

An Introduction

(Robert Griffiths)



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Introduction

I have chosen to focus on Erin Myer's Culture Map, as I personally find it more useful and practical in a business or organisational context. That said, much of her work has obviously benefited from and is partly the result of research done previously by Edward T Hall and Geert Hofstede, both of whose models I have included in a related document "Culture & Conflict".

Fons Trompenaars also has some very interesting insights (see "Recommended Reading and Viewing" section, at the end of this document, for more information).

It is important to distinguish between Cultures and Personalities.

- Cultural dimensions and scales are all relative:
 for example, the Spanish culture is often considered more relationship-based than
 task-based. This may be true from the perspective of a French, UK or USA perspective
 or any other culture that falls left of Spain on the scale. However, from an Indian,
 Chinese, Saudi Arabian or Angolan culture, then in comparison, the Spanish culture
 may seem more task based.
- It is critical therefore to compare cultures from your own cultural perspective, as well as from those of others.
- Likewise, it is important to compare your own personal tendencies on these scales (which are part of your personality) with that of your own national culture (or the culture that you were mostly educated in).
- The Communication Scale (low vs high context) is critical in understanding the nuances and complexities of cultures. Language, education and history play an important role in how we think and communicate.
- Whether we are aware of it or not, our culture plays a very important role in how we communicate. Personality and other skills and competencies obviously play a role too, but often we are simply not aware of how our own culture (language and training) impacts the way we communicate.

Even seasoned, cosmopolitan managers often have oversimplified ideas about how people from other cultures operate.

That's because they tend to zero in on just one or two elements—communication, for example, or decision making.

But culture is more complex than that.

To get an accurate picture, you need to gauge cognitive, relational, and behavioural differences along the eight dimensions where cultural gaps are most common—and to assess yourself in those areas.

Erin Meyer's work provides a valuable framework for understanding how cultural differences impact communication, collaboration, and decision-making in a globalized world.

Remember that these are generalizations, and individuals within a culture may vary in their preferences and behaviours.

Research and experience encourage a nuanced and adaptable approach when working across diverse cultural contexts.

The 8 Dimensions (and scales)

1. **Communicating:** low-context vs. high-context

2. **Evaluating:** direct negative feedback vs. indirect negative feedback

3. **Persuading:** principles-first vs. applications-first

4. **Leading:** egalitarian vs. hierarchical5. **Deciding:** consensual vs. top-down

6. **Trusting:** task-based vs. relationship-based

7. **Disagreeing:** confrontational vs. avoids confrontation

8. **Scheduling:** linear-time vs. flexible-time

1. Communicating: Low-Context vs. High-Context:

- Low-context cultures rely on explicit verbal communication and value clarity and transparency in speech.
- High-context cultures place greater emphasis on non-verbal cues, context, and the relationship between communicators.

2. Evaluating: Direct Negative Feedback vs. Indirect Negative Feedback:

- Some cultures prefer direct and explicit negative feedback to address issues directly.
- Others prefer indirect negative feedback, delivered more subtly to avoid confrontation.

3. Persuading: Principles-First vs. Application-First:

- In principles-first cultures, people often start with the underlying principles or theory before moving to specific examples.
- Application-first cultures prefer to start with practical examples and then move to the underlying principles.

4. Leading: Egalitarian vs. Hierarchical:

- Egalitarian cultures value equality and may have flatter organizational structures.
- Hierarchical cultures emphasize clear authority and a more structured organizational hierarchy.

5. Deciding: Consensual vs. Top-Down:

- Consensual decision-making involves seeking input from multiple stakeholders and reaching a group consensus.
- Top-down decision-making involves decisions made by a few individuals at the top of the hierarchy.

6. Trusting: Task-Based vs. Relationship-Based:

- · Task-based trust is built on the competence and reliability of individuals.
- Relationship-based trust relies on personal connections and relationships as the foundation for trust.

7. Disagreeing: Confrontational vs. Avoids Confrontation:

- Confrontational cultures view open disagreement as a positive way to resolve conflicts and improve decisions.
- Avoids confrontation cultures prefer to avoid direct confrontations and may use indirect means to express disagreement.

8. Scheduling: Linear-Time vs. Flexible-Time:

- Linear-time cultures emphasize punctuality and adhering to schedules.
- Flexible-time cultures are more relaxed about time and may prioritize relationships over strict adherence to schedules.

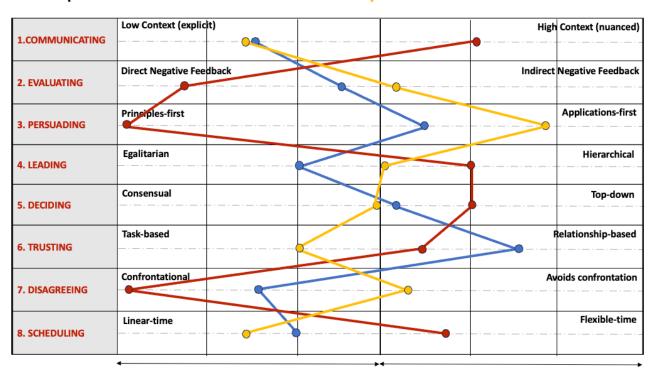
Your Personal Culture Profile

The first step in Inter- Cultural Effectiveness is to become aware of your own personal profile in terms of the Dimensions used, whether they are those proposed by Erin Myer or those proposed by Hofstede.

Once you explore and define your own profile, you can compare it to the Country Profile which mostly closely resembles your own culture, and then compare both to whichever country culture you are interested in comparing. See example below:

Example

Example of Personal Evaluation vs my culture vs another culture



Template

| 1.COMMUNICATING | Low Context (explicit) | High Context (nuanced |
|-----------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2. EVALUATING | Direct Negative Feedback | Indirect Negative Feedback |
| 3. PERSUADING | Principles-first | Applications-first |
| 4. LEADING | Egalitarian | Hierarchical |
| 5. DECIDING | Consensual | Top-down |
| 6. TRUSTING | Task-based | Relationship-based |
| 7. DISAGREEING | Confrontational | Avoids confrontation |
| 8. SCHEDULING | Linear-time | Flexible-time |
| 8. SCHEDULING | Linear-time | Flexible-tim |

8 Cultural Dimensions - Preferences / Values

COMMUNICATION - Low Context

- I rely on explicit verbal communication and value clarity and transparency in speech.
- Good communication is precise, simple, and clear.
- I prefer messages expressed and understood at face value.
- Repetition is appreciated if it helps clarify.

COMMUNICATION - High Context

- I place greater emphasis on non-verbal cues, context, and the relationship between communicators.
- Reading between the lines is expected (e.g., "sous-entendu")
- Less is put in writing, and more is left to interpretation.
- Good communication is sophisticated, nuanced, and layered.
- Messages are both spoken and read between the lines.
- Messages are often implied but not plainly expressed.

EVALUATING - Direct negative feedback

- I prefer direct and explicit negative feedback to address issues directly.
- Negative feedback to a colleague is provided frankly, bluntly, honestly.
- Negative messages stand alone, not softened by positive ones.
- Absolute descriptors are often used (totally inappropriate, completely unprofessional) when criticising.
- Criticism may be given to an individual in front of a group.

EVALUATING - Indirect negative feedback

- I place greater emphasis on non-verbal cues, context, and the relationship between communicators.
- Reading between the lines is expected (e.g., "sous-entendu")
- Less is put in writing, and more is left to interpretation.
- Good communication is sophisticated, nuanced, and layered.
- Messages are both spoken and read between the lines.
- Messages are often implied but not plainly expressed.

PERSUADING - Principles-first

- I usually prefer to start with the underlying principles or theory before moving to specific examples.
- I have been trained to first develop the theory of complex concept before presenting a fact, statement, or opinion.
- My preference is to begin a message or report by building up a theoretical argument before moving on to a conclusion.
- I value the conceptual principles underlying each situation.

PERSUADING – Applications-first

- I prefer to start with practical examples and then move to the underlying principles.
- I have been trained to begin with a fact, statement, or opinion and later add concepts to back up or explain the conclusion as necessary.
- My preference is to begin a message or report by building up a theoretical argument before moving on to a conclusion.
- I value the conceptual principles underlying each situation.

LEADING (Egalitarian)

- I value equality and flatter organizational structures.
- The ideal distance between a boss and a subordinate is low.
- The best boss is a facilitator among equals.
- I prefer flat Organizational structures.
- I'm comfortable with communication often skipping hierarchical lines.

LEADING (Egalitarian)

- I prefer hierarchical cultures which emphasize clear authority and a more structured organizational hierarchy.
- The ideal distance between a boss and subordinate is high.
- The best boss is a strong director who leads from the front.
- Status is important.
- I prefer organizational structures which are multi-layered and fixed.
- I'm comfortable with communication following set hierarchical lines.

DECIDING - Consensual

- I prefer consensual decision-making which involves seeking input from multiple stakeholders and reaching a group consensus.
- I prefer when decisions are made in groups through unanimous agreement.
- I do not feel comfortable when decisions which affect me are made only by the boss or hierarchy without my consultation or input.

DECIDING - Top-down

- I place greater emphasis on Top-down decision-making which involves decisions made by a few individuals at the top of the hierarchy.
- I'm comfortable if and when decisions are made which affect me by individuals above me in the hierarchy (usually the boss), without consulting me or without my input.

TRUSTING - Task-based

- I base my trust in others on their competence and reliability.
- For me, trust is built through businessrelated activities.
- My work relationships are built and dropped easily, based on the practicality of the situation. If the other person does good work consistently, they are reliable.
- I therefore enjoy working with them. I trust them.

TRUSTING - Relationship-based

- I prefer to build trust by weaving personal, affective connections.
- Personal connections and relationships are the foundation for trust.
- Trust is built through sharing meals, evening drinks, and visits at the coffee machine.
- Work relationships build up slowly over the long term. I've seen who you are at a deep level. I've shared personal time with you. I know others well who trust you. I trust you.

DISAGREEING - Confrontational

- I view open disagreement as a positive way to resolve conflicts and improve decisions.
- Disagreement and debate are positive for the team or organization.
- Open confrontation is appropriate and will not negatively impact the relationship.

DISAGREEING – Avoids Confrontation

- I prefer to avoid direct confrontations and may use indirect means to express disagreement.
- Disagreement and debate are negative for the team or organization.
- Open confrontation is inappropriate and will break group harmony or negatively impact the relationship.

SCHEDULING - Linear-time

- I value and emphasize punctuality and adhering to schedules.
- Projects steps should be approached in a sequential fashion, completing one task before beginning the next.
- One thing at a time. No interruptions.
- The focus should be on the deadline and sticking to the schedule.
- I value emphasis on promptness and good organization over flexibility.

SCHEDULING - Flexible-time

- I am more relaxed about time and may prioritize relationships over strict adherence to schedules.
- Project steps should be approached in a fluid manner, changing tasks as opportunities arise.
- I am comfortable with many things being dealt with at once and interruptions are acceptable.
- The focus should be on adaptability, and I value flexibility over organization.

Online Tools

The Erin Myer website offers you a series of tools, including doing **your own Personal Cultural Profile.**

There is a free version of this Profile offered on The Harvard Business Review: Quick online self-evaluation (free): What's Your Cultural Profile? by Erin Meyer https://hbr.org/2014/08/whats-your-cultural-profile

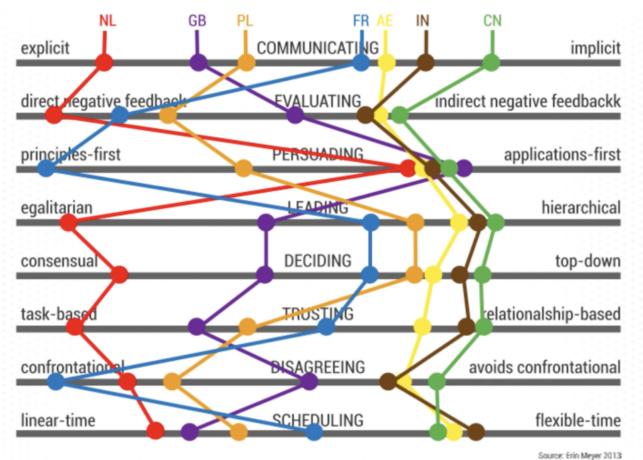
For a more in-depth Personal Profile, or for **specific Team, Country or Corporate Culture Mapping tools** please refer to the Erin Myer website: https://erinmeyer.com/tools/

Available national cultures currently available to map:

| The cultures currently available to map are: | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------------|--|--|
| Search for a specific country | | | | | | |
| search for country | | | | | | |
| Argentina | Australia | Austria | Belgium | Bolivia | | |
| Botswana | Brazil | Bulgaria | Cameroon | Canada | | |
| Chile | China | Colombia | Costa Rica | Czech Republic | | |
| Denmark | Dominican Republic | Egypt | Ethiopia | Finland | | |
| France | Germany | Ghana | Greece | Hungary | | |
| India | Indonesia | Ireland | Israel | Italy | | |
| Jamaica | Japan | Jordan | Kenya | Korea | | |
| Kuwait | Lebanon | Malaysia | Mexico | Morocco | | |
| Netherlands | New Zealand | Nigeria | Norway | Pakistan | | |
| Peru | Philippines | Poland | Portugal | Qatar | | |
| Romania | Russia | Saudi Arabia | Singapore | South Africa (Zulu) | | |
| South Africa (Afrikaans) | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | Tanzania | | |
| Thailand | Tunisia | Turkey | U.A.E | UK | | |
| Uganda | Ukraine | United States | Venezuela | Vietnam | | |
| Zimbabwe | | | | | | |

Example of a Multi-Country Comparison Map

In this case, the countries compared are the Netherlands, Great Britain, Poland, France, Arab Emirates, India, and China:



Source: Erin Meyer 2013

Examples of Country Comparisons for each Dimension

Communicating

1. Communicating (low-context vs. high-context)



Low-Context High-Context

Communicating

This scale measures the degree to which a culture prefers low- or high-context communication, a metric developed by anthropologist Edward Hall.

Low-context cultures (such as the U.S., Germany, and the Netherlands), rely on explicit verbal communication and value clarity and transparency in speech.

- · Good communication is precise, simple, and clear.
- · Messages are expressed and understood at face value
- · Repetition is appreciated if it helps clarify the communication.

High-context cultures (such as China, India, and France), place greater emphasis on non-verbal cues, context, and the relationship between communicators.

- · Reading between the lines is expected (e.g., "sous-entendu")
- · Less is put in writing, and more is left to interpretation.
- · Good communication is sophisticated, nuanced, and layered.
- · Messages are both spoken and read between the lines. Messages are often implied but not plainly expressed.

Evaluating

2. Evaluating (direct negative feedback vs. indirect negative feedback)

India Saudi Arabia Japan Russia USA UK France Italy Brazil China Korea Thailand Israel Norway Australia Canada Mexico Netherlands Denmark Spain Argentina Ghana Indonesia

Direct negative feedback

Indirect negative feedback

Evaluating

Often confused with the Communicating scale, Evaluating measures something distinct: the relative preference for direct versus indirect criticism.

- Some cultures prefer direct and explicit negative feedback to address issues directly.
- Others prefer indirect negative feedback, delivered more subtly to avoid confrontation.
- The French, for example, are high-context communicators relative to Americans yet are much more direct with negative feedback. Spaniards and Mexicans are
 equally high-context communicators, but the Spanish are much more direct than Mexicans when it comes to giving negative feedback.

Direct negative feedback:

Negative feedback to a colleague is provided frankly, bluntly, honestly.

Negative messages stand alone, not softened by positive ones.

Absolute descriptors are often used (totally inappropriate, completely unprofessional) when criticising. Criticism may be given to an individual in front of a group.

Indirect negative feedback:

- Negative feedback to a colleague is provided softly, subtly, diplomatically.
- Positive messages are used to wrap negative ones.
- · Qualifying descriptors are often used (sort of inappropriate, slightly unprofessional) when criticising. Criticism is given only in private.

Persuading

3. Persuading (principles-first vs. applications-first)

Italy Russia Germany Argentina Sweden Netherlands Australia
France Spain Brazil Mexico Denmark UK Canada USA

Principles-first Applications-first

Persuading

This scale measures preference for principles-first versus applications-first arguments (sometimes described as deductive versus inductive reasoning).

- People from Germanic and southern European cultures usually find it more persuasive to lay out generally accepted principles before presenting an opinion or making a statement.
- American and British managers typically lead with opinions or factual observations, adding concepts later to explain as necessary.

Principles-first

- · In principles-first cultures, people often start with the underlying principles or theory before moving to specific examples.
- Individuals have been trained to first develop the theory of complex concept before presenting a fact, statement, or opinion.
- · The preference is to begin a message or report by building up a theoretical argument before moving on to a conclusion.
- The conceptual principles underlying each situation are valued.

Applications-firs

- Application-first cultures prefer to start with practical examples and then move to the underlying principles.
- Individuals are trained to begin with a fact, statement, or opinion and later add concepts to back up or explain the conclusion as necessary.
- · The preference is to begin a message or report by building up a theoretical argument before moving on to a conclusion.
- · The conceptual principles underlying each situation are valued.

*Note: The Persuading scale does not plot all world cultures as the concept of Principles-first and Applications-first only applies to western environments. Asian cultures, for example, are Holistic and neither Applications-first not Principles-first. This is why the Persuading scale will not appear on the map when some countries are plotted.

Leading

4. Leading (egalitarian vs. hierarchical)

Denmark Israel Canada USA Poland Saudi Arabia Japan France Italy Netherlands Finland UK Germany Russia India Korea Mexico Peru Sweden Australia Brazil Spain China Nigeria

Egalitarian Hierarchical

Leading

This scale gauges the degree of respect and deference shown to authority figures, on a spectrum between the egalitarian and the hierarchical.

The former camp includes Scandinavia and Israel, whereas China, Russia, Nigeria, and Japan are more hierarchical.

The metric builds on the concept of power distance, first researched by Geert Hofstede, who conducted 100,000 management surveys at IBM in the 1970s, and later researched by Robert House and Mansour <u>Javidan</u> in their GLOBE Study of 62 Societies.

Egalitarian

 $\label{thm:cultures} \textbf{Egalitarian cultures value equality and may have flatter organizational structures}.$

- · The ideal distance between a boss and a subordinate is low.
- · The best boss is a facilitator among equals.
- Organizational structures are flat. Communication often skips hierarchical lines.

Hierarchical

Hierarchical cultures emphasize clear authority and a more structured organizational hierarchy.

- The ideal distance between a boss and subordinate is high.
- The best boss is a strong director who leads from the front.
- · Status is important.
- · Organizational structures are multi-layered and fixed.
- Communication follows set hierarchical lines.

Deciding

5. Deciding (consensual vs. top-down)

Sweden Norway Denmark Germany Spain France USA India Nigeria

Japan Netherlands UK Brazil Italy Russia China Indonesia

Consensual Top-down

Deciding

We often assume that the most egalitarian cultures in the world are also the most consensual, and that the most hierarchical ones are those where the boss makes top-down decisions.

That's not always the case. The Japanese are strongly hierarchical but have one of the most consensual cultures in the world.

Germans are more hierarchical than Americans but also more likely to make decisions through group consensus.

This scale explores differences between building group agreement and relying on one person (usually the boss) to make decisions.

Consensual

- · Consensual decision-making involves seeking input from multiple stakeholders and reaching a group consensus.
- Decisions are made in groups through unanimous agreement.

Top-down

- Top-down decision-making involves decisions made by a few individuals at the top of the hierarchy.
- Decisions are made by individuals (usually the boss).

Trusting

6. Trusting (task-based vs. relationship-based)

Saudi Italy Mexico Brazil USA Denmark Germany UK Poland France Arabia **Finland** Spain Netherlands Russia Thailand India Austria Australia China Nigeria Japan Turkey

Task-based Relationship-based

Trusting

This scale balances task-based trust (from the head) with relationship-based trust (from the heart).

In a task-based culture, such as the United States, the UK, or Germany, trust is built through work: We collaborate well, we like each other's work, and we are fond of each other—so I trust you.

In a relationship-based society, such as Brazil, China, or India, trust is built by weaving personal, affective connections: We have laughed together, have shared time relaxing together, and have come to know each other at a deep, personal level—so I trust you.

Many scholars, such as Roy Chua and Michael Morris, have researched this topic.

Task-based

- · Task-based trust is built on the competence and reliability of individuals.
- Trust is built through business-related activities
- Work relationships are built and dropped easily, based on the practicality of the situation. You do good work consistently, you are reliable.
- · I enjoy working with you. I trust you.

Relationship-based

- · Relationship-based trust relies on personal connections and relationships as the foundation for trust.
- · Trust is built through sharing meals, evening drinks, and visits at the coffee machine.
- · Work relationships build up slowly over the long term. I've seen who you are at a deep level.
- I've shared personal time with you. I know others well who trust you. I trust you.

Disagreeing

7. Disagreeing (confrontational vs. avoids confrontation)

Sweden India China Germany Denmark Australia USA Indonesia France Russia Spain UK Brazil Mexico Peru Ghana Japan Italy Netherlands Singapore Saudi Arabia Thailand

Confrontational Avoids confrontation

Disagreeing

Everyone knows that a little confrontation is healthy, right?

The recent U.S. business literature certainly confirms that viewpoint, but different cultures have varying ideas about how productive it is.

People in Indonesia, Japan and Thailand view the public airing of disagreement very dimly, whereas those in Germany, France, and the Netherlands are quite comfortable with it.

This scale measures how you view confrontation—whether you feel it is likely to improve group dynamics or to harm relationships within a team or between individuals.

Confrontational

- · Confrontational cultures view open disagreement as a positive way to resolve conflicts and improve decisions.
- · Disagreement and debate are positive for the team or organization
- · Open confrontation is appropriate and will not negatively impact the relationship.

Avoids confrontation

- · Avoids-confrontation cultures prefer to avoid direct confrontations and may use indirect means to express disagreement.
- · Disagreement and debate are negative for the team or organization.
- · Open confrontation is inappropriate and will break group harmony or negatively impact the relationship.

Scheduling

8. Scheduling (linear-time vs. flexible time)

Germany Japan Netherlands Poland Spain Italy Brazil China Saudi Arabia

Switzerland Sweden USA UK Czech Republic France Russia Mexico India Nigeria

Denmark Turkey Kenya

Linear-time Flexible-time

Scheduling

All businesses follow timetables, but in India, Brazil, and Italy, people treat a schedule as a suggestion.

In Switzerland, Germany, and the U.S., people typically stick to the plan.

This scale measures whether you view time as linear or flexible, depending on how much value you place on structure or adaptability.

It is based on the monochronic/polychronic distinction formalized by Edward Hall.

Linear-time

- · Linear-time cultures emphasize punctuality and adhering to schedules.
- · Projects steps are approached in a sequential fashion, completing one task before beginning the next.
- · One thing at a time. No interruptions.
- . The focus is on the deadline and sticking to the schedule. Emphasis on the promptness and good organization over flexibility.

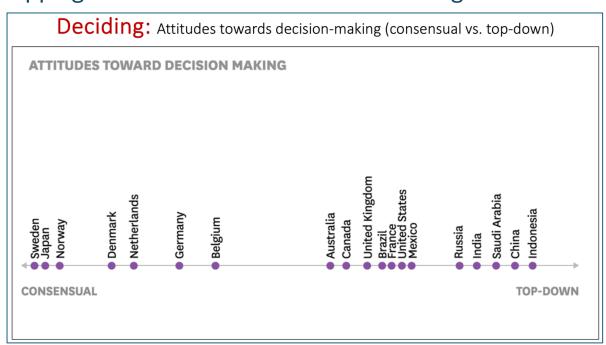
Flexible-time

- · Flexible-time cultures are more relaxed about time and may prioritize relationships over strict adherence to schedules.
- Project steps are approached in a fluid manner, changing tasks as opportunities arise.
- · Many things are dealt with at once and interruptions accepted.
- · The focus is on adaptability, and flexibility is valued over organization.

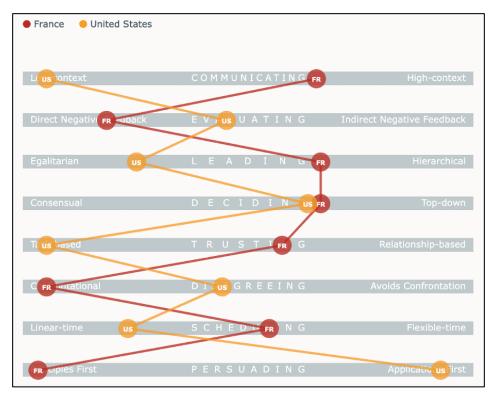
Mapping Leadership Cultures

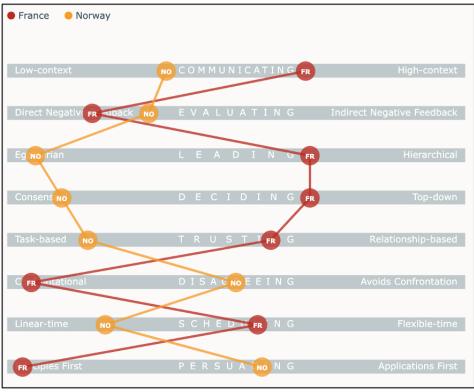


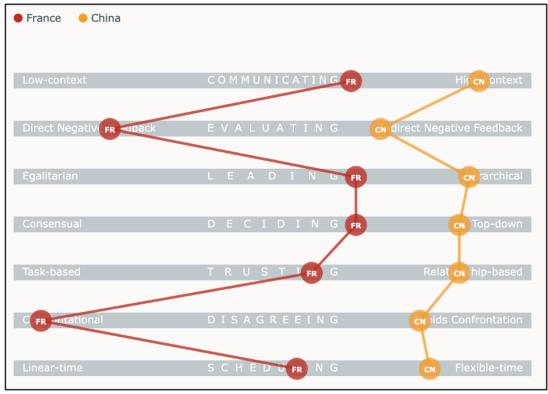
Mapping Attitudes towards decision-making

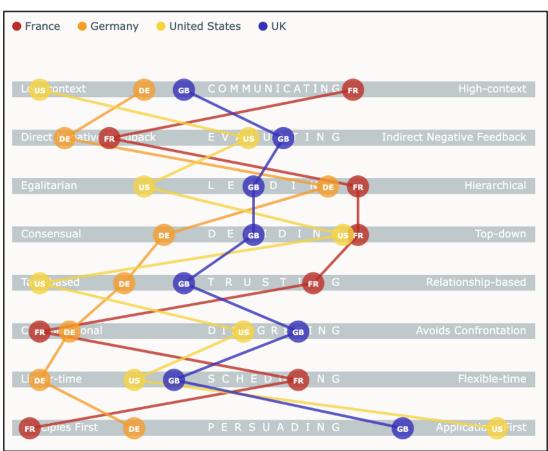


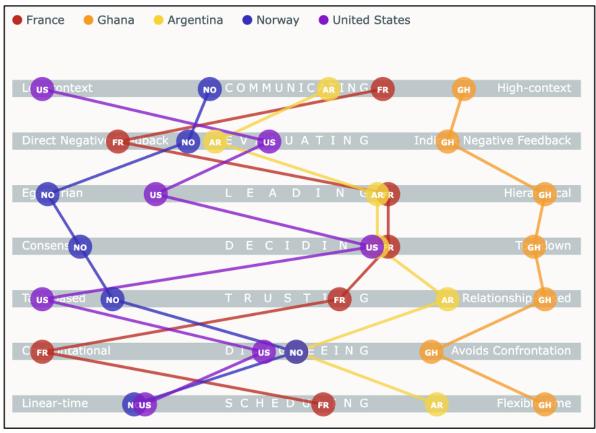
Examples of divergences and convergences between national cultures

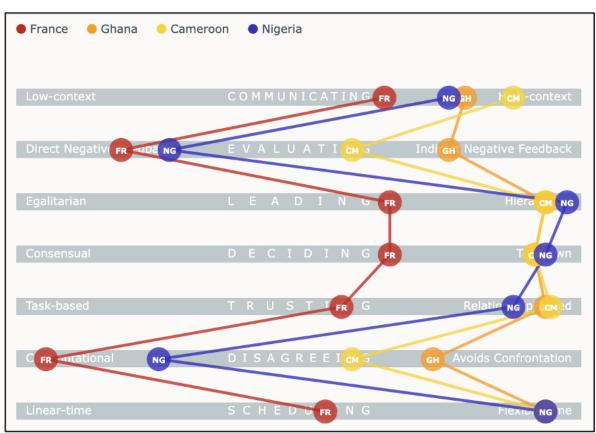






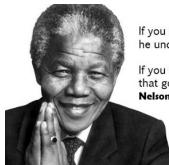






Recommended Reading & Viewing

All Books, Articles or Videos in "bold lettering" are strongly recommended.



If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head.

If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart. **Nelson Mandela**

Books

The Culture Map Erin Meyer

(Decoding How People Think, Lead, and Get Things Done Across Cultures)

Riding the Waves of Culture Fons Trompenaars & Charles Hampden-Turner

Build Your Cultural Agility Paula Caligiuri **Beyond Culture** Edward T. Hall

Cultures and Organizations Geert Hofstede, G Jan Hofstede, Michael Minkov

Managing Intercultural Conflict Effectively Stella Ting-Toomey, John Oetzel

Mind Your Manners John Mole

The Speed of Trust Stephen MR Covey

Articles

- Managing Multicultural Teams Exploring the opportunities and challenges CIPD https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/diversity/managing-multicultural-teams#gref
- Change Agility across Different Cultures Project Management Institute https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/change-agility-different-cultures-10188
- Cross culture project management https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/cross-culture-project-management-teams-8008
- Five Ways To Boost Your Cross-Cultural Agility Forbes 2010 https://www.forbes.com/2010/09/29/cross-cultural-agility-globalization-leadership-managing-ccl.html

- Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity
 https://organizingengagement.org/models/developmental-model-of-intercultural-sensitivity/
- Managing cross cultural differences in projects
 https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/managing-cross-cultural-differences-projects-6736

Videos

- Erin Meyer the Culture Map
 Erin Meyer explains culture gaps and how to overcome them at work
 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJZ0BUvOmaA
- The Culture Map Erin Meyer https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRBpwjdk7dw&ab_channel=Chantyba
- Business Speaker Erin Meyer: The Language of Negative Feedback
 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwBPfbEeynw&ab_channel=TheLavinAgencySpeakersBureau
 sBureau
- Cross cultural communication | Pellegrino Riccardi | TEDxBergen https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMyofREc5Jk&ab_channel=TEDxTalks
- Riding the waves of culture: Fons Trompenaars at TEDxAmsterdam https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmyfiKicbm0&ab_channel=TEDxTalks
- Cultural difference in business | Valerie Hoeks | TEDxHaarlem https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMwjscSCcf0&ab_channel=TEDxTalks
- Learn a new culture | Julien S. Bourrelle | TEDxArendal https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhA9eypocE0&ab_channel=TEDxTalks

Note: most videos have an option for subtitles in various languages via their respective "settings".