropriate?), what you chose to drive (Lamborghini vs. a bike.)

Because values influence the norms across a wide span of activities, having identified core values gives us a hint as to which behaviors will be unwelcome – and by curtailing these behaviors we may become less offensive to our counterparts.

I have phrased this negatively on purpose. Behaving according to the norms – which would be the common alternative to being offensive – would be more or less invisible. That is just what is expected; when we see what we expect to see, we don't register if this was done through great effort by the other party. So don't expect praise if you are more than four years old just because you have learned the rules.

We get much more punished when we break the rules in a bad way than we get rewarded if we do it in a good way. The ratio of good to bad events is about 5:1[8] just to be in balance. Make one big blunder and you have to give your counterpart five good surprises – just to be back where you started. That is difficult, even under the best of circumstances, and more so when you are not quite sure what s/he expects to begin with.

With this example of a value and how it influences how things are done, you have a better idea how central a basis this is for culture. We will go through a lot of values in later chapters but first I want to throw in another question:

Do you live by your values?

I don't ask to be nasty. I ask because the first time we go abroad and feel the impact of disapproval – people disapproving of us; our own disapproval of events we experience – our values become *very* succinct. Suddenly we become more nationalistic than we ever were before: *This is what we stand for!* But if you don't live by these values – if they are just a story your people tell each other of who you are – you will experience a second conflict between who you thought you were and the way you behave.

"What people say, what people do, and what they say they do are entirely different things."[9]

Margareth Mead, Anthropologist

Welcome to Culture Shock.

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4 The Learning Curve

You have probably heard about the U-curve and the phases of adaptation, but for good measure I will repeat the central points.

Basically, there are four stages:

1. The unknown unknowns
2. The known unknowns
3. The known knowns
4. The unknown knowns

I had to put this in because I love writing "*the unknown unknowns*" and recall how Secretary Rumsfeld got a lot of colorful press for introducing this incomprehensible term to the American public[10].
It actually only means that you didn't know you needed to learn something. This is the blissfully ignorant stage 1.

It is not surprisingly followed by stage 2 where you have realized that you need to learn something, the *known unknows*. Don't you just hate it when you know you are found wanting? It is one thing to chose to study something new and challenging but this is like having to ask for directions when you are already late for a meeting. Why didn't you look at a map before you left home?

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Then you learn it in phase 3 so it becomes the *known knowns,* and in phase 4 you have become so good at it that you don't even think about it, the *knowns* you have stopped realizing could be an issue for other people.

With our own culture's norms, most people are in phase 4 where the *knowns* have become second nature: "Do we really need to explain that pickled herring is eaten *before* the liver pâté, the black pudding, and the head cheese? Everybody knows that!"

Actually, what I presented you with above is the normal sequence of learning.
I didn't think I would ever have to learn Spanish (phase 1) but now that I live in California, it would actually be very useful (phase 2). So consequently I have taken some adult evenings classes (oh, how I wish I was through phase 3 – but alas, I am still a learner) and unless I move to a Spanish speaking country I will never be fluent. (No stage 4 for me.)

This illustrates the difference between normal learning and learning a new culture. I can abort my Spanish efforts and still function in the US. But I *have* to go through cultural adaptation if I want to be effective in my host country and if I want not to be continuously frustrated. More than a Spanish lesson, it is a swimming lesson in the deep end of the pool. Start paddling!

4.1 The U-curve

Culture theory calls the learning phases:

1. Honeymoon
2. Crisis
3. Recovery
4. Adjustment

4.1.1 Honeymoon phase

The *Honeymoon phase* is when we are still "tourists" and everything is interesting – including our presence to the locals: "Who are you, where do you come from, and why are you here?" But our ignorance soon becomes less charming to both them and to ourselves.

4.1.2 Crisis phase

Below are symptoms of Culture Shock from University of California Berkeley's page for international students[11] so in the *Crisis phase* they will be prepared if they experience:

- changes in eating habits and sleeping habits
- acute homesickness; calling home much more often than usual
- being hostile/complaining all the time about the host country/culture

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- irritability, sadness, depression
- frequent frustration; being easily angered
- self doubts; sense of failure
- recurrent illness
- withdrawing from friends or other people and/or activities

Young brains are up till the mid-twenties more plastic than older brains and more ready for rewiring when learning new norms. All the same, rewiring takes energy from other tasks – learning new ways to behave can be as hard as being on a diet or trying to stop smoking. I hope for the sake of learning that not all exchange students experience all of this. And I hope the same for you. (If you are reading this book because your organization is employing people from other countries, know that they, too, have to go through this – sympathy and outreach works better than ostracism to get them through and learn new norms.)

If this describes you, I hope that it helps to know that it is normal and that it gets better. Hearing other people's experiences from similar situations can help[12] as can a personality of curiosity and optimism.

4.1.3 Recovery phase

In the *Recovery phase* we begin to master the technicalities of living in our new home. Many small victories can help us into the recovery phase. We begin to recognize the *Whats* and are learning some of the *Hows*. (If the *Hows* include learning a brand new language, you could add sore face and tongue muscles to the list above from learning how to pronounce new sounds.[13])

4.1.4 Adaptation phase

Finally we reach the *Adaptation phase* where we start to do the *Whats* without thinking about it and are not too embarrassed about our lack of *How* fluidity. Psychologists call this *self efficacy*: We believe that we can succeed at what we set out to do.

4.1.5 What timeframe are we looking at?

My observations have been that going through this series of phases takes around two years. Some adjust faster; it much depends on how soon one feels safe. Positive friends and doing activities that can strengthen ones self-efficacy will both accelerate the process.

From an organizational point of view this is important, because transferred managers or experts typically have to decide if they want to stay for another 2-year contract *before* they are ready to make the decision. If they – or accompanying families – are in the middle of the Crisis-phase when they are making this decision after typically 18–20 months, chance is that they will return to the home country after the expiration of the first contract and the organization will not reap much benefit from the learning their employee has been through. Add to that that the local organization has to adjust to a new manager.

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4.2 Value clash

Some models of the U-curve have a little bump upwards before you go down in a deep trough. This little bump is when *Recovery* first kicks in.

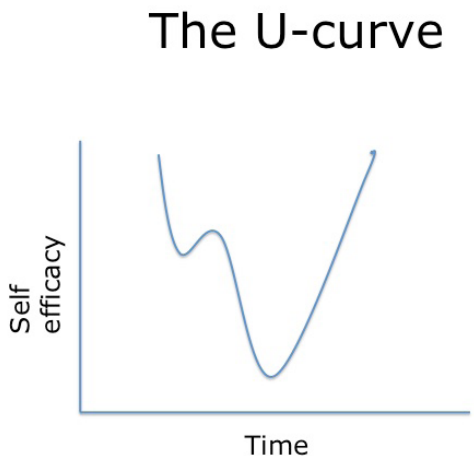

Fig 2. The U-curve

We begin to feel more competent but then we may run into that value clash and identity confusion I discussed in chapter 3, and that can really throw us off. It can throw us off so much more, if we have no clue that this might happen – and as you can see, the "4 stage standard model" doesn't prepare you for this.

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One reason it is not included in the model may be that it takes longer to happen than most people stay abroad[14]. If you are a transfer student or even an expat on a two-year assignment, your mind may already be on the way home by the time you have been so exposed to the host culture that you experience these value conflicts as more than an inconvenience. And even if you do, you know that you are going home in a few months.

As it takes two or, if the cultural differences are big, more than five years to adapt to a new culture, it may not even happen to you[15]. But for people who stay abroad longer, know that this value conflict is normal and accept is as a chance to grow.

You may find that you would initially be neutral about some of the *Hows* and *Whats*. But if the *Whys* behind these norms are value-*Whys* and they are conflicting with your own central values, your attitude to the *Hows* and *Whats* can change. Reversely, very strange norms can be easy to adapt to, if you value-wise are aligned with the *Whys* behind them. (I have for example been shaking my head over the extended use of multiple-choice tests in American schools. To be able to recognize an answer from a list requires less mastering of the subject than if you have to write an essay – and evidently much of what is learned is easily forgotten once the bubbles have been filled out. However, realizing that it is way harder to discriminate when students fill out a bubble, it may be that this kind of test is more fair and has less risk of bias against students who don't master the language to perfection or use it in a way dominant in a sub-culture but not recognized by the mainstream culture. So I have made my peace with this education tool.)

The only way you can be conscious about you values is by reflecting on what it is around you that troubles you. If you ignore these signs, you risk that the annoyance you feel about one thing spills over onto other areas and you reject every aspect of the new culture; even things that had no importance whatsoever before you moved abroad can now become offensive.
If you can identify the most essential parts, take ownership to these values and live by them. Then other issues may become noise in the background that won't upset you so much. Remember, values are part of our identity, and changing them means changing who we think we are. This is not a trivial endeavor and deserves your attention.

Because of these conflicts, some people never adjust. Mind you, there is a difference between adjusting and being assimilated. You can be happily adjusted without "going local".

Many immigrants who have stayed out longer say that another shift happens around 5–6 years – and that includes even people traveling from the UK to USA where they almost speak the same language. I can't say exactly what it is that feels different but I have been there, too. Perhaps it is a realization that this has actually become home?

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4.3 Going back

To complete the woe, when you go home after finishing an assignment abroad, you may have to through the whole thing once more[16]. While you were away, your country has changed – and you have changed, too. It pays to be up to date with the local news, movies, politics, because when you come back and talk (almost) like them and act (almost) like them, they will not get why you are totally clueless about what happens in society. It will also give you something to make small talk about so you are not left out at the lunch table.

The reverse culture shock is so normal that we talk about the W-curve, where the second trough is reserved for the going home experience. Immigrant counselors discuss whether the shock of the going out or going home is worse. It much depends on where you have been, how long you have been away and how much you had been integrated. But that the discussion takes place, tells you that any "blues" after returning may not be because your employer or your family and friends are not behaving well; it can just be that you are going through a new identity adjustment crisis.

That said, many employers are unfortunately poor at planning how to take advantage of a returning managers' new understanding of the other country, and many returning employees don't stay long with the company that sent them abroad[17]. Bookboon has a couple of other books with practical advice for expatriates well worth reading *before* going abroad.

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5 Adapting – or not

How do people actually react to the experience of culture shock? Table 1 below shows a model of possible outcomes.

- / + Rejects old culture – accepts the new	**+ / +** Best from both cultures, mixing or switching according to circumstances
- / - Doesn't feel belonging to new culture, has become critical of the old culture	**+ / -** Keeps old culture – suspicious of new values and customs

Table 1. Four acculturation strategies[18]

5.1 Assimilation

Going clockwise from upper left corner, the first possibility is "When in Rome, do like the Romans", here illustrated as the -/+ position. You let go of the old culture – the "-" – and take on a new set of norms – the "+".

What the locals think of this choice is perhaps best illustrated by a direct translation of the old, Danish idiom: "Customs follow or country flee." Think about it this way: If you go somewhere and don't want to adapt, what does that say about your attitude to their way of doing things? Does it signal that you think their country is the best place in the world or should it better be neglected? How would you feel, if they thought like that about *your* country?[19]

Assimilation can only be said to have happened in the -/+ situation. What would lead you to assimilate? The less contact you have with the old culture and the younger you are, the easier it happens. Going abroad as an exchange student and marrying locally will make it much more likely that you assimilate than if you move later in life with a family. Not only does love make the new culture so much rosier – if this wonderful person came out of here, it must be the best place on Earth – but our values are normally not fully ingrained until we are in our twenties.

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That said, it is not easy to form cross-cultural relationships and although you think you have adapted to the local norms, child raring may show that you are still much more like your parents than you would like to admit. Before we have children, we normally are less vested in our values and are easier to influence. As soon as we get children we want to bring them up "in our image" – and what is that if not with our values? The model we have integrated of how to be a parent is normally what we have seen our own parents do, tweaked for generational differences. So we may have moved geography, but suddenly we hear our father or mother's supporting/scolding phrases coming out of our own mouths. What you say may not be what your spouse expected to hear.

5.2 Bi/Multi cultural

Many children follow the local norms at school and appear to outsiders to belong in the local culture. But if their parents hold on to the values from the home culture, they will intimately get to know that culture as well – at least the part of it that is lived out in the family. If they visit "the old country", they will almost fit in seamlessly because of the way their family has functioned.
The ability to switch modes according to circumstances is the mark of *a true multicultural person* who belongs in the +/+ category. They have gained a new set of behaviors without losing the old. Think of it like being bilingual. Yes, it is "use it or lose it" for either language, but if you grew up that way, it is not that difficult to switch.

People can end up having more than one cultural setting and switch between them, or they may hold on to some parts of one value-set but depending on context they reorganize how they prioritize less important values and make a "hybrid culture"[20]. This can happen to people who haven't grown up abroad, as well, but it takes a lot of work and willingness to question all one's biases.

In this context should also be mentioned expats who travel repeatedly to many foreign localities – diplomats and multiple transfers. Their hybrid culture may end up being something that is understood by other people in the same situation but doesn't really resemble any national culture.

5.3 Rejection

As I warned in the previous chapter, if you don't work with yourself to find redeeming factors about the new culture but only focus on how it grinds on you, you may *reject* it totally. Because you feel your values have been under attack, you defend them all the more. The +/- outcome, holding on to the old culture while rejecting the new, does not make you a happy resident in the new country. You are probably not a delight to your surroundings, either.[21]

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One could argue that you should stay in your home country, but it could just be that you have come to a place too different for you. There is nothing wrong with having strong values. If the local mode is that you need to bribe your way not to get arrested, to get your belongings through customs, to get any permit whatsoever, I would be the last to fault you for holding on to other values. But then you are not the right person to send to that country – and if the company insists on doing business in that country, perhaps you should also consider getting a new employer[22].

If you new country makes you show disregard for the people you value most, drives a wedge down the middle of your family because your children are taught norms you disagree with, or through its dress code, entertainment, or social mores makes you feel forced to live in a way that constantly makes you feel ashamed of yourself, this, neither, may be a country for you.

Try to look a little behind why people have these strange behaviors because most people aren't bad, they just function in different and perhaps difficult circumstances. Based on the knowledge you may gain, not just the initial impressions, you can decide if you can live here. Perhaps choosing another part of "here" is all the difference you need? It can make a big difference if you live in a city or away from a metropolitan area. It also makes a big difference if you live among the locals or have regular contact with other immigrants.

Living by your values sometimes requires sacrifices, but at least you should know why you reject the new.

5.4 Culture loss

Finally there are people who by being exposed to a foreign culture have come to reflect more on what goes on in their home country, and now they don't approve of either: the -/- situation. This *culture loss* sometimes happen if people have been abroad and haven't realized how much they had been changed by the experience; they no longer feel that home is home afterwards.

As I mentioned above, it can help to define what you are *for* and live authentically honoring that – even if that is not what any of the cultures you live within are *for.* To be perpetually *against* everything is not a way to live.

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6 Don't jump this chapter as much as you may want to

We can't discuss what we know about values without touching upon how we collect the information and a little about statistics. No, don't go away! This is not a math book, and I will keep if short and simple.

Before we dig into the values, I need to say a very important thing about social science: *One person does not make a representative sample.* You can't judge a country by one person and you can't judge a person by their country.

In the following chapters, when I present you with data on how one country's values are compared to other countries' values, that doesn't mean that the next person you meet from that country will be anything like what I tell you.
It means that *on average*, across thousands of people, this is how people from that country answer, when they are asked a set of questions.

That is why I asked you "What are your values?" and "Do you live by them?" Well, neither do they. So even if I told you what questions they answered and how, don't believe that they live by these responses any more than you would. Still, because the answers are not totally random, they do point us in the right direction.

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6.1 Questionnaire confusion

Data can be skewed in so many ways: The people answering interviews may not be representative for the country. Have you ever hung up on a telephone call where somebody wanted to ask you a set of questions? I know I have. The people who agree to answer may come from a subset of the population. Until recently, selecting people for surveys was in some countries done using the telephone directory for landlines. Naturally, that meant that young people got underrepresented in many surveys if they only had a cell phone and were not part of the family household any longer. (I am sure that you can already see how this would only be relevant for a subset of the World's countries, so the data from different countries may not be skewed in the same way.)

The respondents may not understand the same, even if they use the same words as the person interviewing them. Or they may want to answer what is socially acceptable regardless of how they really feel or act[23]. They may answer how they feel but not how they act.

And finally, in spite of all efforts in translations, some concepts may not be totally identical across cultures or even understood the same way within a culture. What social scientists often fail to recognize is that their language is just as nuanced within their field as a mechanic's language is about what is in your car's engine. To lay people like me, mechanic speak is often gibberish. So people making the questionnaires may know the difference between *Egality* and *Equality* or *Atheism* and *Agnosticism*[24], but not all respondents do. Within the U.S. we can't even agree on what *Equality* means, so how should it be better when we survey the World?

Let us for arguments' sake say that we have all that covered and have done a good job all the way. We still have to recognize that the statistical mean is an average of thousands of people – and that most will have answered something different than the average.

6.2 What does Statistical Mean mean?

I want you to picture in your mind a grid-paper but covering all of your dining table. Now you grab a bowl of sugar and try to pour it onto one of the squares. The square is the mean for your country. The sugar grains will, if you are careful, end in a little mountain with the top on the mean, but it is not a sugar pole, it is more of a cone and it probably has a bottom covering a pretty big area – including a little on the floor.

If every grain was a person answering, some will have answered way above the mean and some well below. They are the grains on the floor and in the flatlands far from the mountaintop. Answers will be given on a numerical scale and now we add all the answers and divide by number of sugar grains and we get the mean. This is simple math – but also often very misunderstood math results. Whenever you hear the word *mean* or *average*, think sugar mountain.

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Let us take another sugar bowl of *green* sugar and make another mountain a little distance from the first. That is the country you are going to.

Chance is that there will be green sugar grains all the way to your white mountain and white sugar grains very close to or in the green mountain. What this represents is that there are people from "over there" thinking like the majority of your people – and likewise you may have fellow countrymen who, in their values, resemble "the other guys". Mind you, they may still behave differently because they have been taught so. They may drive in the other side of the road or dress differently, and most likely they speak differently. But they "get you" because in many ways you think alike and have similar priorities.

6.2 Variance

Your mountain can be tall with a narrow base or not so tall, spreading out more in the landscape. Statistically, the low, broad mountain had more variance than the tall, narrow-based mountain. In culture-speak we talk about a loose or a tight culture respectively; the narrower/tighter, the more it is frowned upon to behave differently from the norm. Some will call that *conforming*; in other cultures they call it *harmonizing*: small adjustments in our behavior that pours oil into the social machinery. To illustrate how small these adjustments can be, imagine that you never used the word "Please". Yes, it is very rude not to include it – but in some languages it doesn't even exist.

6.3 What can you infer from knowing the mean?

Knowing the mean for your host country tells you which values this people prioritizes highly and these values may be reflected in the way they have organized their society and in the way they interact.

But chance is that you don't interact with "the population" – you interact with individuals. The person you have in front of you could have been part of the green sugar mountain, and thus representative for the country, or a grain on the floor (what we will call a statistical outlier. This is a mathematical concept more well defined than "on the floor", but for this purpose, knowing that some people answer very differently is enough to know.[25])

If the people you have met from "over there" live in your country, they are probably already outliers. Most people stay home. (If you are going abroad, you are probably an outlier, too. Most people like to go on vacation abroad but otherwise they really do want to stay home.)

This was a bit hasty. Many normal people do go to live abroad. If you are on a career track and get offered a position with good management training opportunities, you may take it although you never before aspired to be a globetrotter.

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If you are an accompanying spouse, not knowing what you are getting yourself into yet, but want to support your partner's career, hats off to you. If you would not otherwise have considered going abroad but find it highly important to spend your life with your spouse who wants to travel, you are probably more normal than your partner – normal being "closer to the center of the sugar mountain".
And if you are the employer getting a new member of your group from another country, know that this person who has traveled to work for you probably is not well described by any literature you can pick up, because literature typically describes people who have stayed at home. But it will still serve you well to be interested in your employee's background.

6.4 Correlations and Causality

I have made a very nasty and prohibited statistical error. By encouraging you to ask *"Why do they do like that?"* and illustrating with value answers, I have implied values are *the cause* of a certain behavior, what we call *causality*. We don't know for sure what leads to what. Do values lead to a certain behavior or is it the behavior that leads us to having certain values? What we do know is that some value patterns and some behaviors seem to move together; they *correlate*. But if knowing a set of values lets us predict a pattern of behaviors, for practical purposes it doesn't matter so much if the one leads to the other or vice versa – or even if it is a third, unknown factor that leads both values and behaviors.

Enough statistics for now.

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7 More about Values

Why do we discuss values in the first place? Regardless that we don't *always* behave according to our values, they still seem to be good predictors for many behaviors. Analyzing European values has found significant correlations with for example how eager people are to cooperate, how politically engaged they are, and how they vote along the political spectrum.[26]

Before jumping into value models, let me emphasize that discussing values is not the same as making *value judgments*. Naturally, your values are the best. That is why you have them. If you knew other values were better, you wouldn't hold on to the ones you have, would you?
But in other circumstances, under different social and ecological conditions, the values that we just can't wrap our minds around may make total sense. As we didn't grow up under these conditions, we can't imagine which circumstances could warrant such different mindsets.

Remember that value differences described in the following chapters are in how populations compare relatively to one another – they don't tell that people in some countries have *disregard* for the values that other people hold dear. The differences are in how we prioritize what is important.

If we discussed the values one by one and discussed why this or that value was of importance to us, we could probably agree on the virtue of all of them: Is obligation to one's family more or less important than creating a level playing field where everybody gets the same chances? Wouldn't we all rather donate a kidney to a sibling than to a stranger? But if we ourselves needed a kidney, wouldn't it be nice that we could get one even if we didn't have siblings with kidneys to spare? Is protecting ocean quality worth the price that it puts on industry to reduce pollution? We all want clean oceans but we also want cheap T-shirts. You can even ask Americans how they think wealth should be distributed, and they volunteer numbers that would make the U.S. look like Sweden[27]. But single-issue politics is not how values are shaped.

So I don't want to discuss right or wrong; for that I refer you to whichever scripture is most to your liking – and you will probably find that your actions veer quite a long distance from that ideal as well.

The following chapters will give you an overview of two value theories. The first because I think Shalom Schwartz's theory is the best description and because it builds on good research methods.

It is not the most commonly used theory outside of Europe, so I will introduce you to Geert Hofstede as well. If you talk to cross cultural coaches, chances are that they will know Hofstede's theory. He was the first to connect values to organizational differences so convincingly that the business world paid attention[28]. His website can be very useful. But, with all respect for one of the fathers of the field, I still think Schwartz did a better job.

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You may meet other models as well in literature or through culture counselors or in the press. Some cross-cultural agencies have their own models. Datasets are not widely shared and, hence, less published research has been done on/with these models. And most focus less on values and more on behaviors. But to complete the overview, I will mention some of these other theories / models without going deep into details. There are links to articles and websites in the endnotes, if you want to know more.

Because of my background, my knowledge is about research that has been published in western journals and literature. There may be totally different value theories and research methods known on other continents. I will be happy to learn about them.

7.1 Schwartz's Value theory[29]

Dr. Schwartz and his international colleagues set out to measure all the values they could think of. And they could think of quite a few. But when they tried to agree on how to put all these values into questionnaires, they found that some of the values were important in some cultures but were totally unknown in other cultures.
So this is the *first warning* message: There may be values you have never heard about but you can still offend your hosts when not behaving according to these values. Likewise, you may have values that they don't know about.

Ignorance is not necessarily bad intent.

When the team had sorted this out and questioned people all across the world, they did some fancy statistical analyses and found that some values grouped together one way in some countries but very differently in other countries.
Hence, *second warning* is that a value can be important to both you and your counterpart, and you would translate it with words you both understand, but you could still mean something different. (That is one of the worst situations in international communication: You think you agree, but you speak about two different things[30]. To both parties this may lead to a *breach of trust*.)

Third warning is that because of these problems, all these values were not included in the rest of the work and I can't tell you more about them. But the story does illustrate the complexity of international collaboration – and I thought you might enjoy that cross-cultural scientists have their share of challenges, too.

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7.1.1 Schwartz's model

Dr. Schwartz ended up with a Personal Value Questionnaire, which today is included in a short form in the European Social Survey. For all European countries – and some outside Europe – 1500–4000 people per country tell interviewers about their values (and a lot of other stuff) every other year through evaluating on a six point scale how much they are similar to people like these[31]:

- Being very successful is important to her. She hopes people will recognize her achievements.
- Tradition is important to him. He tries to follow the customs handed down by his religion or his family.
- It is important to him to listen to people who are different from him. Even when he disagrees with them, he still wants to understand them.

We have a pretty good picture about what Europeans have to say about these matters – even if they don't always behave accordingly.

With data from all continents but Antarctica, Schwartz and Co's original research lead to the model shown in Fig. 3.

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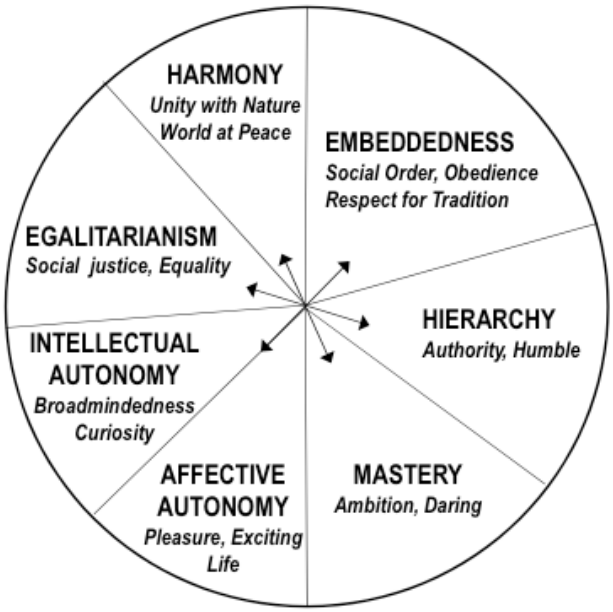

Fig. 3: Schwartz's Culture Values[32]

Fig. 3 and Table 2 show examples of the values in the seven clusters. The research team gave the clusters names to illustrate commonalities of the values grouping together. (In the rest of this book, when I use one of these names, it will be *italicized* and **C**apitalized as some of the names have other uses in every day vernacular.) Note, that where the borders are between the clusters may not be so nice as indicated by the radians in Fig. 3 – and some values could just as well be in either of two clusters. *Humble* is for example in *Hierarchy* on the border to *Embeddedness*. *Capable* is listed in *Mastery* in Table 2 but it is smack in the middle of the circle – and is appreciated everywhere.

As you can see on Fig. 3, the values are arranged in a circle. There are little arrows showing opposing values. If a country has high scores on the questions that relate to for example the *Harmony* cluster, they have low scores on the questions relating to the opposing value cluster *Mastery*. (Naturally, there will be individuals from the *Harmony* country with high scores on the *Mastery* questions, but they will be far from their national sugar mountain.)

Likewise, a country that subscribes to *Egalitarianism* will not have high values related to *Hierarchy*. And finally, populations that believe in *Autonomy* – be it *Intellectual*: how they do their job and what they want to study, or *Affective*: what they want to eat/watch on TV/wear of clothes and where and when – these people will not feel *Embedded* in their group or show a lot of reverence for their elders. But again, some in their country will; they are just far from the mountain.

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Embeddedness	Clean, Forgiving, Protecting public image, Obedient, Wisdom, Devout, Reciprocation of favors, Self discipline, Moderation
Harmony	World of beauty, Unity with nature, Protect environment
Egalitarianism	Helpful, Responsible, Freedom, Loyal, Honest, Accept portion in life
Intellectual Autonomy	Broadminded, Curious, Creativity
Affective Autonomy	Varied life, Pleasure, Enjoying life, Exiting life
Mastery	Capable, Choosing own goals, Independent, Ambitious, Daring, Successful, Competitive,
Hierarchy	Authority, Influential, Wealth, Power, Humble

Table 2. Schwartz's Culture Values

How do you use Fig. 3? Let me give you an example with my own country Denmark since I have picked on it already. Not because it is a very important country to anybody but the 5 million Danes but because it is the only country I, as a Dane, am allowed to critique.

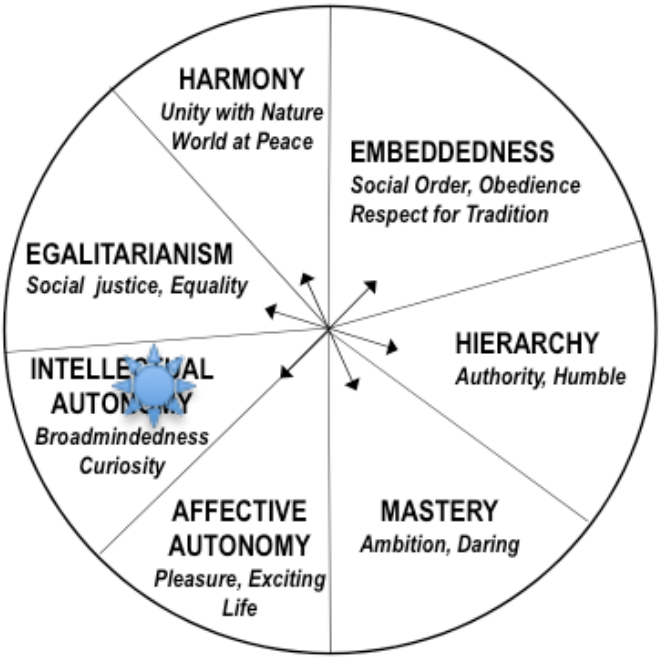

Fig. 3a: Denmark placed on Schwartz's model [33]

Denmark would according to Schwartz's research be placed approximately over the "C" in *IntelleCtual Autonomy* on the circle model. From that we can read that it is obviously more *Autonomy* oriented than *Embedded*, but it is also more *Egalitarian* than *Hierarchical* and tends a little more to *Harmony* than *Mastery*.

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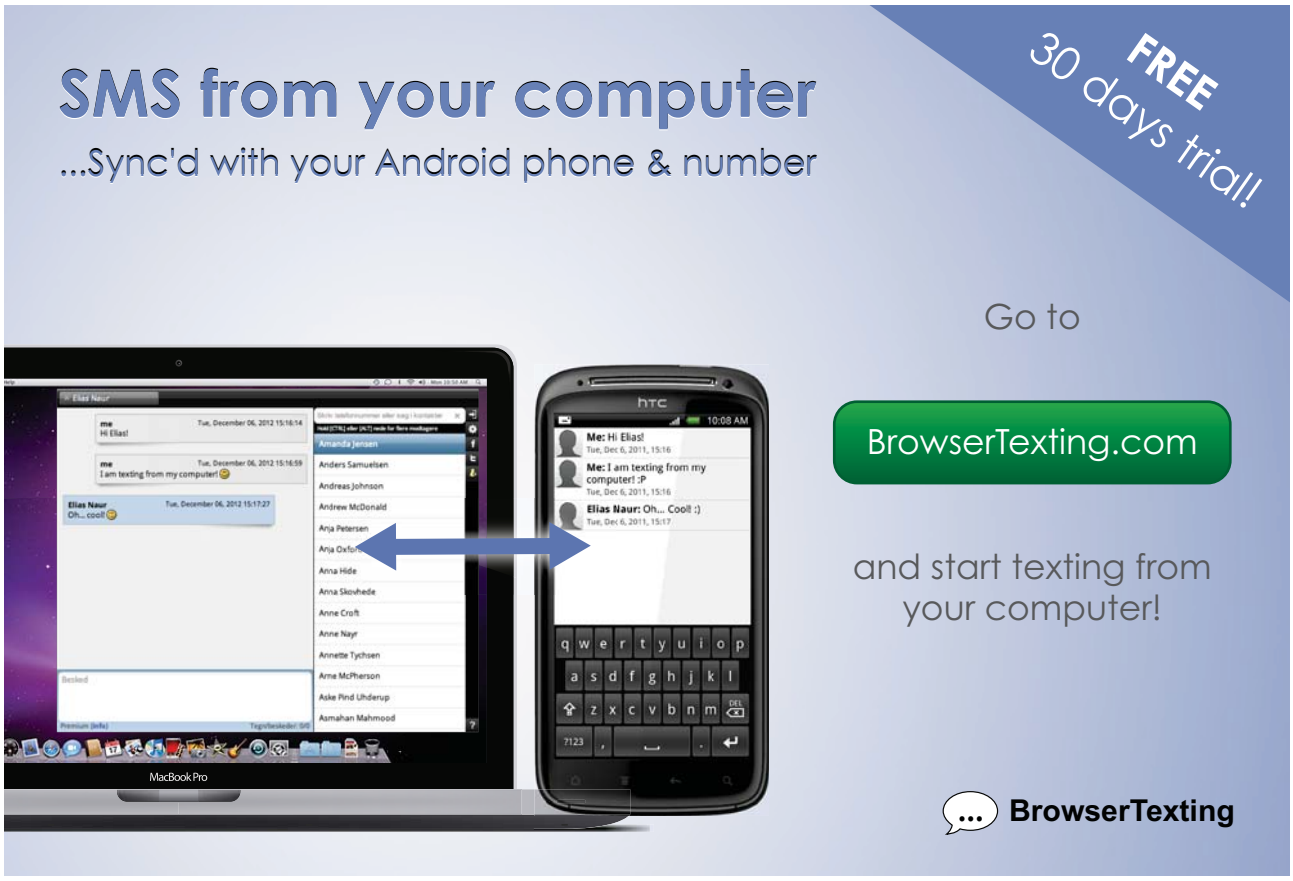
If it had been on the "Y" in *Intellectual AutonomY*, *Harmony* and *Mastery* would have been equally important. If it had been on the ending "L" in *IntellectuaL*, it would still have been *Egalitarian*, but not as much as it is. (Naturally, when I use C, Y, and L it is to point you to a distance from the center on Fig. 3a, to an alignment vs. the three opposing arrows, and has nothing to do with the actual letters.)

These values have formed a country with high taxes and free education and health care (+*Egalitarianism*), sustainability awareness in e.g. wind generated electricity, triple window glass in new houses (+*Harmony*), and a highly educated workforce who generally don't like being told how to do their job (+*Intellectual Autonomy*). Danes have a very high personal debt to income ratio (+*Affective Autonomy*, -*Embeddedness* (*moderation*)). The freedom "not to work for somebody else" is the most mentioned reason for people to start their own company (-*Hierarchy, +Autonomy*). That said, most people are employees in either a big public sector or in private industry and service (-*Mastery (daring, risk)*). It is uncommon that many generations live together; social security net is covered more by society than family (-*Embeddedness.*) They are also among the people least afraid of being laughed at (-*Embeddedness* (*protecting public image*[34])).



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7.1.2 Value-families

An interesting feature of the circle model is that values seem to come in "families". If a country has a high score in one of these seven value clusters, the data show that it also has a high or medium *but not a low* score on the neighboring value clusters. Consequently, because high scores in one cluster leads to low scores in the opposing cluster, it will *not* have high scores on values *opposing the neighboring values* either. No countries have been high on *Harmony and* high on *Hierarchy*. Likewise, no countries have been high on *Egalitarianism and* on *Mastery*. Some values just don't walk hand in hand.

Because values have a tendency to exist in families, knowing about *one* value, you can make reasonably accurate assumptions about a whole cluster of values:
Going back to our original example of the bragging job application; what can we learn from this one data point using the model? If enhancing achievements is a norm in your country, it is probably subscribing to competition values ("getting ahead of other people") that are in the *Mastery* cluster. From that you can deduct that in all likelihood the culture will *not* be *Egalitarian*, more likely it will be *Hierarchical* – or at most it will be equally balanced between *Egalitarian* and *Hierarchical*. It will have middle to high values on *Autonomy* and *not* be a culture of *Embeddedness* – again at most it will have middle values in both *Autonomy* and *Embeddedness.*

Can you deduct further, when you are sitting with an application that appear somewhat glorified, that this person fits into the above description? No. The most obvious reason is that anybody can read a book or take a class on writing job applications. Particularly if this person is not accustomed to writing like this, an enhanced application will look accordingly. Those, to whom exaggeration comes naturally, will probably not catch your attention in a critical way.
Also, if a person lives in a culture with high focus on achievements, the person will have to behave according to that norm – or probably not be hired. So regardless of personal values, they will try to play by the local rules.

This doesn't mean that you will never encounter a person that will be just like the mean of his or her country. After all, it took quite a few sugar grains to make that mountaintop. But just as many were spread around on your grid paper, and you owe it to each person to let him/her make his or her own impression on you and not let assumptions run away with your judgment. (That is a nicer way to say "don't let stereotypes make you prejudiced.") Regardless of where you go, they have some version of *The Golden Rule*: "Never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself."[35]

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7.1.3 Cultural similarities and differences

When we are together with our siblings, we all agree how different we are; I think my children are very different from each other. But still, when we travel to neighboring countries, we immediately spot how "they" differ from "us". (The notable exception is in countries high on immigration, but even here we have our own within-country "us" and "other" moments.) Because we so easily pick up clues to who are "us" and who are "other", it is difficult to imagine that on the grand scale Western Europe is pretty much the same. So are big parts of Asia – but absolutely not the same as Europe.

This is not to make light of the differences among cultures in neither Asia nor Europe; the differences on both continents are both important and difficult to learn[36]. It is to put into perspective how waste the *unknown unknowns* are if you plan to travel to or get employees from a different continent. To assume that you know nothing and get and offer proper training is a safer way to go about it than "do it yourself". You may even consider arranging pre-departure training *and* a coach at the receiving end to help you when the challenges arise – as the unknown unknowns become *known unknowns* and as you discover that your common sense just doesn't work as well here. As the saying goes *"it ain't the things we don't know that gets us in trouble; it's the things we know that just ain't so."*[37]

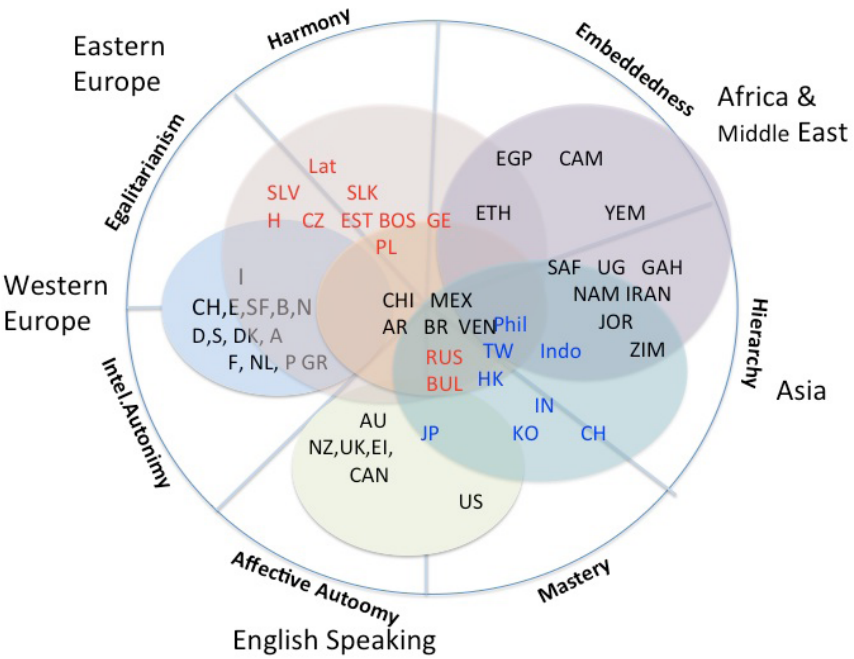

Fig. 3b Clusters of countries placed in Schwartz's model[38]

Based on Schwartz's research, I have placed various countries on the model in Fig 3b. (More countries can be found in the original paper.)

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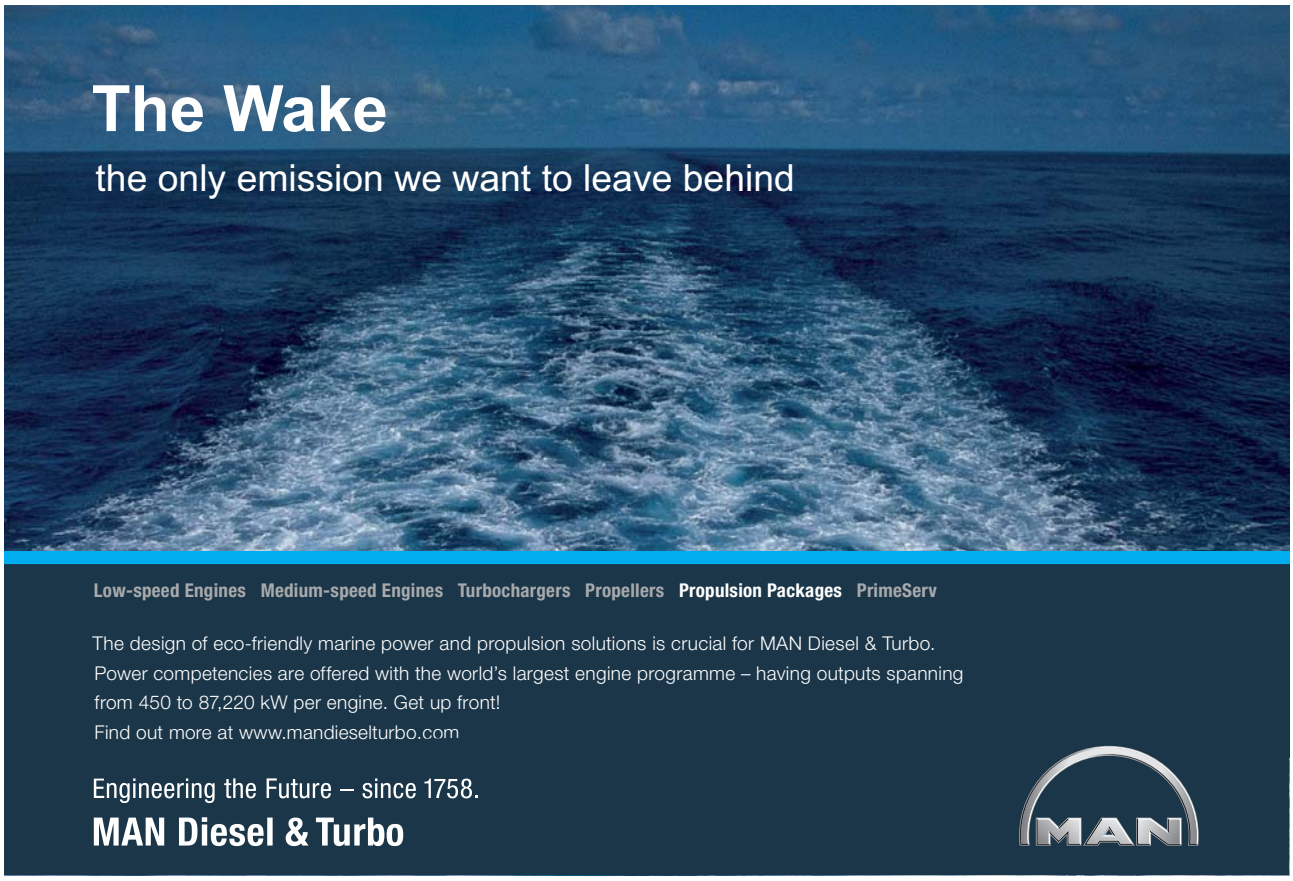
The countries in Latin America are pretty much in the center, balancing *Hierarchy* and *Egalitarianism*, *Autonomy* and *Embeddedness*, and *Mastery* and *Harmony*.

The British Isles are surprisingly different from the rest of Western Europe – oriented more towards *Mastery* and *Hierarchy*. Some countries surprise a little by being different from their cultural heritage. USA is for example more *Hierarchical* than the rest of the English speaking countries and with much higher *Mastery* values. But it is not more *Autonomous* than Western Europe – the individualistic traits that distinguish USA seem to collate around values such as competitiveness and risk taking.
(The surprise is not so much that USA values risk taking. After all, emigrating and leaving one's old network behind is indeed a risky endeavor. The surprise is that Canada, Australia and New Zealand, having been populated by immigrants as well, are no more different from the UK and Western Europe than is the case.)

Over the last 25 years, we have experienced increased activity with collaboration between companies in Eastern and Western Europe. Here the main difference in values is around the *Autonomy/Embeddedness* axis. That indicates a higher feeling of obligation to the family in the East than in the West along with more respect for authorities. Being further from *Affective Autonomy* the East may find Western attitudes frivolous when it comes to expectations of variety of goods available and the expectation of speed of delivery and service.



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Another increase in international collaboration has been between Europe on one end and India and China in the other end. India and China are also more *Embedded* than their western counterparts and their extreme position on the *Hierarchical/Egalitarian* axis is also worth noting – regardless if one is Indian or Chinese and has to work with Europeans or for Europeans working with India and particularly with China. I have highlighted the different understandings of status and the implications for behavior in the following chapters.

India and China are, however, not much higher on the *Hierarchy* dimension than USA, a fact that is often a surprise to Americans because we have this story about equality that we tell each other in the U.S. But how this plays out in business and in society at large is different on the two continents. USA shows respect for *achieved status* where *ascribed status* is more important in Asia. The difference is described more in chapter 9. So for American and Asian organizational cooperation both differences in how status affects relationships and differences along the *Autonomy/Embeddedness* axis are important to note.

If you can find your home country on the figure, like I did with Denmark you can think about how these value priorities play out in how your society is organized. Understanding a culture you are well familiar with this way may help you understand how values play out in your host culture.

Look at the figure, and pour mental sugar mountains on each country. You can have plenty of overlaps in values and still a lot of differences in exactly *What* they do and *How* they do it. But this map gives you at least some insight to which values they say they have, i.e. a *Why* they do it. And that is not a bad place to start.

7.1.4 Stability and variance of values

Placing countries in fig 3b was done based on data collected in the first years of the century (The source article is from 2007). How permanent are these values? Compared to similar research 10 years earlier there is generally not much change; although USA has become a little more *Hierarchical* and Canada less so, differences that can also come from asking a different subset of people in the two studies.

What we do know is that the differences *within* country can be much bigger than differences *between* neighboring countries. In all countries, people who travel a lot and have much interaction with people from other countries may be more open to accepting some "relativism" in their values.

Think about the sugar mountain. Although the countries in Fig. 3b are placed according to the national averages, who within the country is more or less *Hierarchical* or more or less *Harmony* oriented may not be totally random – it can depend on education, age, gender, profession, religion, and other subgroup delineators. So which group you interact with will make a difference.

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For example has research in USA shown that not only do economy student have stronger values that would belong in the *Mastery* and *Hierarchy* clusters than their humanities studying peers; they have stronger values when they finish school than when they started. Evidently, something about studying money changes their worldview. Although I am not aware if it has been studied, might one not assume that students of environmental science would have values skewed towards *Harmony* compared to students in other fields?

It will be interesting to follow the development in values when the world has not only become much more connected both economically and through information networks; it has also had a serious global recession, there has been a movement towards democracy in many countries that were run autocratically in the past, and there has been increased focus on equal rights for women.

All this argues for shying away from cultural stereotypes and being very observant of whom you have in front of you. Take your cues from their behavior and only use the descriptions in this book as a "cheat sheet" so you are better able to recognize and understand what you see and hear. But beware, that your preconceived notions about how other people behave can blind you so you may see and hear what you expect, not what is actually happening.

If you have had enough of cultural models for now, you can jump a couple of chapters. You can always go back and read about the other models later. You may want to read the issues discussed in 8.3.3 and onwards, as these are not covered later.

The following chapters describe the Hofstede, World Values Survey, Lewis, and Globesmart theories and models. It is my impression that Hofstede, Lewis, and Globesmart are more focused on the business world although the cultural values naturally penetrate norms both in and outside this part of society. The World Values Survey is a totally different animal than all the other models and is more focused on political and economic trends influenced by and influencing value changes.

7.2 Values according to Hofstede

Geert Hofstede assisted the IBM Corporation in the 1970–80s with their worldwide employee surveys. As he saw national patterns in the way people responded, he started investigating deeper into the subject and identified four areas where scores seemed to follow these patterns. The areas were called *Individualism*, *Power Distance*, *Uncertainty Avoidance*, and *Masculinity*[39]. He and his organization have since added more countries to the research and have added two more concepts to the theory, *Pragmatism* and *Indulgence*. These concepts are frequently referred to by the abbreviations.

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Individualism	IDV	How personal needs and goals are prioritized vs. the needs and goals of the group/clan/organization.
Power Distance	PDI	Accept of inequality in distribution on power in society. The degree people are comfortable with influencing upwards.
Uncertainty Avoidance	UA	How comfortable are people with changing the way they work or live (low UA) or prefer the known systems (high UA).
Masculinity	MAS	Masculine societies have different rules for men and women, less so in feminine cultures. Masculine cultures are less collaborative.
Pragmatism **(Long Term Orientation)**	LTO	Accepting that there can be more than one truth vs. looking for explanations. The goal justifies the means vs. normative behaviors.
Indulgence **(vs. Restraint)**	IVR	Allowing gratification of basic drives related to enjoying life and having fun vs. regulating it through strict social norms.

Table 2: Hofstede's six culture variables[40]

You can think of each of these six value concepts as six continua – from high IDV to low IDV (what you may also have heard of as Collectivism), from high PDI to low PDI etc. But unlike the other theories, it doesn't come with a visual model.

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Because most of Hofstede's concepts have been known for many years, quite a lot of research has been done on how they relate to behavior. Immigrants and other expatriates have, not surprisingly, lower UA than the people who stay home[41] – after all changing culture introduces ambiguity into one's life like few other decisions. They also have higher scores on IDV. This might explain why countries that to a high degree have been populated by immigrants (USA, Australia, New Zealand) have a higher IDV than many. But it could also be that they, by virtue of having inherited many British systems, have reinforced a British norm – as the motherland, Great Britain, also is high on IDV.

One of the benefits of this being a broadly researched theory is that there are useful resources on the Internet where you can see how the countries rank on PDI, IDV etc. Links are in the notes and in the appendix.

Based on these resources I have in Fig. 4 compared my two home countries, Denmark and USA, to China as a representative of a different value cluster.

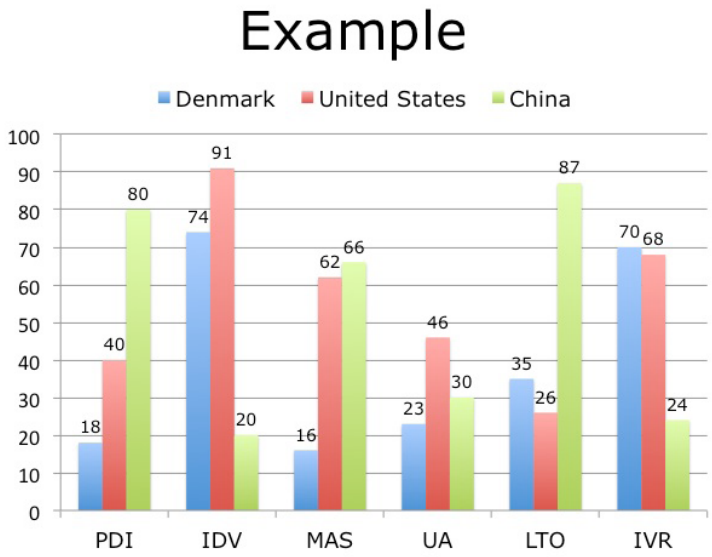

Fig. 4: Differences in Hofstede values[36]

Like in the Schwartz model, Denmark and USA are generally much closer than either of them is to China. The exceptions are MAS and UA. Danes subscribe to more equal terms for men and women than both USA and China; practical implementations of this are that new parents get both maternity and paternity leave and that most professions have a high degree of work-life balance. Denmark is more similar to China than to USA on UA in accepting that rules can depend on the situation. Could it be there is more need in the U.S. to have regulations and procedures since knowledge of the "unwritten rules" can't be taken for granted in a country that hosts the most diverse work force in the world? (Other immigrant countries, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, also have higher UA – including higher UA than Great Britain and Ireland.)

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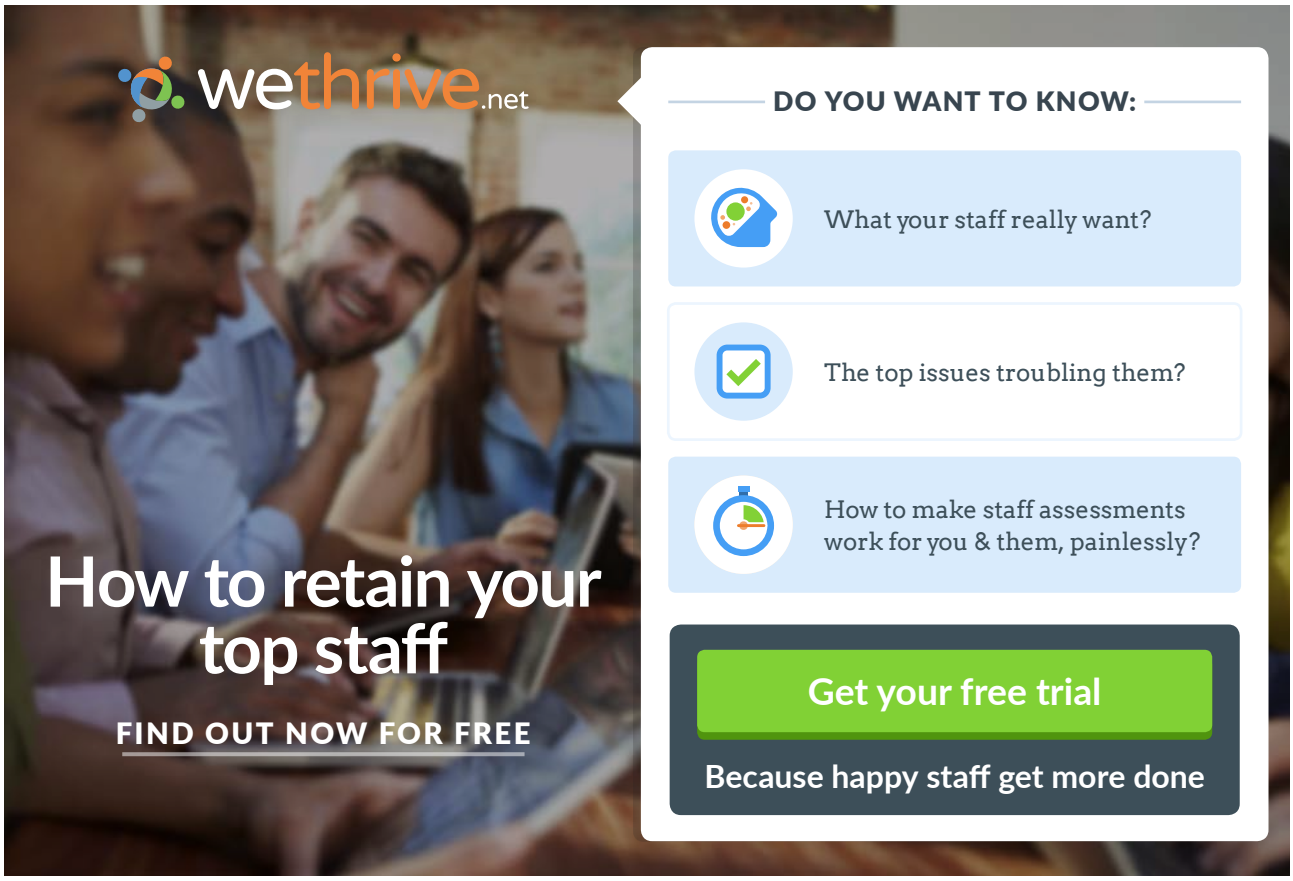
I know, it looks very elitist that I immediately jump into using the abbreviations for these concepts. It is important to distinguish theoretical concepts, particularly for those words are not as stringent in their meaning in day-to-day use. I can assure you that most Danish men would not appreciate if you said that they are not masculine – but they happily accept a low MAS culture. (How I wish Hofstede had chosen another name for this concept.)

7.2.1 Hofstede vs. Schwartz

It is tempting to assume that the two theories described above just use different names for the same things. Wouldn't Schwartz's *Hierarchy* and Hofstede's PDI be equivalent? Wouldn't *Autonomy* and IDV have a lot to do with each other? Not necessarily. Schwartz measures societal norms in general; Hofstede is more closely related to the business setting[42].

One way to check if the concepts overlap is to compare datasets. If two concepts were describing the same underlying reality, they would correlate – for example would countries with higher values on *Hierarchy* also have higher PDI if the two concepts were identical and as you can see, USA and China are far apart on PDI but not on *Hierarchy*. I have, much to my surprise and frustration, found only very weak relationships between any of Hofstede's and Schwartz's concepts.



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8 Other Models

I promised that I would touch on other models as well.

8.1 World Values Survey[43]

World Values Survey is a third model that regularly gathers data from all over the world. Starting in 1981 with data from OECD countries it has over the years expanded to become a collaboration of researchers from over 100 countries.

It has its quite own set of questions and the model (originally formulated by Roald Inglehart and Christian Welzel) focus on only two central aspects:
Along one axis it has *Traditional* ⇔ *Secular-Rational Values*. This covers if people rely on some kind of scripture or deity/guru/external force to dictate what is proper behavior (*Traditional*) or if behavior is much more determined by context and people's own sense of right and wrong (*Secular-Rational*).
The other axis delineates *Survival Values* ⇔ *Self-Expression Values*. *Survival Values* are related to the material world and security and *Self-Expression Values* centers more on subjective well-being and quality of life aspects.

These two sets of worldviews seem to correlate with a host of values and priorities, among these are the structure of the family, relationship with authority, freedom rights, environmental protection, and tolerance for minorities.

The map of the world (shown in Fig. 5) has, not surprisingly, the countries clustering around the major philosophies, religious or otherwise, and continents. All the English-speaking countries are clustered together, again reinforcing the idea that it perhaps is an English tradition more than the immigration aspect that has brought high IDV to the former British colonies.

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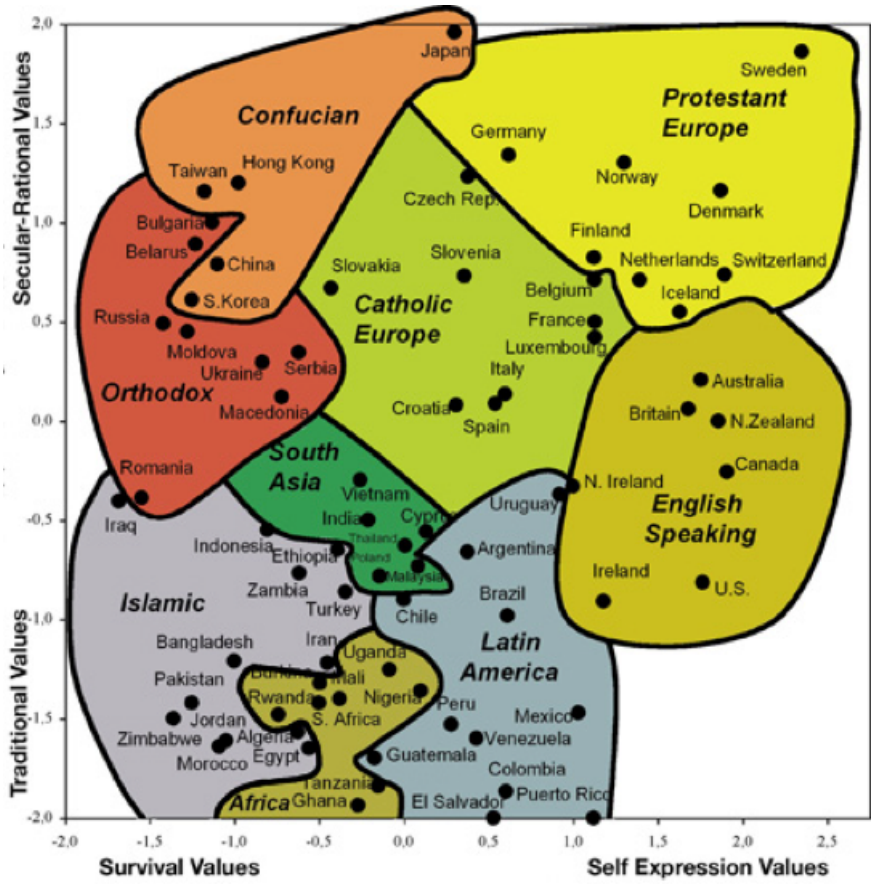

Fig. 5: Inglehart-Welzel Culture Map of the World

Comparing results from several decades of research, WVS's analyses have found that most countries move from *Survival* toward *Self-expression* values, as they grow richer. People, to whom survival has not been an issue for a while, focus no longer on valuing what they already have (survival/security means) and more on what other things/ideas life can offer (e.g. freedom of speech).

Most countries also move up the figure from *Traditional* towards *Secular-Rational* as literacy becomes widespread and GDP increases.

The notable exception is USA that is both wealthy, subscribes to *Self-expression,* and is still very *Traditional*.

8.2 The Lewis Model

The Lewis model is from the research of Richard D. Lewis, the founder of Berlitz language schools. Work with the model is done by Richard Lewis Communications in collaboration with Duke University.

This theory posits that cultures are defined by their modus operandi: Are they

1. Multi active: Warm, emotional, impulsive
2. Linear active: Cold, factual, decisive, planning
3. Reactive: Courteous, accommodating, compromising, listening

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Based on these three overriding criteria countries are organized into this model:

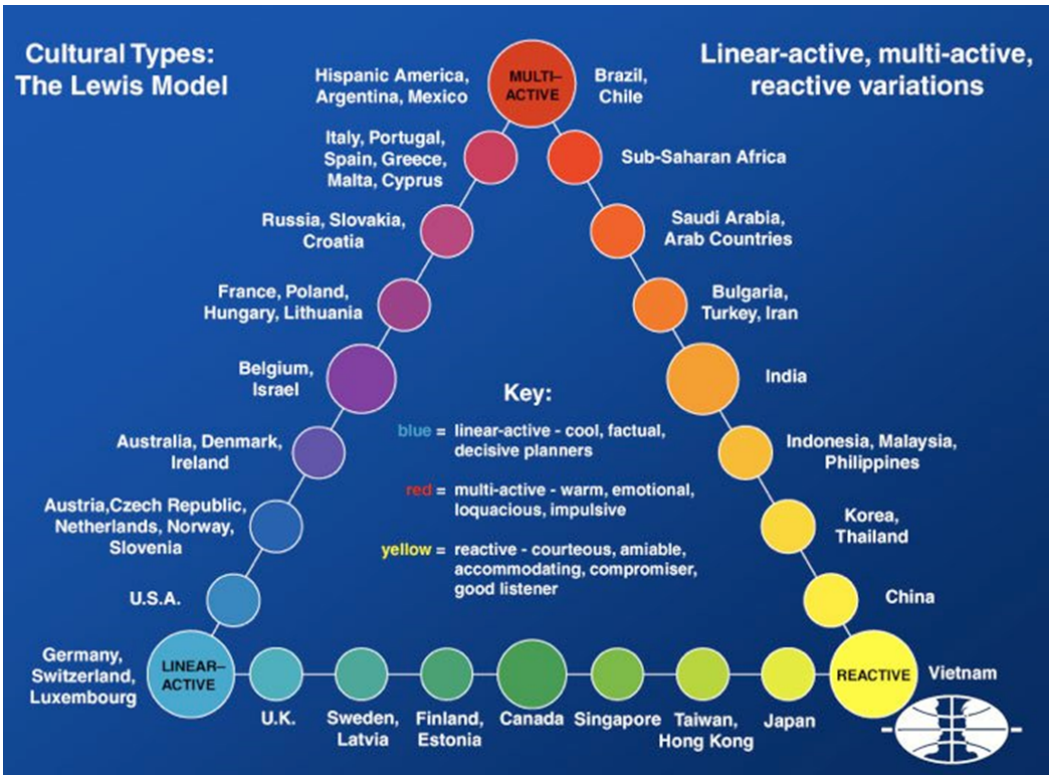
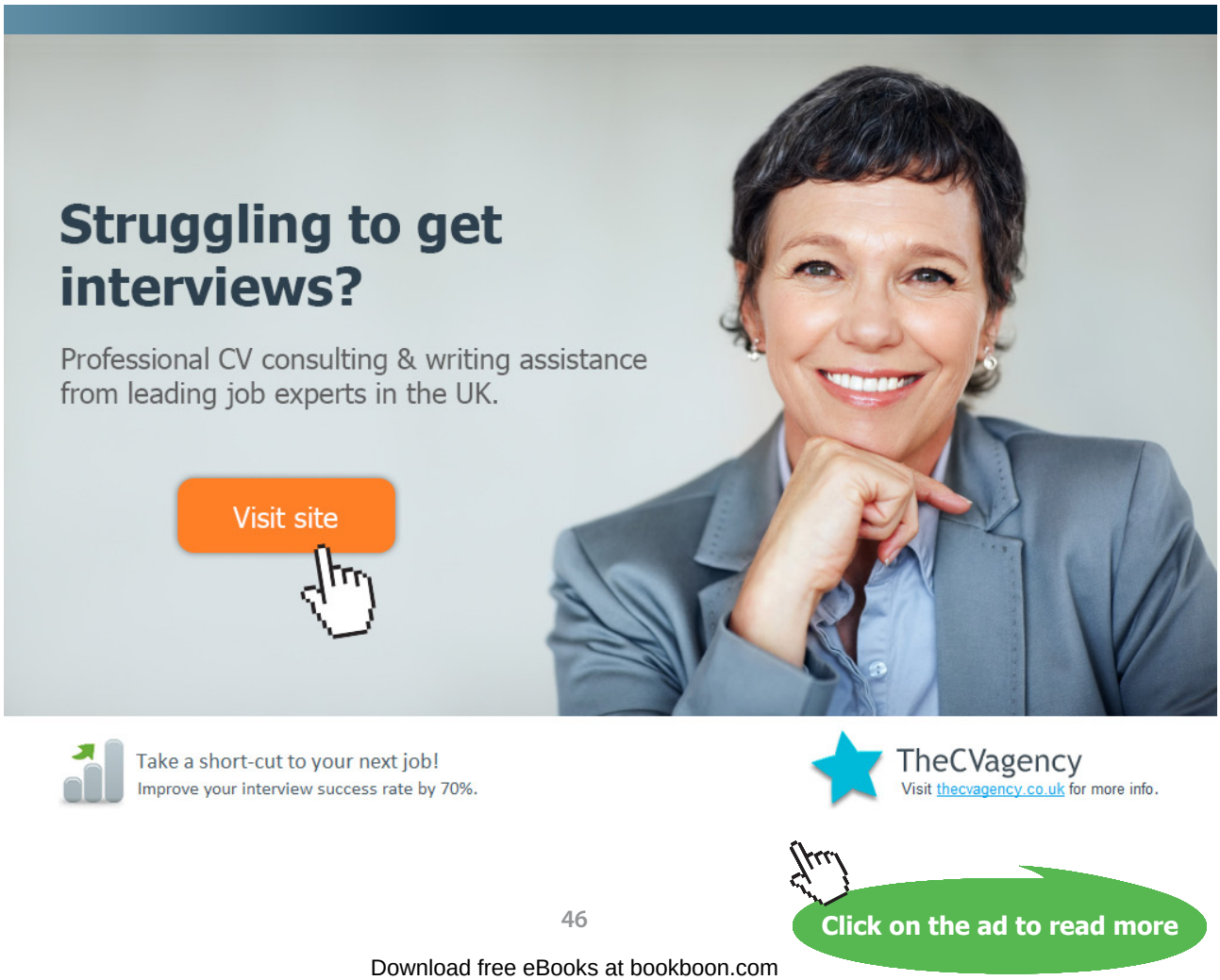


Fig. 6: The Lewis Model[44]



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Using this model and a questionnaire, people are evaluated as to what category they belong to, or rather which styles they prefer under which circumstances. Those with an even mix – in the middle of the triangle – are good moderators. Most people have a preference for one or two of these behavior groups. A tool called CultureActive is supposed to disclose your preferred style. Working in an environment that is very different will be a stretch, but if you are aware of in which areas you will be challenged, you are warned what "different" looks like.

The questions relate to preferences for a.o.

- Listening vs. speaking
- Direct vs. indirect communication
- Ease with Interrupting / being interrupted
- Patient vs. Impatient
- Sticking to facts or being more "promising"
- Treating Truth as an absolute or relative issue
- Mixing or separating private and business spheres socially

As you can see, most of the issues are directly related to communicating, the subject for a later chapter.

8.3 GlobeSmart[45]

I am not in the business to advertise Aperian neither, another of the agencies for intercultural education, so this is partly to illustrate which parameters another private company may use when teaching important differences to be aware of if you want to do business somewhere else; partly to emphasize a couple of issues also mentioned in the other theories.

Aperian's tool, Globesmart[46], measures people's attitudes and skills on the five dimensions in Table 3:

Independent	Interdependent
Direct	Indirect
Risk	Restraint
Task	Relationship
Egalitarianism	Status

Table 3. Globesmart parameters

8.3.1 Independent / Interdependent

We have already addressed the *Independent / Interdependent* difference in the *Autonomy vs. Embedded* schism under the Schwartz model.

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8.3.2 Direct / Indirect

The *Direct vs. Indirect* dimension refers to communication and we will touch on that subject in a later chapter.

8.3.3 Risk / Restraint

Risk vs. Restraint is not as clearly shown in Schwartz's model, *Risk* being a value within the *Mastery* cluster.

In this context the *Risk / Restraint* dualism touches on how much you prepare for all contingencies before making business decisions. Some cultures adhere to the sport apparel company Nike's motto: "Just do it" – that is the same philosophy behind Lean development: prototype and change. To other cultures this behavior seems unprofessional and rash.
Carlos Ghosn, the CEO of Renault-Nissan Alliance, told a Stanford audience in an interview that the goal for decision-making was that the decision was executed, not that the decision was made. Sometimes waiting to make the decision and then have a smooth implementation because the surroundings' attitudes had "matured" could beat a fast decision leading to organizational friction and slow or botched implementation. He credited that insight to his Japanese experience[47].

While risk – as in bungee jumping or car racing – is not part of Hofstede's UA, the type of risk reduction described above that serves to reduce ambiguity and uncertainty will be included in Hofstede's UA dimension.

8.3.4 Task / Relationship

Finally there is *Task vs. Relationship* orientation. This duality has two connotations in relation to business. The first is more or less a "personality trait"; people are generally more inclined to be one or the other (ref. the engineer vs. Human Resource stereotypes.)

In relation to cultural differences the impact can be a little more complicated: Cultures that value *Relationships* over *Task* may not "understand" the concept of getting three quotes before you place an order; naturally the order goes to the company/person you have a good prior relationship with.
"If my nephew can use this job, what is the idea to even look if there might be somebody more qualified, if you by choosing somebody else would insult a partner?" *Relationship* orientation is the opposite of meritocracy. In this context it goes back to *Embeddedness* or *Interdependence*: The obligations to the in-group that must not be neglected by us doing our own thing.

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Note, that I used the word *obligation*. Remember that unpleasant feeling about being excluded from good company, if you don't live up to the norms? That is what you inflict on employees, if you force them to play by *Task* rules in *Relationship* oriented cultures. I am not against meritocracy, on the contrary, that is what I want for myself. I just advocate for being open to looking for common ground if you live and work in a relationship-oriented culture. Remember that someone's nephew is not automatically unqualified; perhaps you can tweak the job-description and make use of him? You already have checks and balances in place, I assume.

Reversely, if you move to a more *Task* oriented culture than the one you come from, know that the insistence on getting multiple quotes or filling positions based on open recruitment is neither meant as a slight towards existing suppliers or relations, not is it perceived as such by most people in these cultures. It is a commitment to creating a level playing field where you are evaluated on what you know, not whom you know.

And as mentioned before, cultures can have many variations where *Task* orientation applies in some contexts and *Relationship* orientation applies in other. That is how U.S. Americans can be direct and to the point when having business meetings, not "wasting time" on getting a personal relationship with the other party, while at the same time several U.S. organizations embrace policies of referral bonuses to their employees, if they can help recruit new colleagues.

8.3.5 Egalitarianism / Status

This distinction is so important that I have given it its own chapter 9 below.

8.4 Missing values

What I feel is missing most from the previous four models is the equivalent of *Harmony* in Schwartz's model. It is perhaps indicative that an instrument for how to do business around the world will not exactly focus on the planet itself, but in an age where *sustainability* has become a major business parameter, it deserves in my opinion a little more attention.

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9 Egalitarianism / Hierarchy / Patriarchy

Misalignments between managers and employees when their attitudes to *Hierarchy* differ is one of the most common culture clashes when doing business abroad:

Consultative management – or even self-managing groups – is highly appreciated in *Egalitarian* cultures. These people wish to have a say in decisions that affect their work life. In flat organizations, people typically know what their colleagues do so they can collaborate along the process flow without managerial interference. When you know who and what produces the "work in process" that you should add your expertise to, and you know who your "internal customer" is down the line, it is easier to come up with suggestions on how to make it easier, more flawless, and more efficient for all parties. An effective system for processing employee suggestions is also seen as good for employee morale.[48]
It should be noted that although Japan is considered a hierarchical culture, their Kaizen system of continuous improvement – in the West known as Total Quality Management – shares many elements with the self-managing group.

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In *Hierarchical* cultures the boss is expected to know. Admitting you don't know something can make you lose status. That is not the same as that the boss can't ask questions. But sometimes answers only contain what the employee thinks the boss wants to hear, so listen for what is *not* being said. If an employee doesn't answer your question directly it is possibly because the answer would be negative.

There is often a preference for *patriarchal management style* in *Hierarchical* cultures, and that comes with showing interest in the employees' families and participating in social functions outside of the office. Expectations can be attending weddings or showing up at the hospital if an employee is sick. Not upholding such social obligations is seen as rude[49]. Remember that patriarchal means fatherly, and benevolent, guiding, scolding, and caring are all parts of that.

Most expatriate managers from *Egalitarian* cultures understand that hierarchical means more telling than asking people what to do, and even very egalitarian managers can adapt to being more "bossy" than what they are initially comfortable with. They also have to learn that having an "open door" doesn't mean that anybody are likely to walk through it uninvited.

But the social aspect takes many by surprise – and is not always welcomed by accompanying spouses who already see their working partner fewer hours than they wish for. Spouses can participate in these functions *if the culture allows it* (+South America, India / – Muslim countries, Japan, Russia) and *the spouse is willing*. The absence of an expected spouse may be seen as a slight in some countries; conversely the spouse being involved may bring extra honor – and can give a welcome added cultural exposure for the spouse as well. But generally the demand on the spouse of a foreign manager is smaller than on the local manager's spouse. The Lewis model mentions more or less comfort with mixing social life and business. Social responsibilities falling to managers in patriarchal organizations are examples of this mixing.

9.1 Status and Respect

The last comments on *Hierarchy* are on the understanding of *Status* and *Respect*.

We distinguish between *ascribed* status and *achieved* status. *Ascribed* status if for example the status of H.R.M. Queen Elizabeth II. Some have a chair because they are "born into it" like HRMQE2 – that is *ascribed status*. Some have worked their way or been elected into their position – that is *achieved status*.

I don't say that The Queen can't have achieved status, but that would be status gained for something she had done besides being born. She seems to be a decent mechanic, a good paratrooper (!), hard working, and supposedly she can be a good sport[50]. All that can earn her achieved status. (If she is your head of state, I am sure you have a more nuanced view.)

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Some cultures confer *ascribed status* to people with less public positions than royalty, but the dynamic is the same. (Have the irony in mind that even in highly egalitarian cultures, some people salivate by the mentioning of royalty. People don't always live their values.)

People from cultures where *achieved status* is the only thing that earns respect – strictly meritocratic cultures – can have difficulty showing the expected amount of respect for people who feel entitled to it by virtue of birth. (I don't use the phrase "proper amount" because proper is in the eye of the beholder. "Expected" refers to what goes on in the mind of the person with ascribed status who is used to being shown deference.)

This is not only a problem between the people directly involved. If meritocratic managers work in a hierarchical culture and don't show respect for the people *their employees respect*, it can have wider impact (of the "My friend's enemy is my enemy" kind.)

It will obviously also be a problem if a middle manager doesn't behave in a way that *signals* respect for upper management – not because the middle manager don't wish to signal respect but because the signals of respect s/he uses are different from what the higher ups or peers know how to decode.

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Likewise, it can be difficult for meritocratic people to understand that hierarchical oriented people, without flinching, may accept incredible rude behavior if it comes from such a high status person; behavior they would not have taken from people with lower status.

In the context of signaling status, I can't help but referring an anecdote presented by a former president for American Management Association. He recounted how he was leaving the terminal to travel on a private jet to an appointment when the pilot came rushing up offering to carry his briefcase. Slightly miffed that apparently he came across as so old and feeble that he couldn't carry his own briefcase, the president declined. "But please, sir," said the pilot, "what will the other pilots think of me if I work for a man who is carrying his own briefcase?"

People from hierarchical cultures, reversely, don't always understand that in egalitarian cultures you have to *earn* respect both upwards *and* downwards. Egalitarian employees don't automatically accept that "the higher-ups promoted you, and they probably know something I don't know about how fantastic and talented you are". You have to prove yourself worthy of respect and trust on an ongoing basis to your peers and subordinates. Employees can fear you without respecting you. (And if they do, they might resign – or complain to your boss.)

In egalitarian cultures, lack of deference doesn't necessarily mean lack of respect. Respect can be "I expect you to want to know my point of view even if I think you are wrong." Leaning too heavily on organizational seniority to close a discussion can signal that your arguments don't stand for closer scrutiny or that you don't master the subject discussed.

Egalitarian managers often mistakenly think that their employees from more hierarchical cultures lack initiative and ideas. They don't fully understand that the ideas will come out when asked for but that the employees will not volunteer their thoughts unprompted.

9.1.1 Deference / Reverence

For understanding these difficult dynamics, let us look at the words themselves. I have used "deference" above when describing this upward articulation in the hierarchical relationship. A generation or two ago the same behavior would have been named "reverence" – the word still used when addressing clergy. The dictionary translated reverence "*To consider or treat with profound awe and respect*"[51]; keywords probably being *"profound"* and *"respect"* – with no mentioning of fear.

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In many European/American countries, patriarchal relationships have disappeared over the last 50–100 years. Remember "fatherly, and benevolent, guiding, scolding, and caring"? Where people from these countries might have shown reverence for a benevolent and caring proprietor, relationships without *"noblesse oblige"* don't normally inspire "profound awe" and, hence, many have forgotten what reverence looks and feels like. The opposite behavior from deference – what in the West now is seen as "showing good initiative and leadership qualities" – would have been named *"recalcitrance"* or *"audacity"* by our forefathers because the absence of profound awe would be taken for lack of respect.[52] It is still taken that way in many cultures favoring patriarchal leadership.

Regardless of where you are, if you try to assert authority without having been conferred the status – may it be through recognized expertise, earned respect, public endorsement from people with high status, or personal relationships, whatever fits into the culture – you will not be effective. Unawareness or disregard for these dynamics can lead to diminished authority, aborted negotiations, or even diplomatic incidents[53].

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10 History

Going back to the model from Chapter 1, the second foundation for culture was the country's history. Many elements of a culture have been built up over long years of history. Geographical or ecological features (islands, mountain ranges, deserts, oceans) have created natural boundaries within which the population and their norms developed.

The "Darwinian approach"[54] is to ask: "What threatens the survival of this group of people?" If we think of a world of smaller bands warring for scarce resources in a time before refrigerators, pasteurizing, and antibiotics; behaviors that could make us starve, make us sick, or make us unable to reproduce healthy children could wipe out an entire population. A safeguard against "recklessness" would be to declare such behaviors *taboo*. These norms would often be first incorporated into and later be reinforced by the religious views of the population; the way populations have kept old wisdom alive since time immemorial.

You can think about what is *taboo* in your culture and how upholding or breaking these taboos may influence the physical and emotional health of the community. With that in mind, it may be easier to understand why religious societies with thousands of years of history are still advocating for practices that were not only more but even highly relevant in another era.

While by no means an exhaustive list of historical impacts, here are some of the broader theories along with some extra comments.

10.1 The Protein Theory[55]

"The Protein Theory" is one of the older theories worth knowing for understanding religious taboos. Many religions have instituted preference for livestock that would not compete with humans for food unless they could contribute as an additional, safe source of protein, hence the name of the theory.

For Hindus, it means not eating cows because cows – with their contribution of milk – are better protein providers alive than dead. It is well known that many Indians are vegetarians. It may be for religious reasons but if so, the religion is sensible as animal protein is a *very* expensive source of calories. The planet could feed many more people than we are now, if we were all vegetarians. Less known is it that even among Hindus some will eat beef if it is certain to come from male animals. As any beef producing farmer knows, bulls produce neither milk nor calves in proportion to the male calves that are born. Should we use scarce resources to feed the bulls, just to have them walk around, or should we eat the bull calves? A bull or two for breeding, some oxen for plowing and pulling, the rest are for dinner.

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In the dry Middle East where grass is not the most natural plant, goats that can eat anything and camels that have special relationship with water are more common than grass-eating cattle. Pigs are considered unclean for the good reason that they will eat much the same food that humans may want to eat. But even worse, they will eat your dead grandmother (should she not be buried deep enough.) In an environment where the temperature is ideal for bacterial growth, you don't want your food source to be infected by eating dead grandmothers. Today we know that pigs seem to be a last step for some pathogens that mutate from attacking other animal species to other mammals to humans[56]. When H1N1/SARS virus mutated to be able to spread among pigs, UN's WHO paid close attention.

Colder regions have a more open relationship with potential food sources. If you have big forests where pigs can roam freely eating acorns, there is no good reason not to eat pork. (But just to be safe, we do fence in the graveyards.) If your pig can convert grubs that would otherwise be harmful to your plants, or food leftovers, or fend for themselves, they may be a relatively much cheaper food resource. And if you can slaughter a pig in winter where it is cold enough for the meat to keep for months, one pig can feed a family for a long while. In warmer climates, the meat will spoil in no time and has to be shared. Under such circumstances a family pig is not as good an investment.

Orthodox Jews don't eat shellfish. Consider the temperature of the Mediterranean Sea along the closed-in East coast and the fact that the Bible was written when the ocean was the big dump for everything unwanted – including untreated sewer waste. I probably would be concerned as well. When El Niño[57] conditions exist in the Pacific Ocean and the sea temperature along the California Coast raises, similar warnings against eating oyster and crab come up. This is not dogma; this is common sense.

(Agreed, there are other religious practices that today have the opposite effect than keeping people healthy. But as religious texts have been written down, it has become increasingly difficult to change as much as a comma. Rules that served the population well in a sparsely populated world may have the opposite effect in our more crowded era, particularly if the population doesn't understand the original rationale for the rule.)

10.2 The Xenophobe Theory[58]

A newer theory posits that bacterial disease patterns would influence how *open* a culture would be towards strangers. In mountainous or island regions, for example, it can be too cold for mosquitos to cross from one valley to another over the mountain or unlikely that people make the trip across the water.

It makes a certain sense that if you live fairly isolated and the population over generations has gained immunity towards the local diseases, the arrival of strangers can bring in new diseases you are not immune towards. If somebody dies often enough after a stranger has passed through the valley or landed on the beach, perhaps strangers really do spell trouble?

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Denmark is technically the Baltic archipelago. It used to be that if you moved to some of the smaller islands in the country, you should expect to be the "new ones" for at least two or three generations. And that also applied if you were just moving from across the water.

History shows that whole populations of Native Americans – North and South – succumbed to diseases that Europeans brought over. Sometimes this was actively used as biological warfare, sometimes settlers with the best of intentions gave clothes to local barely dressed people – who subsequently caught measles and other diseases that were annoying but not necessarily life threatening to the European carriers. There is also history showing the opposite, that immigrants would succumb to diseases new to them that didn't much bother the local population.

In our day and age, chlorinated drinking water, probiotics, and antibiotics have made traveling a different experience than it was to our ancestors. We think of "travelers' stomach" as something to do with primitive conditions and uncleanliness, but note that it happens more often to travelers than the natives who live under the same conditions. The local bacteria are known to their immune systems.

While I am sure you already are familiar with the problem caused by bacteria in the water and on raw food if you visit a foreign country (perhaps much more familiar than you would wish for), consider that mosquito borne diseases can have the same or worse effects on populations living even fairly close to one another with only a tall mountain separating them. Might this change their outlook?

We only need to look the outbreak of bird flu in China, the SARS epidemic in Mexico, MERS in Saudi Arabia, Ebola outbreak in Guinea spreading to the neighboring countries, to know that diseases for good reasons create distrust and isolation. In another age it might have been made a religious *taboo* to eat bats since they seem to be the carriers of the Ebola virus.

Side note: Today we know that racial mixed marriages can produce disease resistant children. They may have inherited partly immunity to f.ex HIV through their Northern European ancestors and resistance to f.ex tuberculosis from Jewish ancestors.[59] So mingling with strangers can have an upside, too. (However, that Inuit or other populations would positively encourage their wives to sleep with strangers seems to be no more than a myth.[60])

10.3 Rice/Wheat theory[61]

One of the newest theories is about how *Individualism* has been influenced by ecological circumstances. It posits that rice-growing societies have a more communal way of thinking than wheat-growing communities. Because rice paddy preparation, planting, growing, and harvesting require sharing of resources – water – and has to take place within condensed time spans, it is supposedly only possible to successfully grow rice if you collaborate with neighboring families.

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The authors of this theory have researched different areas in China and neighboring countries and found that wheat-growing societies (or descendants of wheat growers) have more individualistic values than rice growers (or their descendants). But this theory is so new that it has not yet been tested outside this geographical area and the measurements for what is considered "Individualistic" are different from what is used in the theories I have described in the previous chapters.

It may be that it is not rice vs. wheat per se that is driving the individualistic culture dimension but the question could be if communal undertakings among equals were significant prerequisites for survival. If so, remeasuring their fields after the yearly Nile flooding should also have driven collectivism in Egypt – in spite that their main crop was wheat. Today the Aswan Dam controls the floods. But cultures take many generations to change and Egypt is on Hofstede's measurement less individualistic than many – but not all – of its neighbors.

In our ever more interconnected societies, it may be a theory worth watching.

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10.4 Imperialism/Colonialism

Where the former theories relate to formation of cultural components over long spans in history, we can trace some cultural components to more modern times. Imperialism and Colonialism – the period in time where the European countries and the Ottoman Empire divided the rest of the World among them to the extent that it was possible – created two sets of cultural influences. One component was the impact on the people already living in the country; another was on the cultures of the peoples doing the colonizing.

Some "colonies" later became independent states under the rule of the local population (Eastern Europe, India, East Asia, Africa), in some the colonists stayed to dominate (North America, Australia, New Zealand), and some ended with a mix of the original population and colonial and later immigrants (South America, South Africa). Regardless of who now rules the countries, the borders were artificially laid out by the colonial powers, which have created countries with subcultures based on old loyalties, sometimes across borders. One example is Kurdistan where Kurds live in Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria – there is no one country called Kurdistan today.

More than a country, India is more like the EU, a subcontinent with 28 states and at least 17 official languages not to mention the numerous local languages. The regions are fiercely aware of their individual cultures. That the Raj now is split into three separate countries, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, says even more how much an outside force, Great Britain, could disregard local differences.

Yugoslavia split into ethnic groups after the pressure from the USSR disappeared. (The term "balkanization" is however far older, having been in use after both the break down of the Ottoman Empire and later after the Austria-Hungarian Empire was dissolved after WWI[62].)

In some countries, colonist took over an existing power structure and cemented it further[63].
Countries in the Middle East and Africa have become hotbeds for in-country strife, partly because they were formed as artificial collectives of diverse tribes and because colonial power often was exerted through "divide and conquer". Might they have fared better if borders had followed natural or ethnic boundaries? We will probably never know.

USA is from the outside considered one country, but the states have distinct differences – their cultures being aligned with the diverse populations who as the "first movers" cemented their worldviews and interests into the state constitutions[64]. It may not have more than one semiofficial language[65], English, but differences in interests were enough for the nation to go through a very bloody civil war that still creates controversies 150 years after it ended.

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A consequence of colonialism has in some countries been that cultural components have developed as an "anti-thesis" to the colonial rulers. "If they do something their way, we will do the opposite just to spite them."[66] Or some ancient traditions about which the population otherwise had little affinity might have been resurrected to demonstrate national pride[67]. Or some ancient traditions about which the population *had* affinity became even more important.
Like I mentioned in the adaptation chapter: if your culture/values/traditions are threatened, a natural reaction is to hold them even dearer.

10.5 Is this still relevant?

Why is all this history relevant to you as an immigrant/expatriate?

If you start out assuming that there is some good reason for why the locals do what they do, strange customs are much easier to live with. It doesn't mean that you have to understand the history of every bit of your new country's norms. It doesn't even mean that you have to adapt to these norms. Being curious about their history will endear you more to the local population than if you stay ignorant (or disdainful) about their customs. It also helps them understand that your ignorance is not bad intent; it is only lack of knowledge. But if you are shameful about your ignorance and thus don't ask questions, how can you expect them to help you learn the *Whats*, the *Hows,* or in this case even the *Whys*?

My experience has been that asking questions makes the locals reflect on why something is done this way and not any other way, and through that reflection many come to realize that their customs are perhaps not that easy to guess. So while I have learned something, they too, have grown in cross-cultural awareness. Reversely, I have become much more knowledgeable about Danish history because I have had reasons to question why I think and behave like I do.[68]

Yes, you do run the risk of learning something and you also risk that knowing more may change the way you think about life and the wider world. Calling it a risk may sound a bit "tongue in cheek" but it can have long-term consequences and you should be aware of that. Relativism is not equally popular everywhere.

If you come from countries from the upper half of the World Values Survey's *Traditional* ⇔ *Rational-Secular* spectrum, you may become more conservative by understanding the local rationales and if your culture is more traditional, you may become more secular. Likewise, living under circumstances more dire than you are used to can make you treasure how privileged you have otherwise been all the more. It can make you unbearable to your fellow countrymen at home because you just can't get riled up any longer by the things they complain about. Having lived in a more affluent country, materialistically and/or with more freedom rights, can make it difficult to go back to where society does not offer the same civil protections or freedom of choice.

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Changes along either dimension could make it more difficult to adapt to your home culture if you move back to the "old country" and this can contribute to the second dip in the *W-curve* as mentioned in the chapter about Culture Shock.

But trying to understand a new culture's origins and rationales is normally called "expanding your world view" and is generally not considered a bad thing. It will give you a couple more tools in your toolbox when dealing with other people. (And it will impress your hosts if you know interesting tidbits about their history – as long as you are aware of that history written by the local population may be different than the version you have learned somewhere else.)

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11 Systems

The final basis for the Culture model was Systems. What does that even mean?

Systems are the way we have structured our commons. The national Constitutions are examples of codifying "What We Stand For." That is one of the reasons why many countries today have huge discussions/fights about what their new constitutions should contain; why USA insisted that Germany and Japan got new constitutions after World War II[69]; why the U.S. constitution is considered an almost sacred document to many U.S.-Americans.

In some countries, phrases from the Constitution are part of the every day vernacular. Conversely, in the UK they don't even have a Constitution. In some countries, constitutional rights are taught rigorously; in some countries, the populations should rather not know too much about what their rights are according to the Constitution because much of what takes place is unconstitutional anyway. In some countries, everybody knows about systematic breaches without even thinking about protesting.
This illustrates the point that what we stand for is not always what we *say* we stand for.

Systems are often at work in places where we are in contact with the official part of the country. We, who live abroad, have already been in contact with an immigration system. In many cases, this is a system where we have never had the need to reflect on how our own country's system worked. Those of us who look and speak like the majority of passport holders from the same country thankfully have only limited contact with our own government when we arrive at the airport. In defense of the tedious lines at the airports' immigration desks, remember that the people you interact with didn't make the rules, and that the rules basically are there to keep people out. The immigration officers are not trying to find excuses for why they should let you in "anyway" – and neither should they be. The rules are a political decision.

Some major differences in how systems work are listed below. This is by no means a complete list, but it contains examples of systemic differences that may open your eyes to differences in areas where you perhaps took something for granted. And once you have started looking, I am sure you will find many more illustrative examples than I can possibly imagine.

11.1 General legalities

In some countries you still can't expect "rule of law" to be enforced and "equality before the law" – symbolized by the blindfolded Lady Justitia – is nothing but a dream. But where the laws are generally respected, many countries operate within one of two different legal patterns:

- What is not forbidden is allowed.
- What is not allowed is forbidden.

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This distinction is seen between Common law, the norm in the countries that have/have inherited the English legal system, and Napoleonic Code, which is the basis for the norms in Western Continental Europe and the Mediterranean coastal regions.

The Continental norm is that there are basic broad rules for types of transactions. When you write a contract within these countries, all the general lines are already established in the legal framework and you only need to address specificities in your contract. In many countries it means that established rules already exist for labor agreements, loan agreements, rental agreements, business agreements, etc. The rules are meant to assure that the weaker part of the agreement, typically the employee or consumer, is not abused by the stronger party, the employer, bank, company, and that many contracts can be agreed to without the need of legal assistance. Often an item in the law will read something to the end of: "Any agreements that diminish the rights of any of the parties beyond what is here stated, are illegal."

People from these countries can be taken aback by the length and amounts of documents needed to do business in countries where everything has to be included in a contract, as it can't refer to a set of commonly known laws. Likewise, they may not be used to asking for legal advice or understand the implications of signing papers they don't fully understand. They are primed with the notion that a law will assure some fairness in transactions.

The most bizarre example I have seen of late of these lengthy contracts was when leasing a car. To assure that the contract was not one of these documents that no consumer can read, the local authorities had instituted that the contract could only be one page long. It *was* on only one page – but it was a page of around 1 meter, 3–4 feet long.

If you are used to Common law principles, contracts in "Napoleonic Code" countries leave many questions unanswered, but these questions should be answered by reading the laws the contract should be referring to. Since these laws may not be part of one's prior education and being used to the traps contracts can include, having a huge part of the contract implicitly covered by some rules not in front of you at the moment of signing can be very unnerving.

My contract with Bookboon is with an English company in a Common Law country, so I was expecting one of these inch thick tomes. But the contract is to be treated by Danish contract law (Roman Law) and it only few pages. This is a big relief to a Dane (me) – though probably not to English authors.

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Regardless of where you go, the best advice I can give is to make sure that you read and understand before you sign anything. That sounds evident, but you will be surprised how many people don't read first or sign in spite of that they don't understand what they just put their name under. If you are uncomfortable with signing here and now, ask for time to have it cleared with legal advisor. (It is sometimes amazing what impact mentioning "legal advisor" can have on people's willingness to renegotiate.) If time is of urgency, ask in advance what you can expect and familiarize yourself with the local norms. Remember that contracts are not important as long as we are friends; but if something does not go as planned, what is written in fine print on the back of the paper is also important.

I know, I didn't mention that the paper is in a foreign language that you perhaps can't read.

Wherever negotiations take place, understanding what motivates the other party can make you a better negotiator. Whether you negotiate a lengthy contract under Common Law, where everything has to be in the contract, a shorter under a "Napoleonic Code" law, or have to function where Sharia Law governs (or is on the minds of people even if it is not actually "on the books"), seeking alignment between ones interests and the interests of the other party demonstrates respect for local values. That may entail learning basic principles of the Holy Koran or understanding industry standards in depth but in either case, focusing on shared goals rather than only seeing the other party as an adversary can produce a better outcome.[70]

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Particularly for people seeking employment in a different country, it pays to know what the local jurisprudence is for employment contracts. It would be a waste of negotiation capital to change onerous clauses that would not hold up in court anyway. But do be aware that in some countries, Justitia favors the locals over foreigners.

11.2 School Systems

School systems reinforce and perpetuate elements in a culture. For this reason, some of the research Dr. Schwartz did on value differences was done on schoolteachers.

If you have children attending international school, you have implicitly "un-chosen" the local schools. Might one reason be that you don't want them to be indoctrinated with values you don't subscribe to? (Naturally, it can just be that you are traveling to so many places that an international education with standard curriculum makes easier for your child to move between schools – or that the local schools are not very good.)

Here are some areas where populations differ on how they treat children in school:

1. Do the students need to be in school or can they be home schooled?
2. Does the child get new class mates every year, remixing all students at the same grade level, or do the classes advance in small groups where the only changes come from students moving in and out of the school?
3. Which class subjects are taught in the public school system? What is mandatory and what is optional? Religious instruction, foreign languages, sexual education,…
4. Are the same classes mandatory for boys and girls?
5. How are school activities funded? Are fundraising activities involving parents common, rare, none?
6. Is primary/secondary/tertiary education free, private, or somewhere in between?
7. Rote learning or independent thinking?

Again, this is in no way a complete list.

Since schools serve a central role in socializing children into becoming hopefully productive members of society, the way schools arrange themselves / are arranged legally and through oversight boards are a reflection of society's current priorities and aspirations.

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As noted above, Schwartz surveyed teachers as part of his research. Supposedly that would also eliminate many of the other variables that could make the replies harder to compare. An interesting observation was, however, that in some countries, schoolteachers are just another group of public employees where in other countries they are among the best educated people in the communities they serve. Naturally, the attitude of the parents will differ accordingly and the teacher is treated as a revered master in some countries and almost with disdain in other. (History may disclose why: e.g. where teaching used to be done by the priests, the role had traditionally higher status.)

Again, if you are traveling from a country in one of "these camps" to a country in the other camp, you may experience an attitude towards teachers – and perhaps learning – that can be strange and incomprehensible to you. While there is little risk in treating the teacher with more respect than the local population does (at most they will think you try to achieve preferential treatment for your child,) you may reconsider showing too little respect for teachers in a society where teachers are otherwise revered. First, it could be that a society that prioritizes teachers high will have fantastic teachers. Second, as mentioned earlier, not showing respect for a person generally recognized as having "high status" can turn other people against you.

As you look through the list, I am sure you can recognize that there are items where acting one way or the other will reinforce specific gender roles vs. gender equality. Likewise, what is taught relates to how comfortable the population is with sexuality.

How do you teach a population to be more or less open to strangers? Keeping children together or remixing classes (no. 2) is a distinct difference where a child may end regarding the core 20–30 students in the classroom "friends" or the whole grade of perhaps 100…500 students may be considered "our class". In the latter situation, the students will have overlapped in one classroom or another over the years with most of the other students. Why might this be important? If you live somewhere where the population generally stay put where they were born, having stronger ties to fewer people may serve them well. If the population has high mobility, it is important that children are trained in both making new friends and acquaintances and in saying goodbye.

Do schools influence hierarchy or egalitarianism? The amount of deference between student and teacher models what will later be employee/employer relationships. If students call the teacher by first name or with title and last name makes a difference. How parents address the teacher reinforces or diminishes this impact.
I wonder if remixing classes can also have an impact on the student-teacher relationship? 30 students who have known each other for years can be a difficult group to get the upper hand on for a new teacher. When the students don't have strong ties with each other, the teacher has more power to influence class dynamics.

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Private schools and schools that rely heavily on fundraising for improving the educational experience are other reinforcements of hierarchal values and in-group preference. In Denmark, public schools have not been allowed to accept parent donations because children in richer communities should not have better access to educational resources than children from poorer districts.

How about individualism? In some of the early Israeli kibbutz movement, children resided in a children's house, not with their families[71]. At the other end of the spectrum we have many countries where you are allowed teach your children at home. (In some of these countries it is a matter of logistics. Living on a farm where the nearest school may be a plane ride away creates special needs. In countries where this may apply to some communities, it is difficult to allow these children home schooling and not permit it for other.) Somewhere between these two points we have distance schooling where teachers, not parents, teach the students through radio and/or internet and countries where children *must* attend school but normally live at home. As you can see, the imprint the parents – or the schools – can leave on the children will differ across these systems.

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11.3 Taxes

I will not argue for the size of taxes one way or the other and neither will I evaluate the various types of taxes. But because this area can be so different from one country to another, let me mention some of the differences I know have confused people moving or doing business across borders. And again, there may be use taxes, certificates, services that you pay for in one country but not in others – the list is not meant to be complete but to illustrate points about system differences.

Taxes are typically paid as a consequence of owning something or because of a taxable transaction.

Among the first type are property taxes and taxes for operating vehicles, ships, etc. Decades back, many countries had taxes based on one's net value. They have since been generally abolished. (That illustrates a value shift towards less equality.)
In the second category are e.g. tax on income (salary/wage, interest, profit/loss from financial transactions), sales tax, estate tax (inheritance), payroll taxes.

There is a big difference in how countries have arranged who can tax you and how coordinated these taxing (pun intended) agencies operate. Thus you may have one yearly income statement for all tax authorities (high coordination) or you may have to deliver a report to every tax authority – which each may be structured differently because each authority may have different criteria for what is taxable income.
Likewise you may be taxed at the point of transaction or have to pay taxes after the fact. Needless to say, that point-of-transaction-taxes (e.g. that the employer withholds income and payroll taxes on salaries) tend to be easier to reinforce than taxes one has to declare after the fact (e.g. tax on a service paid for in cash.)

The proportions of public income that come from the various sources can vary dramatically. If the economy makes it easy to not report income (because everybody are self employed or barter is normal), property taxes may be higher because it is more difficult to hide a house. If the country has a lot of export, more taxes may come from that trade, because it is popular with the voters to have somebody else pay the taxes (e.g. Norwegian oil export.)

Note that Sales Tax and Value Added Tax may not be the same thing and it can be fatal for a small company to confuse them if they think they will get refunds for some of their taxes and this doesn't happen. Again, different jurisdictions may differ on what warrants sales tax or VAT and what is not taxed or with which rates.

Payroll taxes, such as payments into mandatory retirement accounts or health accounts, can differ tremendously. Some countries rely heavily on this kind of taxes, other have hardly any. For companies who think about establishing themselves abroad, understanding that salaries are not the only employee driven expenses and what this overhead structure does for comparative costs can change where they set up shop.

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(For any expatriate living abroad for an extended amount of time, it is prudent to check the rules related to retirement accounts. You may have earned the right to some public services through paying taxes in different countries. In some cases and in some countries, you can transfer the retirement funds to where you end up retiring.)

11.4 Public accounts

When countries publicize their "public accounts", these numbers can be very hard to compare. And yet it is done all the time in the newspapers and for political purposes. I will call the main difference *gross* and *net* accounting.

If, for instance, public employees get a low salary but don't pay income tax because that is moving money from one public pocket to another or if they get free or subsidized housing or other benefits, they may end up with the same disposable income as somebody with a much higher paying job who pays normal taxes and don't get these perks. The alternative is to give the public employee a normal salary and claim normal tax, rent, etc. The first method is the *net* method and the second is the *gross* method.

Likewise, you can give a company a deduction in their tax or a similar amount as a subsidy. For the company the net result may be the same; for the public, accounts will look different. A deduction diminishes the public income; a subsidy increases the income (comparatively to the deduction method because the company pays more tax) and increases public spending with the subsidy. Again, the first method is *net* reporting; the second is *gross* reporting.

Where am I going with this?

If a country's population values small government, public policies are much more likely to use the net method with deductions instead of subsidies.
While the economic effect may be the same, the numbers flowing through the public records are smaller. (There is also much more public focus on subsidies than on deductions.)

Why would you claim taxes with one hand only to give more money out with the other? For employees, it makes government jobs comparable to jobs in the private sector. If the fact that the net pay is the same – or better – is only known to those who are on the inside and the jobs look totally unappealing to anybody else unless they have read a very long memo, public sector jobs will be perpetuated to only attract people with special knowledge. It may be nice with less competition for these jobs, but it may not be in the best interest of the country.

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Likewise, having companies pay higher taxes and subsidize the sectors of strategic interest makes it more transparent which sectors are of strategic interest. A side effect is that the population may appreciate knowing they are not the only ones paying taxes. It is demoralizing to the common taxpayer if big corporations pay little tax, as legal as it may be.
Consequently, countries that value transparency or where personal taxes are high are more likely to use gross reporting.

Unless you study economics, these differences seem unimportant but they contribute to a people's understanding of who they are because the differences are part of the story they tell about themselves. "Who we think we are" is often based on how we act compared to other peoples/nations, and if the mirror we use is faulty – like using numbers calculated using different principles – our conclusions may be far from the truth.

Before you think of criticizing or applauding any country's policies by comparing their accounts to some you like better or less, make sure that you are not comparing apples to oranges.[72]

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11.5 Other Systems

Below are some hot political topics and how Schwartz's value clusters would be aligned with some positions on the question:

- Do we want it harder or easier for people to vote? (*Hierarchy*=>Keep voting rights among the few. They are a privilege that belongs to the top of the hierarchy. Back in history only landowners could vote.)
- How open do we want our borders to be to immigrants or refugees? (*Harmony*=>Open. *Harmony* values "One World" so other people are not more or less important than fellow countrymen.)
- How much will we accept the outside world to influence our country through signing international treaties? (*Harmony*=>Treaties. Willingness to restrain own behavior for the common international benefit.)
- Do we appoint or elect public officials? (*Egalitarianism*=>Elect. Decisions that influence the public should be pushed as close to the individuals as possible.)[73]
- Do we use public referendums in all/major/no decisions? (*Egalitarianism*=>Referendums. See Elect above.)
- Which tax structure do we want to have in place? (*Egalitarianism*=>More transfer from rich to poor. 'Equal opportunities' doesn't exist where some children grow up hungry.)
- Environmental protection regulations? (*Harmony*=>Copenhagen Accord, Cap and trade, Fisheries Accords. See treaties above.)
- Transparency (*Egalitarianism*=>Transparency. Bribery leads to inequality as some have more resources to get things through than others.)

I am not trying to start a heated political debate with you, but if you felt slightly riled up because you either anticipated a certain point of view and mentally prepared to argue one way or the other or because you disagree with something you have experienced, great! Or perhaps not exactly great to get agitated, but then you understand what I am talking about.

I mention these points to illustrate that opening the local newspaper can be a daily stress factor if it contains local political decisions or behaviors with which you highly disagree; or that the local newspaper is woefully short on any substantial local news with which you can agree or disagree; or that the local news and the news you get through BBC (or CNN or Al Jazeera or what your normal news medium would be) are far from describing the same reality.

As "the systems" are everywhere we interact with "society", living in a nation where the systems support values you disagree with can feel like a continuous affront.

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I am not proposing that any of the above mentioned systems have been construed with perpetuating any values *in mind*. But the systems we as societies construe, and the tweaks we make along the way to these systems, do reflect the ways influencers think.

When we argue for passing of a new law, the argumentation is that we want to achieve something different than what we had before. That difference typically is aligned with the values of the person/group proposing the law. Some groups in society often have more influence on lawmakers than other, so the new law may be representative of values and value-shifts in the general population – *or it may not*. You can't take for granted that a country, having a certain combination of values in Schwartz's model, has laws that all mirror its values.

Can you express your disagreement with the local politics? Local norms may be open to discussing politics in polite company – or it may make you very unpopular; politics can even be a *taboo* subject of discussion. In some cultures you can agree to disagree. In other cultures that is not a norm and disagreements lead to – well, real disagreements, broken relationships, arrests, and/or mayhem.

Where politics can be discussed, you may find is that many people can have civilized discourses about even hot topics. However, if you talk to individuals as if they were representatives for their country – e.g. "You Americans are crazy about your gun laws!" or "You Danes are all Communists!" – most people become defensive. Even if they might otherwise have agreed with you or have been willing to try to find some common ground, they may not if they feel you are barraging their people or that you appear prejudiced. Then it becomes "Right or wrong, my country!"[74] So don't harangue your neighbor if the local mayor, the local politicians, or the local president behave in ways you disagree with (unless your neighbor *is* the mayor, representative, or the president – and even then, it is not polite and in many countries it may not be safe.)

Again, you can focus on the issues that bother you, or you can focus on what is great about the place you live. Your focus is *your* choice. If you can't vote, where you put your focus may be the only thing you can influence, but don't underestimate the power of that on your wellbeing.

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12 Blueprint of the World

Values, history, and systems are all contexts within which our worldviews are formed. Depending on how you grew up, you have made a "Blueprint of the World" in your mind. Naturally, your personal experiences have also contributed, your family circumstances, your education, as well as the age you were born into.

Whether you are the person traveling or just know people who have moved far away from their place of birth, there can be barriers to communication when people carry vastly different blueprints in their minds. There are barriers enough between people from the same cultures, just stemming from their individual stories and experiences, age differences, across genders, across professions, and across political observations. Cultural differences add another layer of complexity. So the rest of the book will focus on communication.

I hope that the above chapters have given you some "Aha! That may be a reason why s/he does like that"-experiences[75]. But above all I hope that you have become more curious and more open to asking the question of *Why?* – with respect to the behaviors you see around you but no less in reflecting on your own "Blueprint".

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13 Communication

As much as you may know about another country, communication with foreigners can still be difficult[76]. The following chapters will discuss variances in preference for how we communicate. As you read along, you can think about what *your* preferences are. Other people can and will have different preferences. It makes them neither incompetent nor sketchy that they don't communicate in the way you are most comfortable with. But it will make them less predictable to you and because they are less predictable, you can easily get the idea that they are less trustworthy.

I am explicit about this, because we all feel uncomfortable when we are in challenging situations where there is a big chance that we will make fools of ourselves. One of the automatic defense mechanisms is to insist that any problem is because the other party is the fool; that makes it easier to live with ourselves if mistakes have happened. (It is called "*The Fundamental Attribution Error*"[77] which basically states that if something good happens to me it is because I am a genius and if something bad happens it is because of bad luck. If it happens to somebody else, however, good things are because of his good luck and bad things because he is incompetent.)

So starting out acknowledging that mistakes *will* happen through no fault of anybody in particular, you are free to ponder if the other party has *earned* your distrust, or if it that the situation has more ambiguity. It may be that parameters you prioritize when you decide whom to trust are not the same parameters considered important in the culture your are dealing with. Perhaps you value order and they prioritize warmth? Perhaps you value getting to know the other person and they prioritize punctuality higher?[78]

From the perspective of trust building, there is quite a lot hinged on getting communication more aligned. If their cultural differences and preferences make the other party seem untrustworthy to you – well, your cultural preferences are probably as different to them…
So unless you think that the fact that these other people are different entices you to *behave* as a less trustworthy person (and I really hope that it doesn't) assume that they too, will act in good faith.

Knowing how difficult this is and knowing that you, I, and everybody else will make missteps, I will quote Indra Nooyi, the President of Pepsico, when asked what was the best advice she had ever gotten: "*Always assume good intent*." If you get offended by mishaps and behave – or just spontaneously react – accordingly, people who meant no offence will be embarrassed and you may have pushed them away.

Among expat counselors it is heavily debated if you can ever admit to a mistake in cultures that puts a high value of saving face. I advocate for that somebody needs to take the first step to deescalate tension. In a Darwinian sense, only those that have excess resources (power, capital, strength) can afford to handicap themselves by apologizing[79].

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If you think this is difficult, you are right. Unwillingness to apologize and the focus on saving face are strong cultural norms. The compromise in professional settings is probably to use a break in the meetings to take these discussions out of the conference room and engage the other party one-on-one or use a third party as mediator/messenger.

But remember that if you have to live in the country as well, life is more than professional negotiations and in your social relationships you may have to repair connections yourself.

So the real question is if you trust Indra Nooyi and me on that most people mean well but are "under-informed"? For some people trust like that doesn't come easy. In some cultures trust in outsiders doesn't come easy[80]. But in both cases that may have more to do with their individual history or collective history than about the bozo in front of them (in this case that would be me) who used a wrong word, a reference from the wrong book, or gave audacious advice.

I repeat: *Ignorance is not necessarily bad intent.* Admitting ignorance does not make you smaller – it makes you more human.

13.1 Language

The most obvious problem in communication is if *we don't speak the same language*.
It can be incredibly straining to communicate in a foreign language. If the other party agrees to speak in your language, be humble and thankful that you can allocate all your brain cycles to content and don't have to worry about vocabulary, sentence structure, and pronunciation – at least not your own – or about losing face by making linguistic mistakes.

When international leaders meet and insist on translators, don't believe that it is necessarily because they wouldn't otherwise understand what is being said. Having translators involved gives them time to think about the answer and to catch nuances that might otherwise have slipped by. And it also means avoiding a concession to the other party by accepting that their language is used. So acknowledge that there is power inequality if one speaks the native language and the other doesn't.

So now you are speaking your mother tongue and another is speaking a foreign language. There is a good chance that words will be used, which don't describe exactly what the person is trying to say. You can always reply back with what you took away from what the other party said. You can use such phrases like "what I hear you say is…", "do we agree that…?" or "so we differ on these points…?" and phrase it more eloquently in the language chosen.

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Don't assume that discussions will be like if you were talking to your fellow countrymen. You may have to explain more, rephrase, use more simple words, speak more slowly, and *understanding* what the other party tries to say also requires more focus. But please don't complain that somebody is butchering your language or is hard to understand[81]. Half of the difficulty in understanding may arise from you feeling annoyed that the other party doesn't "respect" your language more and if you can let go of that, it is easier to focus on the content of the conversation. After all, they might have insisted that you all speak their language…

You can double the purely linguistic problems if both parties speak a third language, foreign to both, but at least we can easier acknowledge that mistakes can happen when we both make them. It doesn't make understanding each other easier, however. Bridging one accent to understand for example the "clean" BBC English or Deutsche Rundfunk is one thing; understanding the used language with the added accent from the other party is another. So yes, if something is at stake, you too, may want a translator.

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Even where languages are spoken fluently, many expressions may not be known or have different connotations. I am sure I may have used phrases that refer to something you are not familiar with. Americans fill their language with references to sport: "Out of the ballpark", "Home run", "Slam dunk". If you don't play baseball or basketball this may mean nothing. All languages use references to literature ("the emperor has no clothes", "Catch 22"[82]), movies, history, or Holy Scripture. I learned that Chinese "play piano to a cow" when they "throw pearls before swine"[83]. We are not always aware how much we use idioms and euphemisms that can be hard to translate because they rely on culture and country-specific references.

13.2 Other Communication Pitfalls

Language is one thing. How we use it is another. So we just got started.

Before we look at specific communication blockers, I want to address an important, often subconscious, hindrance: we don't have an earnest wish to understand the other person.

Duh! Why would we even talk if we didn't wish to?

Perhaps what we wish is to state a position, let our *own* points be heard? Understanding the other party is a higher level of awareness than just exchanging words. Perhaps we have our own agenda for why the talks should go down the drain? Perhaps we talk to win an imaginary battle? Perhaps we anticipate that the talks will be difficult because of our cultural differences, and if the talks go well we will have to partake in many more challenging discussions in the future – and perhaps I and my family even have to move to another country!!!?

Enough of that! Going forward I will assume good intent.

What did we pick up along the way that has not been addressed?

From the Lewis model and GlobeSmart we postponed to this chapter:

1. Listening vs. Speaking
2. Ease with Interrupting / Being interrupted
3. Patient vs. Impatient
4. Direct vs. Indirect communication
5. Sticking to Facts or being more "Promising"
6. Treating Truth as an Absolute or Relative issue

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13.2.1 Listening vs. Speaking

When I grew up we had a table tennis/Ping-Pong table in our basement. While we were learning, the goal was to get the ball over the net and landing on the table on the other side of the net. 1,2,3…26,27 #@!! When we became more accomplished, we played against rather than with each other and learned smashes and spins.

Discussing can be a bit like playing a game like Ping-Pong. But it makes a lot of difference if you play it to get the highest number of back-and-forth or if you play it to take the other party out. On LinkedIn, the professional social network site, a quote has been circulating that goes something like this: *"Most people don't listen to understand. They listen to reply."* This is a cultural phenomenon, influenced by competition values. Westerners often go for the soft point in the argumentation rather than expand or build on what has been said. (Perhaps it hails back to the critical reading skills taught in school and university? There is a place for this ability as well, but there are also times when it should be shelved.)

While not claiming that Asians can't be competitive – just watch a real Ping-Pong match – communication doesn't necessarily follow the Western pattern. At a meeting, people will usually speak by hierarchal order, and the next speaker may not be commenting on what the previous speaker said. It is a bit more like attending a conference where people take turns to present a prepared script. It also bears the similarity with a conference that the audience is actually supposed to listen and learn, not primarily try to one-up the speaker.

It means that questions may be saved for later and that barging in with comments or questions may not be welcome. That can seem uncomfortably tedious for impatient Westerners. You may even have to take notes!

13.2.2 Ease with Interrupting / being interrupted

Oops, we entered the territory of two next differences, *Interruption* and *Impatience*. In some cultures, people will be loud and constantly interrupting each other and nobody will be offended by being interrupted (e.g. Greece, Israel). In China and Japan one takes turns and has much attention to the hierarchical order.

13.2.3 Patient vs. Impatient

Another aspect of the *Patient vs. Impatient* dimension is how we build up a presentation.
The American norm is to say what you want to achieve, present a few alternatives that have already been analyzed and that will support why this is the best solution, and that is really all we have to decide. Right?

An alternative is to describe who are present and why they are part of the circle around the table – and then we go out for lunch. Later we come back and discuss all the history leading up till this situation and all the alternatives one can possibly think of and weighing A vs. B but if the assumptions supporting A change we may discuss C vs. D instead. And then we go out to drink.

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This is somewhat exaggerated but if you have dealt with both cultures, I am sure you can recognize what I am referring to – and regardless of experience, you can see the difference in approach. The first way is the *Task* oriented norm; the second the *Relationship* focused mode where there must be time to get to know the people we will be doing business with. You may remember that I already mentioned *Task vs. Relationship* earlier when describing Values. Otherwise read 8.3.4.

I have pondered the *Why* of this difference, and the most significant difference I can see is that the payoff for the person investing time in getting to know the other party may be very different. American organizational mobility is way higher than Asian organizational mobility. The average tenure of for example a U.S. CFO these days is less than five years[84]. In Japan, lifetime employment is still normal. To this we can add that American companies in modern times have been among the most international, but the people stationed abroad usually wouldn't stay that long – they were on a career track working their way towards corporate officer jobs. All of it says that Americans better can afford to take the short time perspective because any troubles down the line will be somebody else's problem. With lifetime employment, Asians will benefit for a long time from good relationships. ("Just too bad that the other party keeps changing who we have to talk to.")

Just 30–40 years back, America was much more relationship oriented than it is now and lifetime employment was also prevalent. So who knows? Lifetime employment has started to come down in Asia and the Relationship norms may change there, too.

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A third aspect of the *Patient vs. Impatient* communication pattern is how long it may take to reply or take action. I have mentioned the Lean movement before; how making a prototype and continuously improving features can bring a product to market very fast. Decisions and discussions can follow a similar pattern: An idea is launched like a volley ball and players keep playing it to and fro until the idea has taken full form. Or somebody may take the idea home to sleep on. If you don't get a reply right away, it may be because your partner has taken it home to sleep on. It doesn't necessarily imply that you won't get an answer. (This slow thinking methodology has also been promoted by for example Otto Scharmer[85] and is – slowly – getting rediscovered in the West.)

Whether we are used to instant reply or no interruption, behaviors that don't comply with our norms and expectations can seem rude or the other party can seem disengaged – which is also rude. You can practice patience by becoming more accepting of silence[86]. Conversely, you can give an update or ask a question even if you are not ready with an answer to show that the other person is not being ignored. You can also influence the expectations by being more explicit about what the next step is.

13.2.1 Direct vs. indirect communication

There is no "key" to what is direct or indirect communication, because what may seem indirect in some cultures may be very direct in cultures that prefer even more indirect communication. If we think of communication going from extremely indirect at one end to so curt that it may be rude at the other end, different cultures feel at home on different overlapping segments of this line.

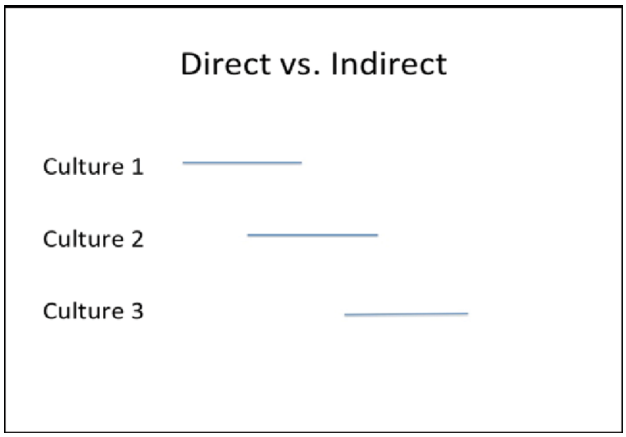

Fig. 7: Direct vs. Indirect communication[87]

In Fig. 7, it would be almost impossible for people from Culture 1 and 3 to communicate because even if the people in Culture 1 did their very best to be subtle and polite, they would still be too direct not to be rude in the eyes of people from Culture 3. At the same time, the Culture 1 people would probably not understand any of the circumscribt messages they got from Culture 3 and would be totally confused when they after a long time thought they had come to some agreements just to learn that the "Yes" they had heard was "Yes, we are still talking to you" – not a "Yes, we have an agreement."

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Let us take an example of one of the most difficult messages: "No."

How do you feel about this reply? Would you ever use it? I didn't put an "!" after – would you ever use it this way: "No!"
Would you say it to an adult?

If you would never say "no" to your manager without wrapping it into a long sentence, your culture likely favors more indirect communication – at least towards people of higher status. If you feel you could say "no" without further ado, your culture favors more direct communication. How would you decline an invitation from your manager?

- "No, I can't come."
- "Unfortunately I can't come."
- "I would love to come, but unfortunately I can't."
- "I would love to come, but unfortunately I have a previous engagement."
- "I would love to come. I have a previous engagement but I will do anything possible to be there."
- "What a nice invitation. Thank you for inviting me. I will do my very best to be there."
- "I am honored to be invited. I will do anything possible to be there."

Doesn't this all basically say "No"?

As you can see in the escalation of niceties, there is some deference involved the later replies. What Westerners often fail to recognize is that the conversations they hear as honored guests or dealing with organizational seniority is *deference*. Indirect and circumventing replies are not necessarily offered downwards in the hierarchy where the tone can be unbelievably crass in some countries.

But unbelievably crass is what many indirect speaking managers hear when they travel to countries or have visitors whose talk is more direct[88]. It is not necessarily the directness in itself that is offensive but that these short replies normally are reserved for "speaking downward". The equivalent in English would be to omit "please" from the language and speak in imperatives.

Another function of indirect speak is that more words makes it easier to protect people's dignity. "Losing face" or making others lose face undermines trust. Helping somebody save face builds trust. In Western culture we have a saying: "Go after the ball, not the man." which illustrates that we separate the action and the person doing the action. But it is not easy, even in Western dialogue, always to adhere to that norm and in many cultures the distinction is not made. You criticize the action and you have criticized the actor.

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Indirect talk is not reserved for Eastern cultures. UK English has its indirectness where suggestions are orders and "interesting" often means that you must have smoked something illegal to come up with such nonsense[89]. I find that an interesting use of an otherwise excellent word.

An American working in the Netherlands described in a blog comment how he had to change his use of metaphors and idioms because they made his communication to vague for the direct Dutch counterparts. (Idioms are generally not taught in foreign language classes and are not well understood by outsiders.[90] Metaphors may relate so something known by one but not by the other party. I wrote "tip of the iceberg" in the introduction. How often have you seen an actual iceberg?)

In South America, employees may also avoid bringing bad news directly to their superiors and come with suggestions that may seem irrational to you. Local processes may be cumbersome and require intermediates' assistance for something you would just have solved by sending an email, had you been home. The locals know that, but they may not be proud of it and may not want to tell a foreigner.

A Danish construction company with many male engineers stationed for long time far away from home had an expense account under travel entertainment called "Men are not made of wood." I will leave it to your imagination what this was indirect speak for (but they have done away with the account and expensing the entertainment after the story came out).

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In many countries around the world, somebody will suggest that dealings are done through an agent and to many Westerners that is just a waste of time and money. But the suggestion may be an attempt to protect the company from doing "necessary activities" that in USA might conflict with Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. Naturally, nobody will discuss that subject directly (and I may have offended some by doing it.) Some very big fines[91] suggest that even having agents doesn't always create enough distance. Attitudes to "greasing the palm" have evolved from acceptance of "necessary activities done by agents" to a hot political issue in most of North America / Western Europe within just one generation. You know that it may become an issue in your dealings, if the cultures you are trying to navigate are far apart on Transparency International's list[92].

In many cultures with indirect communication styles, additional cues from tone of voice and body language are part of the message. (Even in direct communicating countries, if you have teenage children, you know how much of the real message can be conveyed outside of the words said.) Written communication can be difficult in indirect communication cultures because it misses these cues.

In all cultures it pays to get out of the office and go talk to your colleagues if you have a problem. As much as the Millennial generation is happy with texting and IM'ing, Google's own offices still has "public squares" so people can run into each other by chance and have real human interaction. This is much more important in indirect communication cultures. Face to face gives both body language and tone, phone or teleconference gives the tone, and only then would you send an email. So what would you use an email for? Confirming what has already been agreed to verbally (that also creates a paper trail to refer back to). Repeating information that has already been given at a meeting. But don't spring surprises on people in writing – they want to know how you feel about the message, and they can't learn unless they see your face or at least hear your tone of voice.[93]

Particularly for cultures where both relationships and indirect communication are valued, the face-to-face connection builds trust in the relationship. Cultures with less emphasis on relationships are more flexible on communication medium. But it still pays to be more polite in writing than seems immediately necessary because one never knows if the recipient opens the email while in a receptive mood or has just come out of an unproductive meeting. In task-oriented cultures, we tend to reply to emails as if an ongoing dialogue was happening. But if it has been three hours – or two days – since the email you are replying to was sent, that is not how it feels to the recipient who is getting your answer back.

With this in mind, even if you are in a culture of direct communication, try to get a personal relationship with people. Perhaps the Germans can get away with their very direct communication style because they take the time to go around the office and great each other "good morning" with a handshake every day?

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13.2.3 Facts or Promises

In some cultures (those described as linear active in the Lewis model), discussions about organizational matters are very factual. We measure, we meet, we talk, we make decisions, and all the things we have done are objective – or at least we think they are.

Promises and truisms come in when we either discuss something we should have done that for one reason or another haven't happened according to plan or where we may not be quite forthright about what we have actually done. The more planning is done and agreed to and the more it is a tool, not a process for the sake of having a plan, the less need there is for promises and truisms. But not all cultures find planning equally necessary and not all plans are equally actionable.

In most cultures, people will feel resistance to plans that they have not been involved with or have agreed to. But culture heavily influences if one says so when the plan is still in the works or just doesn't follow it later. If it is unfathomable that one could say "no" to a plan imposed by superiors – hierarchical cultures – there is a bigger chance that this "no" will be incorporated in the execution – or rather lack of execution. For this reason, building support for the plan while it is in the works is so much more important, and securing this support can be a highly political process. I refer back to Carlos Ghosn's talk about securing support before starting implementation of change initiatives[23].

Why is this so complicated? In *Hierarchical* cultures there is more difference in how much power one may have. The more benefit the individual has from attaining power, the stronger is the opposition to any plans that may change the power/status in a negative direction. So it can be an issue both who makes the plan, who is seen as owning the plan, who concedes to the plan, who benefits directly or indirectly, who calls who, in which office we meet….

The more controversial any change may be, the greater is the need for alternative face-saving activities if for example high status people need to be taken out of the execution: advisory board positions, parties in honor of…, special committees with important investigative responsibilities but little impact – or even with impact; all can help save face for people who might otherwise hamper the execution. Because the only thing worse than losing face is to make somebody else lose face – that really erodes trust. Not just with the person losing face but with the whole organization. Why is this so trust eroding? Because next time it may be "me" who you will make lose face.

From the above, one might get the impression that there is little politics and power play in low hierarchy cultures. It is a mistake to believe it is so. There are just fewer people who feel the need to be part of that game – but like in the opposite case, just because one doesn't fight for power doesn't mean that one automatically lines up behind edicts or policies imposed from those that do play. It just means that people use fewer words to tell you that the project is delayed.

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Doing the absolute minimum and having a long list of questions (that could easily have been asked a while ago) is a tactic that falls in this "Promising" category. It places the responsibility back at the manager who "didn't supply enough details". Or promising on a long list of items but only doing some items while drawing attention away from the other. Or promising to deliver "as soon as" somebody not present has delivered important input. Or as soon as the computer system has been changed….

13.2.4 "Truisms"

101, the freeway going through California, is often a logistical nightmare. There is always a major renovation project going on somewhere along the road. If you work in any metropolis along it and are late for a meeting, "there was a congestion on 101" will always be true. It may be that *you* were not held up by it – *you* just started too late – but you haven't lied. Just listen to the traffic radio; there always is something on 101.

Would you say that this is fibbing? It is different from "my dog ate my homework" because unless you go to culinary school, this is not likely to be true at all.

Another type of truism is when somebody along the supply chain didn't deliver. Lacking delivery could be because of something we didn't do – e.g. we didn't pay him – but this part of the explanation is conveniently omitted.

There can be a world of difference between swearing to say "The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing but The Truth" and just "The Truth and Nothing but The Truth." And, in some cultures, what is expedient to say here and now doesn't even need to have anything to do with what has happened.

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I won't even start to discuss truisms from the perspective of financial controls or business conduct that is or isn't aligned with company policies. The reason I hold back on this is that we can easily get to fault culture or attitude where the real problem is lack of broad knowledge and understanding of why companies may have certain business practices. It can be difficult enough to teach and find support for these business practices even among people in the same culture.

Particularly in multinational organizations, many procedures serve zero purpose for the business units that have to execute them – they may serve a legal requirement or incomprehensible interests of a parent company incorporated in another county. It is understandable if enthusiasm about such tasks – and hence focus on adhering to these procedures – can be hard to drum up. If reinforcing these rules runs counter to both local practices and the obligations employees feel towards their friends and family, you are asking for a lot. (And I say this from having served in financial functions both in the HQ and the subsidiary role. People like me can dream up all kinds of "nice to know" reports that will be produced years after their utility have ended.)

This does not excuse bad practices but underscores the imperative of securing strong local support for processes you want implemented in another country. Don't waste that "support capital" on processes that are not necessary. And if you really need to know, go out there and talk to the people face to face. Most people are more receptive to another person's needs, if they know who that person is.

13.3 Communication Filters

Where the above listed cultural differences in themselves can hamper connection building, we should not forget that we all have filters through which we perceive the world around us. I have mentioned 'Blueprint of the World" before – the way we make sense of what is happening around us. When we listen to other people, this Blueprint influences what we hear.

In the previous chapter I mentioned that a person favoring indirect communication *hears* that you are talking "down" to him, if you speak too directly. The disconnect comes not from the contents of the message itself but from feeling belittled and disrespected.

A friend of mine has trained to have a higher pitch voice because living in the U.S., she felt that people couldn't connect her deeper tone of voice with a woman and consequently they never listened. Now that she "sounds like a woman", there is no longer this disconnect and she is heard.

In many languages, different word-forms are used if you talk to a close friend vs. to a person you know less well. English is one of the few languages with only one word for "you" (e.g. German has "du" and "Sie", French "tu" and "Vouz", Spanish "tu" and "Vosotros/Usted") and many languages have verbs that also differ according to which level of politeness is involved. To the very direct speaking German and Swiss, using 2nd person singular where 3rd person plural is the norm is as much breach of polite behavior as is not using "please" in English.

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In Danish, the equivalent of please doesn't exist. Polite is signaled by using the subjunctive form of the verb or in more formal/old speak with a "Would you be so kind as to…" Pardon us; we are not rude on purpose when we forget please/bitte/per favor. Some languages only have one verb form and people may sound as if they give orders, speaking only in the imperative. Give me that; move. They don't mean to be rude, either.

In some cultures titles are important. Americans jump to using first name (or even nick names) right away; other nationalities reserve the first names for close friends and family but always use last names in business relationships. Norms differ on whether you can introduce yourself vs. have to be introduced by a mutual connection. And norms differ regarding if men and women not related to each other through family ties can even speak to each other. To add to the confusion, your host may decide to use what is perceived to be closer to your behaviors to accommodate you – and you will make a faux pas in his country if you copy that behavior in other contexts.

We often use humor as an icebreaker. Do not inflict your jokes indiscriminately on people from a different culture. Jokes often are built on a wrong or dual use of words (which may not translate well or may make the other party think that you are mocking their less than perfect use of your language), are on the expense of people not present, or can be politically incorrect. Irony and sarcasm are strongly discouraged. Groups can share a lot of jokes among themselves that are absolutely not welcome if they come from somebody not belonging to that group. They may socialize with you but that doesn't make you an insider.
Where your sense of humor is of value is if you can laugh at yourself or be amicable about any cultural blunder either party will make.

How do *you* like meeting or being introduced to new people you hope to have more interactions with in the future?

Think for a minute about what the best behaviors would look like.

Then imagine that the other party gets all this wrong. What goes on in your mind when such a klutz enters your sphere? Are you inclined to listen carefully or has the other party already lost credibility? That is *your* filter in action and you have to be able to pacify that critical voice if you want to deal with culturally different people.

The Blueprint also influences how we communicate outwards. For people used to very direct communication, trying to become less direct *feels* like deferring to the other party. Using somebody else's communication style is conceding ground just as much as agreeing to speak their language. So adapting to another style almost automatically raises inferiority issues and makes us defensive – and less authentic. That is probably not the best way to start a new relationship. A solution can be to role-play with a coach or colleagues so the other party's preferred communication style becomes less challenging for you and you have a new tool in your communication toolbox that you are more comfortable using when something actually is at stake[94].

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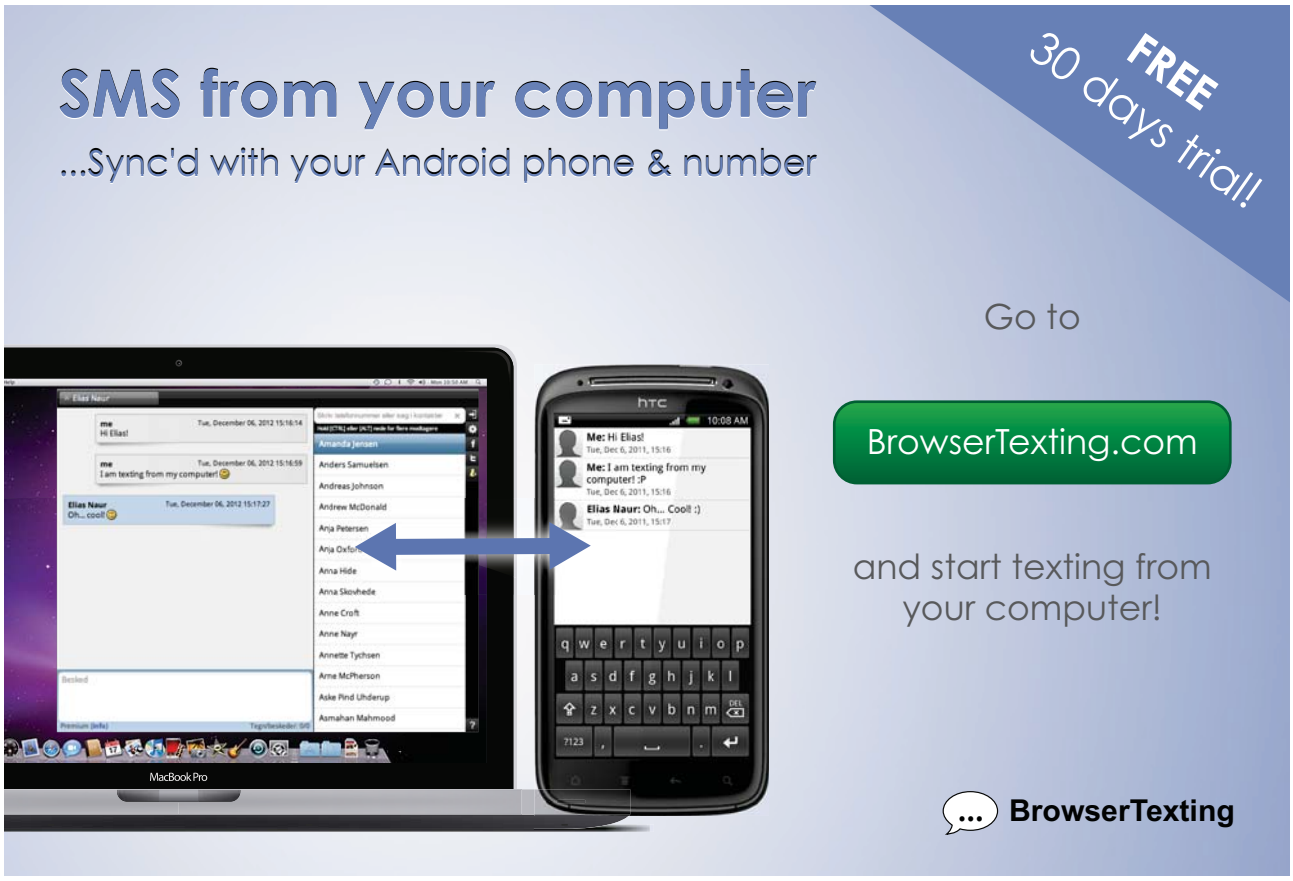
Many organizations see the value of training their spokesperson to feel confident in front of cameras and "bloodthirsty" journalists. International negotiations are equally stressing. Remember, that when we are defensive, blood flows from our modern/neo-cortex brain to the ancient fight or flight center in the limbic system sitting right on top of your brainstem[95]. You do not want your brain's "executive function" in the neo-cortex to be oxygen-deprived if you have difficult negotiations in front of you. Understand that your feelings of frustration and anger should not be directed towards the other person but stems from the situation; learn to recognize these feelings in your body; name them in your mind (or out loud in the bathroom before the meeting[96]) – and then let them go. The old technique of counting to 10 if you feel agitated serves to draw blood from the limbic system back out to neo-cortex; naming your feelings serves the same purpose.

I know that it may sound as if I try gloss over real problems when I repeat that in many situations your attitude is really the only thing you have control over. If you expect to be insulted, it is amazing how many rude people you will encounter to confirm your expectations. If you assume good intent, the exact same utterances may start a dialogue where – perhaps haltingly – you and your counterparts can build a basis for future collaboration.



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14 Concluding Comments

I know; a couple of *Hows* and *Whats* did sneak into the book – like in "*How* to think about these things" and "*What* could be happening here?"

Moving to or working in another country can be very difficult and nobody is served by pretending otherwise. If you have employees or colleagues who have moved from far away or if you are making the transition out, know that it causes all kinds of stress. Be kind to travelers, yourself as well as others.

In the many years I have lived nine time zones away from my country of birth, I have met many people who were emotionally distressed, but I have also seen most of them pull through and live happy and productive lives; many after having redefined themselves. The U-curve ends with the slope going up – even though it can seem to take all too long to get there. But aren't most people better served by knowing that this is normal *before* they hit the crisis phase than when they are ready to pack up and go home – perhaps prematurely and frustrated? The way we think about things really does change the way we feel about them and change the impact they may have on our mental and physical wellbeing[97]. Knowing that "it gets better" is a strong motivator to look for the signs that, indeed, it is getting better. Knowing that there are resources available to support this transition is also important.

Much effort is being put into research about culture, stress, communication, brain science and what not. The results should not stay in research papers; they need to get out to people to help them understand what is going on around them, in their families, and in their heads; help those who move have an easier transition to a life abroad; help those receiving them feel comfortable that the outside world is moving into their neighborhood. That is what I was looking for when I moved abroad but I had to go back to school to get access to that knowledge. I have since written about these subjects and coached other expats to ease their integration. And, thanks to the Internet, more information is now generally available.

As a Dane living in the U.S., my personal experience has been crossing the cultural bridge between these two countries, and for people moving to California I have collected *Whats* and *Hows* on my website www.USDKExpats.org. It has a general English version and a Danish version with special references to the difference between these two cultures. Some information is general to the U.S. and you can find information and references to useful websites.
I also blog about local and general expat issues and share these blogs on LinkedIn. The easiest way to get an update on new blogs is to follow US DK Expats on Linkedin.
USDKExpats.org also has description of culture theories and adaptation that applies regardless of where you are going. The book you have just read is an expansion of some of these web pages and if it has been useful to you, please share book or website URL with expatriates or immigrants in your circle who may be relieved to know that they are not alone.

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Appendix: Additional Resources

Pointers to **Global** "How to behave":
http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/map/hofstede-individualism.html, brings you to maps where you can see how each country ranks on the original four Hofstede dimensions. In itself it tells you very little, but there are listed "rules" for when you travel to countries with higher/lower values on each of the four scales. The site has short guides to local etiquette for a host of countries as well – answers to the local *Whats* and *Hows* – here: http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/country-profiles.html

BBC has travel advice on: http://www.bbc.com/travel where you can find interesting articles, also on do's and don'ts.

You can also find "Cultural Clues, Do's, and Taboos" on this website by searching for the country you are interested in: http://www.gaylecotton.com/blog.

Overview of **Global** migration:
Brookfield Global Relocation Services Survey Report. The report is released every year based on data collection from a group of international corporations. Older versions of the report are available for free download. For getting an idea of which areas within the organization can be difficult to maneuver, reading the report gives some pointers. 2011 version of the report is available here: http://expatriateconnection.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Brookfield-global-mobility-survey-2011.pdf

On more **practical issues**:
The articles on http://www.cartus.com/en/resource-hub/ may be useful. Browsing around give you an opportunity to down load articles on questions from managing returning expats to going to unsafe locations. But they do want to know who you are.

On more **emotional issues**:
This website and its blogs and discussions explore some of the challenging practicalities of expat life: Sudden job loss abroad, male accompanying spouses, the effects of raising kids with multiple languages… http://expatriateconnection.com/.

On professional **communication** and **negotiation**:
A bit scholarly but very comprehensive: L.L. Thompson's "The Mind and The Heart of the Negotiator" is now on its 6th edition. See footnote 86 for online available excerpt from earlier edition.

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Partucularly on **Brazil**:
http://thebrazilbusiness.com/business-culture has articles on lots of areas where understanding Brazilian expectations and rules may differ from your norms.

Particularly on **China**:
Following Gordon Orr, McKinsey's head of their Asian office, on LinkedIn or through his own blog gives some insights seen from a Western perspective from someone living and doing business there.

Particularly on **Denmark**:
https://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-us/ is the official site for people moving to Denmark. The site comes in several other languages than English.
A list of this and other resources can be found on my website at www.usdkexpats.org/resources.

Particularly on **India**:
www.learningindia.in blogs on Indian customs seen through an American lens. The site is highly regarded among Cross-cultural peers for relevance and insight.

Particularly on the **Netherlands**:
http://www.athomeabroad.nl/ blogs on Dutch customs.

Particularly on **Russia**:
http://businesstravel.about.com/od/resources/fl/B.iness-Travel-Tips-for-Russia.htm:

The http://businesstravel.about.com/od/resources/ links to similar articles for **Argentina**, **China**, **Germany**, **Hong Kong**, **Indonesia**, **Iran**, and other by searching the site.

Particularly on **Sweden**:
www.visitstockholm.com/movingtostockholm is a new website with useful tips, as indicated in the name most on the Swedish capital.

Particularly on **USA**:
As the biggest recipient of international relocation, many websites discuss how to go about living in USA. I have collected some of them on http://usdkexpats.org/resources; the site itself is primarily about the San Francisco Bay Area, secondarily about the U.S. and California in general.

There are good videos and resources for addressing the U.S. diversity regulation on
http://www.diversityresources.com.

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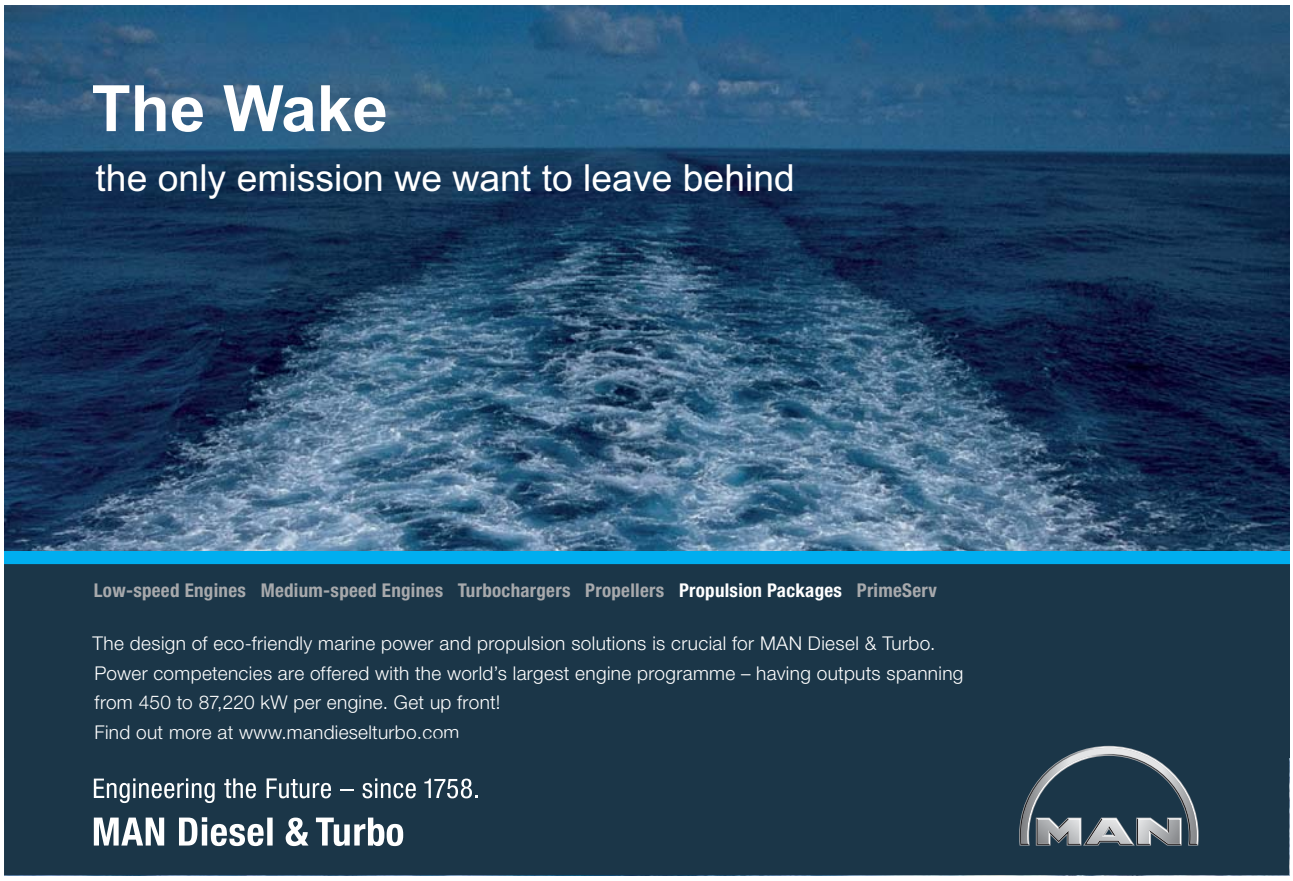
First and foremost, thank you to my family for putting up with my writing and for pulling up the slack, for your encouragement, feedback, and patience. Special thanks to my friend Sju Thorup for putting fresh eyes on the text and giving me her honest opinion.

A great thank you to my network among cross cultural trainers and coaches throughout the world for generously sharing their knowledge and perspectives. Particularly, I want to thank Dr. Shalom Schwartz and Dr. Sharon Glazer for their invaluable contributions to my cross-cultural education.



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Endnotes

In choosing references below, I have aimed at not just using books and scholarly papers but adding online resources so you more easily can read more or watch videos on the subject. If a link doesn't open, copy it into the browser. Links don't always like to be split over several lines or be processed through Word and Adobe.

1. Mitchell, J.P., Macrae, C.N., Banaji, R. (2004): Encoding-specific effects of social cognition on the neural correlates of subsequent memory. *Journal of Neuroscience, 24*(1), 4912–4917.
2. See Simon Sinek's talk at TED. Retrieved June 22, 2014 from http://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action
3. Dean, J. (2014): The Psychology of Storytelling and Empathy, Animated. On Psyblog. Retrieved June 22, 2014 from http://www.spring.org.uk/2014/01/the-psychology-of-storytelling-and-empathy-animated.php
4. Fernandez, M., Schwartz, J. (2013): Teenager's Sentence in Fatal Drunken-Driving Case Stirs 'Affluenza' Debate, New York Times. Published: December 13, 2013, Retrieved June 22, 2014 from http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/14/us/teenagers-sentence-in-fatal-drunken-driving-case-stirs-affluenza-debate.html?_r=0
5. Freely adapted from Hofstede, G. (1984): *Culture's Consequences, International Differences in Work-Related Values.* Sage, Newbury Park, pp. 15.
   I have moderated the ancestral influence because children growing up in a different country than where their parents grew up will be influenced by both parents' home culture and of the localities where they live. They are known as *Third Culture Kids* in cross-cultural science, sometimes Adult TCKs.
6. Lieberman, M.D. (2013): *Social, Why Our Brains Are Wired To Connect.* New York: Crown Publishers.
   Eisenberger, N. (September 11, 2014): *Social Pain*. Edge Interview. Retrieved September 11, 2014 from http://edge.org/conversation/social-pain
7. For more on culture's influence in shame and guilt see:
   Wong, Y. & Tsai, J. L.(2007): Cultural models of shame and guilt. Chapter in J. Tracy, R. Robins & J. Tangney (Eds.). *Handbook of Self-Conscious Emotions*, (pp.210-223). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
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9. Attributed to M. Mead in: Richard B. Miles, Larry Blocher, Eugene Corporon (2000): *Teaching music through performance in band.* Vol 3. p. 13.
10. Retrieved June 22, 2014 from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GiPe1OiKQuk
11. Retrieved June 22, 2014 from http://internationaloffice.berkeley.edu/cultural_adjustment
12. Good dialogues can be found at Expat Connection. Retrieved June 22, 2014 from http://expatriateconnection.com.
13. A very charming interview with a successful immigrant with unusual experiences can be found streaming this radio interview: Comedian Kumail Nanjiani On HBO's 'Silicon Valley'. Retrieved June 22, 2014 from http://hereandnow.wbur.org/2014/04/02/kumail-nanjiani-silicon

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Sussman, N.M. (2001): Repatriation transitions: psychological preparedness, cultural identity, and attributions among American managers. *International journal of intercultural relations: IJIR, 25.* 2, 109.
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17. McNulty, Y. (2013). Are Self-Initiated Expatriates Born or Made? Exploring the Relationship Between SIE Orientation and Individual ROI. In V. Vaiman and A. Haslberger (Eds.): *Managing Talent of Self- Initiated Expatriates: A Neglected Source of Global Talent (pp. 30–58).* Palgrave Macmillan: UK.

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20. Caliguiri, P. (September 2, 2014): *Cultural Agility – the skills needed to navigate successfully in multi-cultural contexts.* Danish Industry, Retrieved September 6, 2014 from http://di.dk/globalleadershipacademy/newsandarticles/insights/Pages/CulturalAgility–theskillsneededtonavigatesuccessfullyinmulti-culturalcontexts.aspx
21. Do you find yourself thinking in such terms as "They always stare at me", "I will never belong here", "everybody are…", or "nobody cares about me"? If so, you may be depressed and getting counseling can help you. When we think in absolutes – *always, never, everybody, nobody* – we are not really thinking but reacting to negative feelings. Try to be more precise about the memories that caused these feelings – it may have been just that one annoying person in the checkout line.
    If you get into a habit of writing five good experiences in a log every evening – the weather, a beautiful flower, the smell of spices, a butterfly… – you will train yourself to look for the good things as well. If you are not better after three weeks of logging, get help.
22. Dr. Katrina Burrus interviews Dr. Eileen Morgan on her book, "Navigating Cross-cultural Ethics: What Global Managers do Right to Keep from Going Wrong." Retrieved September 16, 2014 from http://www.mkbconseil.ch/category/excellent-executive-coaching-podcast/
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24. Reading *"Society Without God, What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us About Contentment"*, Phil Zuckermann's interesting account from 2008 about my home country, it was clear that the people interviewed often referred to themselves as atheists – a believer that there is no god – because they didn't know the term agnostic – a person questioning if there is a God.
25. On a normally distributed bell curve, an outlier is defined as a data point more than 3 standard deviations from the mean. The standard deviation is a measurement for the variance; how narrow or broad the bell curve is. The chance that a point is more than 3 standard deviations from the mean is 0.3%.
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    Schwartz, S.H. (1994): Beyond Individualism/Collectivism: New Cultural Dimensions of Values, *Cross-cultural research and methodology series, 18,* 85.
    Schwartz, S.H. (2002): A theory of cultural values and some implications for work. *Applied psychology: An international review, 48,* 23–47.
    Schwartz, S.H. (2002): A proposal for measuring value orientations across nations.
    Retrieved June 22, 2014 from http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/methodology/core_ess_questionnaire/ESS_core_questionnaire_human_values.pdf
30. Just imagine the implications of using the U.S. date notation mm.dd.yyyy vs dd.mm.yyyy when you agree on a deadline or being responsible for crashing a Mars lander because you work in different measurement systems.

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31. Full description of the ESS value questions can be found on the ESS website.
Retrieved June 22, 2014 from http://nesstar.ess.nsd.uib.no/webview/index.jsp?v=2&submode=variable&study=http%3A%2F%2F129.177.90.83%3A-1%2Fobj%2FfStudy%2FESS6e02.0&gs=undefined&variable=http%3A%2F%2F129.177.90.83%3A80%2Fobj%2FfVariable%2FESS6e02.0_V594&mode=documentation&top=yes
32. Schwartz, S.H. (1999). A theory of cultural values and some implications for work. *Applied Psychology: An international review, 48,* 23–47.
33. Sagiv, L. and Schwartz, S.H. (2007): Cultural values in organisations: insights for Europe, *European J. International Management, 1,* 3, 176–190.
34. Isn't it amazing what is being measured?
Tracey Platt, T., Forabosco, T. (2011): Gelotophobia: The Fear of Being Laughed At. In *Humor and health, Cpt. 12,* Nova Science Publishers, Inc. Retrieved July 13, 2014 from https://www.academia.edu/2764845/Gelotophobia_The_fear_of_being_laughed_at
35. Confucius, http://www.egs.edu/library/confucius/biography/, retrieved June 22, 2014.
Muslim version: "None of you believes until he loves for his brother or his neighbor what he loves for himself." Retrieved July 13, 2014 from http://www.faithinallah.org/forty-hadith-nawawi/#sthash.81uR0Wbz.dpuf.
36. Differences between for example France and Germany, China and Japan are seen in the illustration to this article:
Meyer, E. (September 22, 2014): *Map Out Cultural Conflicts on Your Team*, Harvard Business Review online. Retrieved September 28, 2014 from http://blogs.hbr.org/2014/09/predict-cultural-conflicts-on-your-team/
37. Attributed to Will Rogers.
38. Sagiv, L. and Schwartz, S.H. (2007): Cultural values in organisations: insights for Europe, *European J. International Management, 1,* 3, 176–190.
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40. This website: http://geert-hofstede.com/countries.html gives you the possibility to read about a country evaluated on the six dimensions and compare how it scores against another country or even against two other countries. It is a great tool for a quick overview of where you can expect to find pitfalls. But it doesn't say much about what the specific pitfalls are.
Make sure to read what is written about your own culture first, as you have to know where you come from to appreciate the description of where you are going.
41. Frieze, I.H., Boneva, B.S., Šarlija, N., Horvat, J., Ferligoj, A., Kogovšek, T., et al. (2004). Psychological differences in stayers and leavers: Emigration desires in Central and Eastern European university students. *European Psychologist, 9,* 15–23.
42. An example of an assessment of cultural fit using Hofstede's measurements can be found at http://geert-hofstede.com/tl_files/Culture%20Compass%20Report%20John%20Smith.pdf Retrieved June 22, 2014.
43. Model retrieved June 22, 2014 from http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp, see Findings and Insights for more in depth description. Questionnaires and data can be downloaded from the website.
44. Model retrieved June 22, 2014 from http://www.crossculture.com/services/online-tools/
45. Model retrieved June 22, 2014 from http://corp.aperianglobal.com/globesmartn

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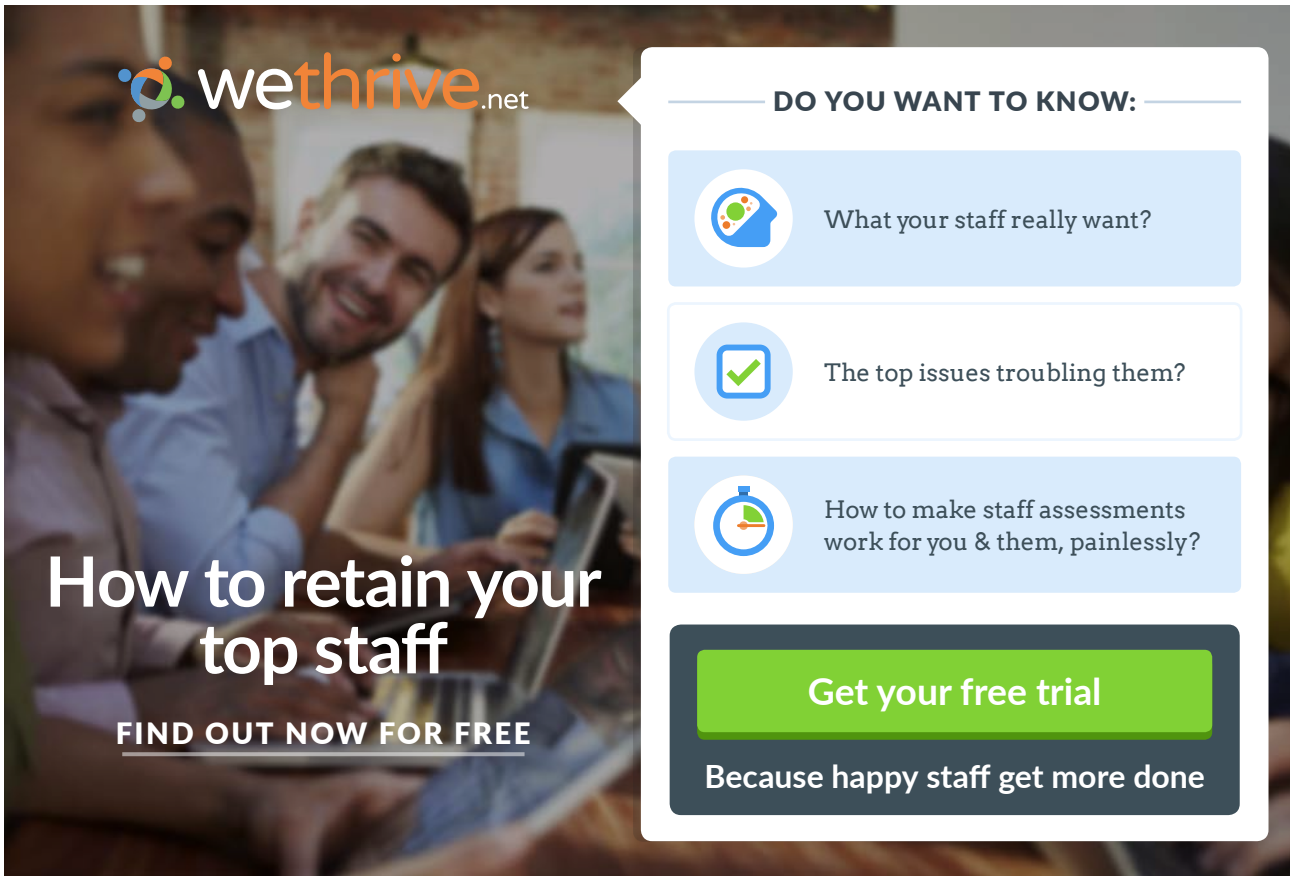
46. As described in this article, retrieved June 22, 2014 from http://corp.aperianglobal.com/sites/default/files/MC-GLOBESMART-2014-LTR_082114.pdf
47. Retrieved June 22, 2014 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2gZ_23z92o#t=842 Carlos Ghosn, CEO of Renault-Nissan Alliance interviewed at Stanford Business School.
The "slow planning process" is also advocated in this article:
Aguirre, D.A., Alpern, M. (2014, June 6): 10 Principles of Leading Change Management. *Strategy And Business, 75*. Retrieved July 2, 2014 from http://www.strategy-business.com/article/00255?pg=1
48. Kjerulf, A. (2014, February 10): Kill the suggetionbox, here's a much better way. Message posted to http://positivesharing.com/2014/02/kill-suggestion-box-heres-much-better-way/
49. Rashid, I. (2013): Kulturforståelse i Praksis – Indsigt som et redskab. [Practical Understanding of Cultures – Knowledge as a tool]. Teaching material used in the Danish Health care sector privately shared by the author.
Miller, N. (2014, January 18): Parent Leadership: An Overview. Retrieved July 10, 2014 from http://learningindia.in/parent-leadership-overview/
50. "Para shooting" is referring to the opening ceremony of the Olympic games in London, 2012. Queen Elizabeth was a mechanic during WWII with the Women's Auxiliary Territorial Services.
51. Reverence definition retrieved July 10, 2014 from http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Reverence
52. This Harvard Business Review blog posted July 7 explains to U.S. managers how the reserved behavior often seen among Asian employees easily gets misunderstood. Retrieved July 25, 2014 from http://blogs.hbr.org/2014/07/learning-to-speak-up-when-youre-from-a-culture-of-deference/. The comments are also worth looking at.



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53. In 2013, an Indian embassy employee in New York was arrested for not treating her maid according to U.S. law. The way the incident played out in U.S. and Indian press and public was by many cultural experts attributed to differences in perception of status.
54. Charles Darwin's theory of evolution posits that species are continuously influenced by mutations and the mutations that most benefit the carrier will result in that this carrier will have more living offspring than members of the same species that don't have this mutation. Over many generations, the mutation will become dominant in the population. On the bigger scale, species that are not flexible enough to adapt to a changing environment will die out. "Survival of the fittest" is really "Extinction of the unfit."
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57. El Niño is the name of a weather pattern caused by higher temperatures in the Pacific Ocean leading to more precipitation along the American West Coast.
58. Faulkner, J., Schaller, M., Park, J.H., Duncan, L.A. (2004): Evolved Disease-Avoidance Mechanisms and Contemporary Xenophobic Attitudes, *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, 7,* 4, 333–353.
59. When the plagues killed off half of Europe in the Middle Ages, is widely assumed that the surviving part of the population had some mutations that also offer some resistance to HIV.
    University Of Liverpool (2005, April 3): Biologists Discover Why 10 Percent Of Europeans Are Safe From HIV Infection. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved June 22, 2014 from www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2005/03/050325234239.htm
60. Kjellström, R. (1973): *Eskimo marriage: An account of traditional Eskimo courtship and marriage. Nordiska museet, Solna: Saelig*
61. Talhelm, T., Zhang, X., Oishi, S., Shimin, C., Duan, D., Lan, X., Kitayama, S. (2014): Large-Scale Psychological Differences Within China Explained by Rice Versus Wheat Agriculture, *Science*. Retrieved July 5, 2014 from http://immuno4ever.org/PDF%20files/Science-2014-Talhelm-603-8.pdf
62. An interesting video showing how the borders on the Balkan Peninsula have developed over the last 500 years can be found on Wikipedia under "Balkanization".
63. The Conquistadores in South America took advantage of that the Inka society already had a hierarchical power structure. They just replaced the ruling class. Acemoglu, D., Robinson, J. (2013): *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty.* Crown Business.
64. Woodard, C. (2011): *American Nations, A History of The Eleven Rival Regional Cultures Of North America.* Penguin Books.
65. Unlike in many other countries where multiple languages are spoken, USA does not have an official language written into its constitution.
66. The Chinese tradition of belching etc. after a good meal is said to be relatively new – as a response to the British in the 1800s.
67. Cinque di Mayo, the Mexican holiday, is celebrated with much more vigor by Mexicans in USA than in Mexico.

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68. No, I can't tell you why the pickled herring has to be eaten before the other items on the Scandinavian smorgasbord. The only reason I can think of is that you don't want to get vinegar mixed in with other tastes and for this reason the herring gets its own fish plate that is cleared away before the meat dishes. Your host/hostess can't clear away the fishplate if you are not done with it. I am open to readers' suggestions for better explanations.
69. The war from 1939–1945 is commonly called World War II but has other names in some countries and didn't last from 1939 to 1945 in all countries involved.
70. Aly, H. (2014, April 24): Can Islamic Law Be an Answer for Humanitarians?
Published by www.irinnews.org, Retrieved June 22, 2014 from http://reliefweb.int/report/world/can-islamic-law-be-answer-humanitarians
71. For an insider's account:
Shpancer, N. (2011, February 18): Child of the Collective. *The Guardian*, Retrieved June 22, 2014 from http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2011/feb/19/kibbutz-child-noam-shpancer
72. OECD rapport where apples and oranges have been more aligned:
Adema, W., Fron, P.,Ladaqui, M. (2001): Is the European Welfare State Really That More Expensive?: Indicators on Social Spending 1980-2012; and a Manual to the OECD Social Expenditure Database (SOCX), OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 124, OECD Publishing, Retrieved June 22, 2014 from
http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/social-issues-migration-health/is-the-european-welfare-state-really-more-expensive_5kg2d2d4pbf0-en#page12
73. I am not sure if electing judges or appointing them is more a question of checks and balances or egalitarian commitment.
Streb, M.J. (eds.) (2007): *Running for Judge, The Rising Political, Financial, and Legal Stakes of Judicial Elections,* New York University.
74. For a deeper understanding of situations where group vs. individual or individual vs. systems communication makes discussions misaligned, see Cross Cultural Communications, Inc: Cross-Cultural Dialogue: Pitfalls For the Unwary, Retrieved June 22, 2014 from http://www.effectiveinfluence.org/clients/problems.php
75. While we normally shouldn't make assumptions about other people's motives, we can't always go into a deep conversation with them to discover what they really think and feel. The point here is that if you can find explanations that pacify your critical voice, it helps your own wellbeing.
76. Many good examples in this interview with Insead professor Erin Mayer (August 6, 2014): WNYC, The Leonard Lopard Show. Retrieved August 27, 2014 from http://www.wnyc.org/story/your-cultural-biases-may-be-affecting-your-bottom-line/?utm_source=sharedUrl&utm_media=metatag&utm_campaign=sharedUrl
77. Franzoi, S.L. (2000): *Social Psychology*, McGraw Hill.
78. Berset-Price, V. (September 22, 2014): Building Cross-Cultural Bridges to Create Happiness. Huffington Post. Downloaded September 24, 2014 from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/valerie-bersetprice/building-crosscultural-bridges-to-create-happiness_b_5849646.html
79. Although Darwin is most known for his theory on evolution, he also wrote about selection of mates. This theory posits that e.g. the outrageous coloration on male birds shows the females that this bird has survived even though it was easier to spot: One smart and fast bird. The same considerations are thought to be behind acts of generosity: Showing that you can afford to give something of value away is the mark of a good provider.

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81. I went to a meeting in Germany years back. After a bit of ho-hum that my German wasn't up to par, I offered that we could speak English or Danish instead. Suddenly my German wasn't that bad after all.

82. The first referring to Hans Christian Anderson: "The Emperor's New Clothes" meaning that somebody pretends to know something but is a fake. The second referring in Joseph Heller's book by the same name to a situation where there is a circular reference. In the book, soldiers can be medically discharged if they are insane, but to declare oneself insane is an indication that one is not insane since the insane can't understand the rule.

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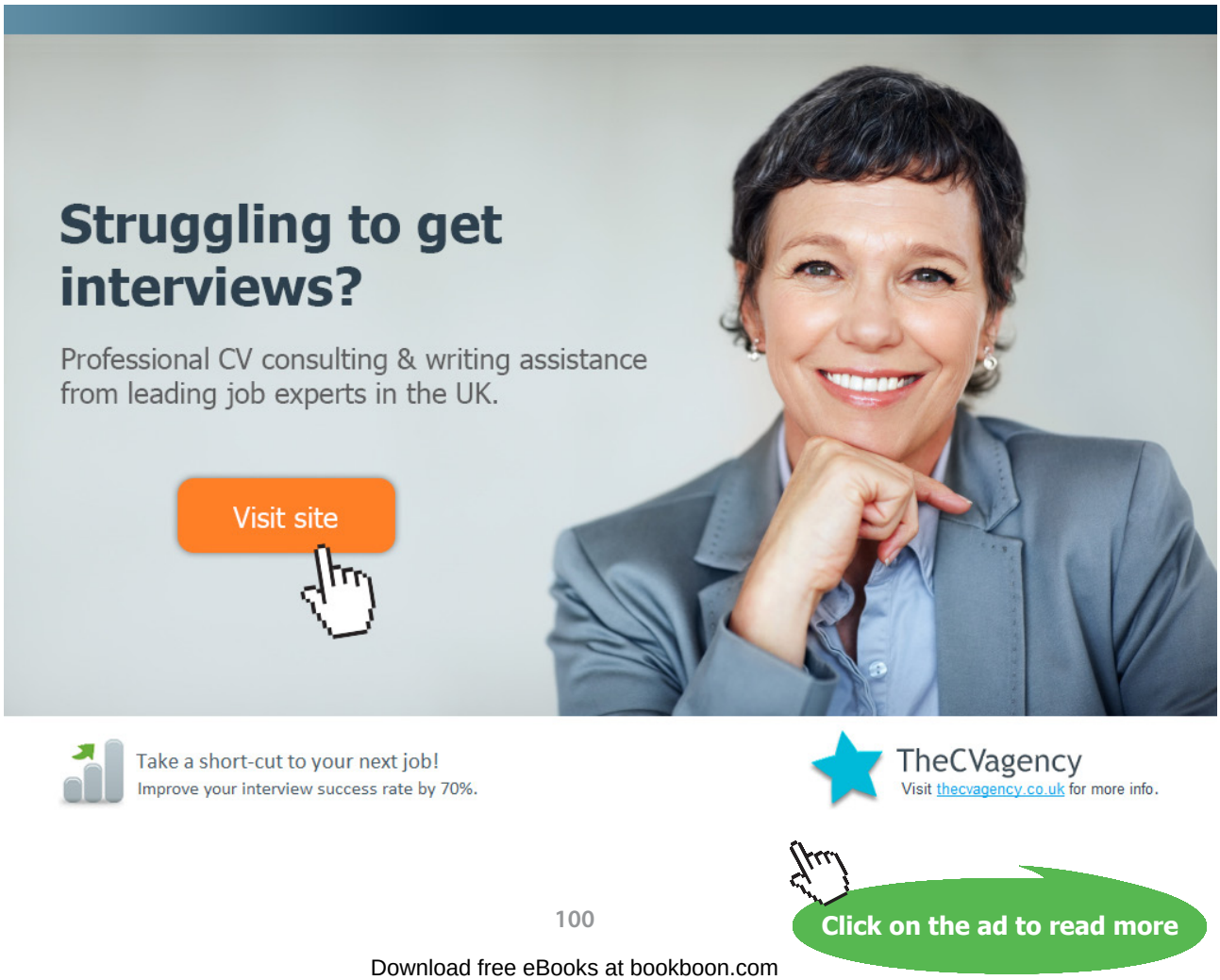

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