

CULTURE: BENEATH THE SURFACE

Management across national borders differs from managing within a domestic setting. Cultural, economic and political systems vary from nation to nation and these differences affect the management of organizations. This manual examines how certain aspects of culture may result in different management perspectives and practices from nation to nation.

Culture is defined as the pattern of values, attitudes, and behaviors shared by the people in a region. Some of a culture's major characteristics are that: (1) it is learned; (2) shared; (3) its elements are interrelated; and (4) it defines the boundaries between different groups of people [7,10, 11a].

Culture is a fairly complex concept. One way of looking at it is to conceive of culture as an "iceberg" floating in the ocean. Some of the iceberg sticks out above the water's surface but most of it is hidden beneath the surface. Culture is very similar in that the aspects of culture we can observe reflects only a small part of its nature [27]. Below different elements of culture are described.



ARTIFACTS - These are above the surface. The visible aspects of culture such as behaviors, clothing, art, buildings, etc. Things we can observe.

VALUES - these are beneath the surface and represent ideas about what is desirable or standard ways of operating or behaving.

ASSUMPTIONS - are well below the surface and represent basic beliefs about people's orientation to their world.

By observing artifacts such as why people hug rather than shake hands when greeting each other, we can see what is different about a culture, but we do not know why the artifacts differ. This paper focuses on certain aspects of culture beneath the surface because they can help explain why certain observable artifacts such as preferences for groups exist in certain cultures but not in others.

Let us begin at the bottom of the iceberg with cultural assumptions. Based on the work of anthropologists, we know that certain cultures differ on basic assumptions about their world around them. Below we focus on five assumptions which also appear to affect people's work behavior [3,7,12, 13, 16, 29].

Environment (ENV)- belief about people's relationship to nature and life. People believe they have little or no control over nature or considerable mastery over

their environment. Cultures range from :

Submit - people are an integral part of their environment.

To

Control - people are separate from their environment and have some control over it (control your destiny).

Human nature (HNT) - one's belief about the true nature of people; these range from:

Evil - people basically are selfish and can't be trusted.

To

Good - people are basically responsible and can be trusted.

Time - cultures vary in their orientation towards time, ranging from:

Monochronic - time is viewed as a commodity with a beginning & end.

To

Polychronic - time is intangible, non-linear, even circular or fluid.

Space - how one is oriented to their surrounding space; this ranges from:

Private - people value their space and prefer some distance between themselves and others .

To

Public - people need less space and are comfortable being physically close to others.

Context - refers to what is meaningful to people. Cultures range from:

Low context - place high value on verbal language .

To

High context - place high value on non-verbal as well as verbal cues.

The chart on the following page illustrates the typical assumptions found in a variety of cultures around the globe. For comparison the USA is part of the Anglo culture and France is part of the European Latin culture. Note individuals within each culture may differ from this profile.

ASSUMPTIONS IN VARIOUS CULTURES

<u>Culture</u>	<u>Environment</u>	<u>Human Nature</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Space</u>	<u>Context</u>
Anglo	Control	Good	Mono	Private	Low
Latin European	Control	Good & Evil	Poly	Public	Moderate
Nordic	Harmony	Good & Evil	Mono	Private	Low
Germanic	Control	Good & Evil	Mono	Private	Low
Latin American	Submit	Evil	Poly	Public	High

Mid East	Submit	Evil	Poly	Public	High
East Asia	Harmony	Good & Evil	Poly	Public	Moderate to High
Russia	Control	Good & Evil	Poly	Public	Moderate
Japan	Harmony	Good	Poly	Public	High

VALUES IN VARIOUS CULTURES

Cultural Values: moving up the cultural iceberg we encounter values. Values are ideas and principles about how things should be in a given situation. While there are literally thousands of values, below we briefly describe four values which have been found to be relevant to work settings and which appear to vary across cultures based on comparative management studies. [5a, 10, 11a., 12,13,24,27]

Power distance (PD) - the amount of distinctiveness among groups in a society in terms of status and access to power. Cultures range from:

Low PD - few status differences and decentralized authority.

To

High PD - many status differences and centralized authority.

Uncertainty avoidance (UA) - the degree to which people feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and seek to avoid them. Cultures range from:

Low UA - people can tolerate some uncertainty and willing to take risks.

To

High UA - people seek to avoid the unknown and take few risks.

Self-orientation (SO) - refers to people's concept of "self" as located solely within the person versus "self" defined in association with others; cultures range from:

Individualists - people look after themselves and are concerned for "I".

To

Collectivists - people place high value on group membership and a concern for "WE".

Assertiveness (AST) - values based on traditional gender roles valuing assertiveness versus social support. Cultures range from:

Masculine - preference for competitiveness (assertiveness), quantity, and outcomes.

To

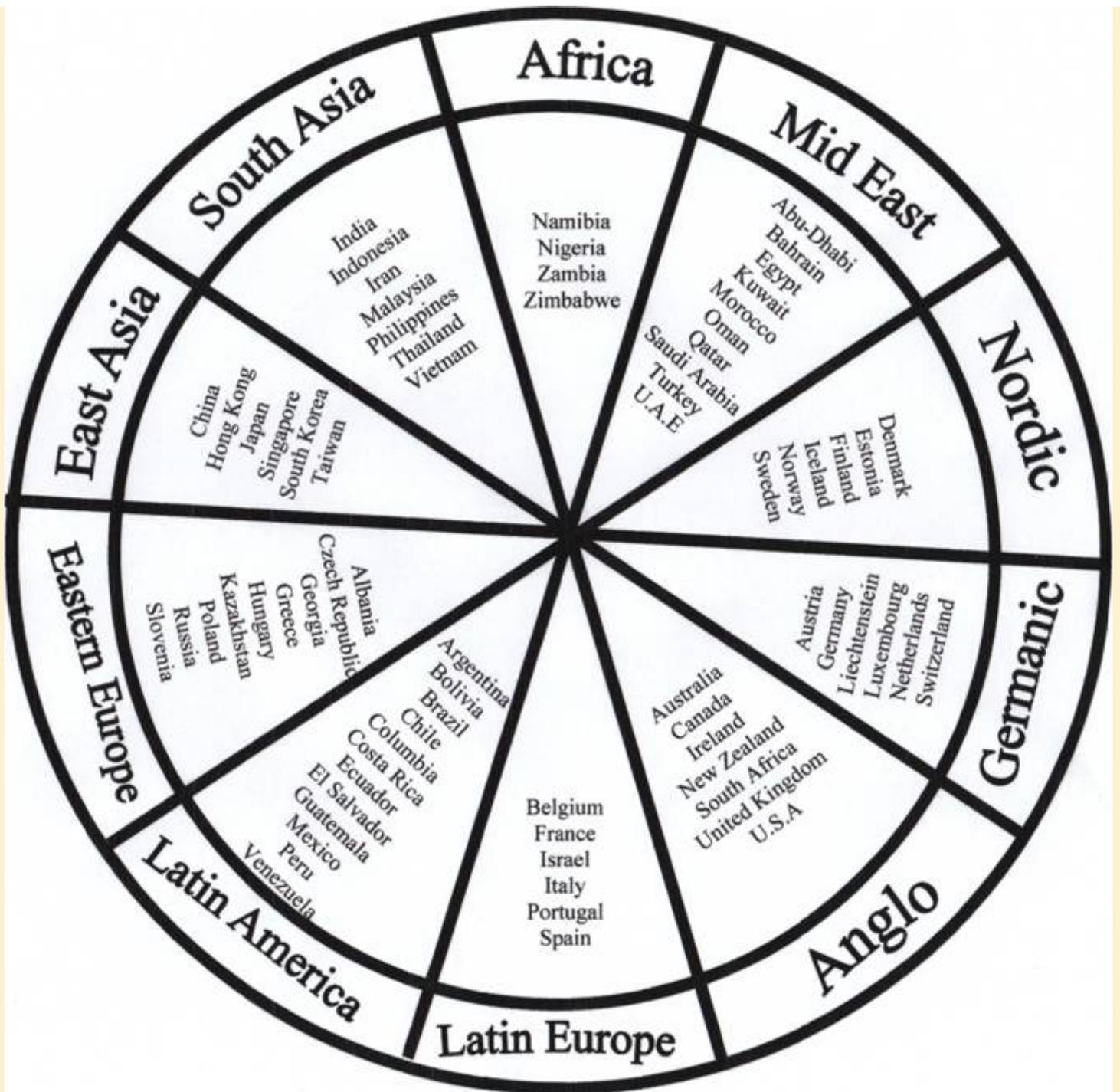
Feminine - preference for cooperation (social support), quality, and process .

The chart on the following page illustrates the typical values found in a variety of cultures around the globe. For comparison the USA is part of the Anglo culture and France is part of the European Latin culture. Note individuals within each culture may differ from this profile.

CULTURES:	VALUES			
	POWER DISTANCE	UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE	SELF-ORIENTATION	ASSERTIVENESS
ANGLO	LOW	LOW	INDV	MASC
GERMANIC	LOW	MEDIUM	INDV-COLL	MASC
NORDIC	LOW	MEDIUM	INDV-COLL	FEM
LATIN EUROPEAN	HIGH	HIGH	INDV	MASC-FEM
LATIN AMERICAN	HIGH	HIGH	COLL	MASC-FEM
EAST ASIA	HIGH	HIGH	COLL	MASC-FEM
MID EAST	HIGH	MEDIUM	COLL	MASC-FEM
ISRAEL	LOW	HIGH	INDV	MASC-FEM
JAPAN	HIGH	HIGH	COLL	MASC
INDIA	HIGH	LOW	COLL	MASC
RUSSIA	HIGH	HIGH	COLL	COLL
SOUTH KOREA	MEDIUM	HIGH	COLL	MASC-FEM

The chart below indicates the countries that represent the major cultures described on the preceding pages. This chart was developed by combining the work of Ronen & Shenkar (1985) and House, et al. (2004). The first study is based on a meta-analysis of 8 large cross-national surveys of values and attitudes in work settings including some of the assumptions and all of the values discussed in this manual. The second study is based on one large study of 9 values in 62 countries. These are not all of the world's cultural groups by any means nor are all of the nations that might belong to each group listed. The nations listed are those represented in the studies from which this chart was developed.

CULTURAL CLUSTERS



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