

Ready for the Multicultural Classroom?

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ETAS AGM Sierre, Jan 2013



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Hofstede's Dimensions of National Culture

www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gJzRS0I7tA

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Hofstede's Dimensions of National Culture

1. Uncertainty avoidance
2. Individualism vs. collectivism
3. Masculinity vs. femininity
4. Power distance
5. High-context vs. low-context communication
6. Short-term vs. long-term orientation

Points of interest in video:

- Uncertainty avoidance

(arriving punctually at 6.30 pm)

- Individualism/collectivism

(shakes hands only with Mark, not with his wife, not meant to be impolite)

- Masculinity/femininity

('oh, your wife didn't cook tonight')

Points of interest in video (cont'd 1):

- Power distance

('your son is eating with us?' wife replies 'of course')

- High-context/low-context communication (Hall)

(So the whaling issue hahaha ... sore point in Japan)

- Short-term/long-term orientation

(can we meet to sign the contract on Monday morning?)

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Uncertainty avoidance



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• **Uncertainty avoidance**

The way that a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known: should we try to control it or just let it happen?

Different cultures have learnt to deal with this anxiety in different ways. At a score of 92 (UK 35), Japan is one of the most uncertainty-avoiding countries on earth.

- *Change is slow and difficult in corporate Japan as all the risk factors must be first worked out before a project can start*
- *At school, teachers are expected to have all the answers*
- *Life is highly ritualized with a lot of ceremonies*

Individualism versus collectivism



11

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• Individualism vs. Collectivism

The degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. Has to do with whether people's self-image is defined in terms of “I” or “We”.

In **individualistic** societies people look after themselves and their direct family.

In **collectivistic** societies people belong to 'in-groups' that take care of them in exchange for loyalty.

Japan, scoring 46 (UK 89) shows many characteristics of a collectivist society such as:

- *putting harmony of the group above the expression of individual opinions*
- *People have a strong sense of shame if they lose face*

12

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Masculinity vs. femininity



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• **Masculinity vs. Femininity**

A high score (masculine) indicates that society will be driven by **competition, achievement and success**, this starts in school and continues through organizational behavior.

A low score (feminine) means that the dominant values in society are **caring for others and quality of life**.

At score 95, Japan (UK 66) is one of the most masculine societies in the world. But because of their mild collectivism, you do not see assertive and competitive individual behaviors often associated with masculine culture. Instead you see severe competition between groups at work, sports.

→ *Strong drive for excellence and perfection in corporate Japan for material production (electronics, autos) and services (hotels, restaurants)*

14

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Power distance



"Smedley, what's this nonsense about 63% of our employees not knowing how to do simple arithmetic? Good Lord, man! That's almost *half!*"

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• **Power distance**

The extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.

Japan scoring 54 (UK 35) is rather hierarchical and has moderately high power distance.

- *As mentioned, foreigners say decision-making is painstakingly slow in corporate Japan as all decisions must be cleared through various levels of hierarchy before reaching top mgt.*
- *Parents teach and expect children's obedience*
- *Respect for the elderly is a basic and lifelong virtue*
- *Children are a source of old-age security for parents*
- *Students give teachers utmost respect, do not contradict them*

16

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High Context Cultures

Japan

Arab Countries

Greece

Spain

Italy

England

France

North America

Scandinavian Countries

German-speaking

Countries

Low Context Cultures



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- **High-context vs. Low-context communication (E. Hall)**

Context is defined as the information that surrounds an event: it is inextricably bound up with the meaning of that event.

High-context communication is one in which little needs to be explained because most of the information is either in the physical environment or supposed to be known by the persons involved. Common in collectivist cultures

Low-context communication is one in which the mass of information is vested in the explicit code, more direct, lots of words, listeners expect clarification when something is unclear. Typical for individualistic cultures.

→ *American business contracts are much longer than Japanese business contracts*

18

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Short-term vs. long-term



19

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• **Short-term vs. Long-term orientation**

This dimension relates to the teachings of Confucius and was added later after Hofstede did work in China.

It is the extent to which a society shows a pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional historical short-term point of view.

Scoring 80, Japan (UK 25) is a long-term oriented society where Japanese see their life as a very short moment in history. Some sense of fatalism prevails, you do your best in your life time and that is all you can do, living lives guided by virtues and practical good examples.

- *High rate of investment in R&D even in difficult economic times*
- *Focus on growing market share over quarterly financial results*
- *Working to preserve the future for generations to come*

20

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Fons Trompenaar

A Dutch author and consultant in the field of cross-cultural communication, he developed a **model of culture with seven dimensions** together with Charles Hampden-Turner.

This covers the ways in which human beings in different national cultures deal with each other in general and in business.

Study case

You are a passenger in a car driven by a close friend, and your **close friend's car hits a pedestrian**. You know that your friend was **going at least thirty-five miles an hour** in an area where the maximum speed was twenty miles an hour. There are no witnesses.

Your friend's lawyer says that if you testify under oath that the speed was only twenty miles an hour then you would save your friend from any serious consequences.

What would you do? Would you lie to protect your friend? What right does your friend have to expect your help? On the other hand what are your obligations to society to uphold the law?

22

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What would you do in this situation?

What are your answers to these questions?

Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden Turner asked 15,000 managers in 28 countries around the world.

They were interested in exploring the cultural difference between what they called **universalist** societies and **particularist** societies.

Universalist societies:

→ *follow the rules and assume that the standards they hold dear are the correct ones. They try to get everyone to conform to them. That way, they believe, society works better.*

24

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Particularist societies:

→ *on the other hand, believe that particular circumstances are more important than general rules and that your response depends on the circumstances and on the particular people involved.*

Would you describe your home country or society as ‘universalist’ or ‘particularist’? Why?

Are your personal views more ‘universalist’ or more ‘particularist’?

25

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Going back to the car and the pedestrian accident,
Trompenaars and Hampden Turner discovered that:

- *North Americans and North Europeans were almost totally universalist in their responses. They would put the law first.*
- *Only 70 per cent of the French and the Japanese would do so, however,*
- *while, in Venezuela, two thirds would lie to save their friend.*

Most of the management theory we know about has come from the Anglo-American culture, a universalist culture, one that assumes that the rules that work for it will work universally.

That just might be a dangerous illusion. After all, we know that things work quite differently but equally well in other parts of the world.

Do you think that Anglo-American management theory works as effectively in your home country or society as it does in Britain and America?

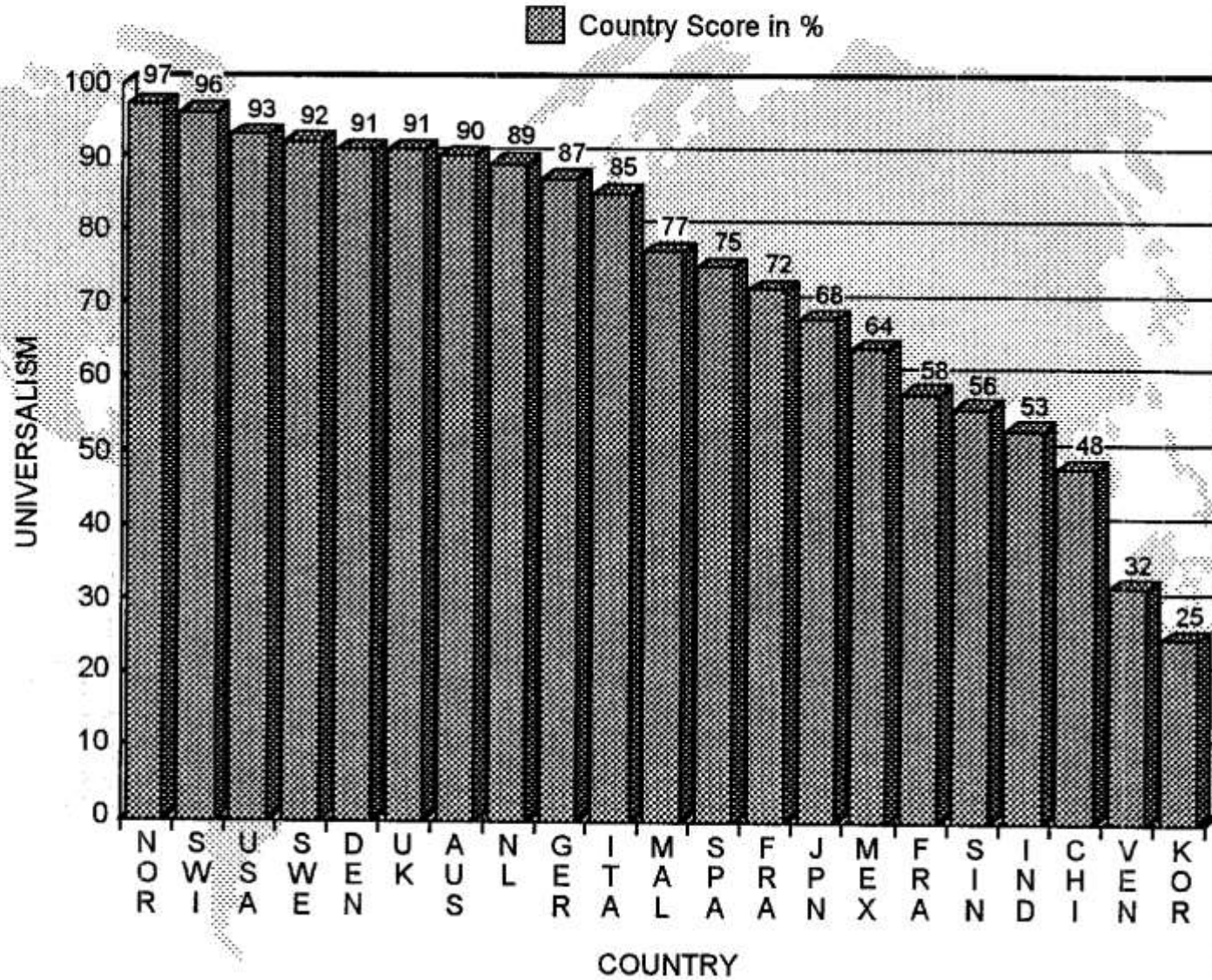
If not, why not? How do they solve the cultural dilemmas they face globally?

27

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UNIVERSALISM VERSUS PARTICULARISM

has no/some right and will not help



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“Successful leaders have the propensity and competence to help organizations and their teams reconcile dilemmas for better sustainable business performance.”