

LOST (OR SAVED) IN TRANSLATION

ENRICHING THE MESSAGE OF CHURCHES, CHARITIES & OTHER VITAL ORGANIZATIONS

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ARE YOUR DECISION-MAKERS & INFLUENCERS CULTURALLY FLUENT? ARE YOU?

INTRODUCTION

The following description of the *Lost (or Saved) in Translation* presentation preceded the UNBOXED Conference in Orlando between April 20-22, 2017.

We are, largely through providence, the by-product of our heritage, geography, family, religious setting, and even our language. That means environmental culture influences how we view authority, generations, gender, our community, ethnicity, and race. Even transformational rebirth doesn't just "undo" nurtured assumptions and learned communication styles. And now, more than ever, the translation of our personal message can be consequential.

Thanks to the internet and smart devices, globalization is now in the palm of our hands. We have become instantly connected worldwide—yet largely unprepared for constructive conversations. Fortunately, new tools and proven practices have emerged to help relational institutions not only adapt, but thrive in our communication frenzy.

It's time, dare we say – past time, congregations, especially those in racially and ethnically diverse cities, and global charities, "baptize" and leverage the tools that will mean more individuals from every "tribe and language and people and nation" will be "saved in translation."

Steve Staten, a Chicago-based consultant, is introducing problem-solving lenses and tools that are unknown in the church world. James Campbell, an evangelist in Miami, will make a case for Cultural Diversity Training as a means for growth and retention, and in the making of "better" ministers.

Cross-Cultural Fluency is "the ability to engage effectively within a variety cultural environments and utilize diversity for mutual understanding and growth."

A brief case is being made that:

(1) Globalization has pressured Western-based organizations that rely on international partners to learn about the values and assumptions of people from other nations in order to communicate more effectively, minimize unnecessary offense and develop relationships. Global cultural lenses have developed over the last seven decades for the purpose of developing cross-cultural understanding, incentivized by globalization and the need to negotiate with people coming from different values and assumptions. These tools can also enrich global churches and charities.

(2) Each country has a national cultural framework that will touch an organization in one way or another. Cultural fissures and disconnections become apparent when there are disruptions that are rooted in racial, generational, or gender-based factors. Members of the dominant culture tend to be the least aware of the dynamics felt by the sub, micro and counter cultures.

(3) An idea is being set forth that a course could be developed for the purpose of training leaders and influencers of churches and charities to better manage both global and local national challenges related to culture—using seasoned specialists. A survey will be used to determine the level of interest that the presentation and this paper cultivates.

The following notes were meant to be read in conjunction with the presentation, *Lost (or Saved) in Translation*. The last page, the Appendix, contains recommended reading for Global Cultures and the National American Culture.

GLOBAL CULTURAL LENSES

I. EDWARD T. HALL (1914-2009)

- American anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher.
- His major books include, *The Silent Language* (1959) and *The Hidden Dimension* (1966)
- Hall developed three cultural metrics—(1) **High and Low Context Cultures**. This deals with the difference between people who possess unwritten and spoken rules versus people who take nothing for granted in communication. (2) **Monochronic and Polychronic Time**. People exist on a continuum between careful planning, doing one thing on time, at a time, in order versus being more concerned with human interaction than schedules and deadlines. And (3) **The Need for Space**. Some people have low need for ownership and space or territory, while others value more space for their person, home, parking or office.

II. GEERT HOFSTEDE (1928)

- A Dutch engineer, social psychologist, and professor of organizational anthropology
- Major publications are: *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values: Second Edition* (2003), and *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind, Third Edition* (2010).
- Hired by IBM in 1965, he worked as a management trainer and manager of personnel research.
- Hofstede defines culture as “*the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from another.*”
Power Distance (PDI)—the attitude about power inequities among us
Individualism (IDV)—the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members
Masculinity (MAS)—*what motivates people, wanting to be the best (Masculine) or liking what you do (Feminine)*. Admittedly, the use of terms is confusing in the US.
Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)—the way that a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known
Long-Term Orientation (LTO)— how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future
Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR)—*the extent to which people try to control their impulses*

III. RICHARD LEWIS (1930)

- A British communications consultant and social theorist, is well known among international businesses for his Lewis Model of Cross-Cultural Communication.
- Some of his main books are *When Cultures Collide: Leading Across Cultures* (2005), *When Teams Collide: Managing the International Team Successfully* (2012).
- Richard Lewis developed The Lewis Model -- Dimensions of Behavior. He believed that humans can be divided into three clear categories: Linear-active, Multi-active and Reactive.

IV. FONS TROMPENAARS (1953)

- A Dutch consultant, trainer, founder of an intercultural management firm, has helping Fortune 500 leaders manage and solve their business and cultural dilemmas to increase global effectiveness.
- His books include, *Riding the Waves of Culture* (2010) and *Servant Leadership Across Cultures: Harnessing the Strength of the World's Most Powerful Leadership Philosophy* (2009).
- Trompenaars identified seven dimensions of any given national culture.

It is important not to get lost in the technical language. Various lenses teach us how various cultures around the world are oriented differently. Those distinctions are in relation to time, space, information context, individualism, restraint, humane concerns, assertiveness, uncertainty, power, gender egalitarianism and others.

V. LEARNING FROM GLOBAL ORGANIZATIONS & NATIONS

- **Globalization Demands New Lenses.** During the mid-1960s IBM recognized that it was stuck globally, unable to navigate a cultural disconnect. They hired Geert Hofstede, a Dutch Anthropologist who soon observed major cultural differences among staff from different countries despite their shared corporate culture.

Between 1967 and 1973, Geert Hofstede executed a survey study of 117,000 employees in 72 affiliates in about 40 of the largest countries comprised of 20 different languages. He was searching for national values and other differences across the subsidiaries of this multinational corporation. He pioneered cross-cultural theories that could be used to explain observed differences between cultures — and help the company navigate in a modern context.

- **Coming from Behind Can Be An Advantage.** The authors of the book *Fish Can't See Water: How National Culture Can Make or Break Your Corporate Strategy*¹ state that national culture “has a powerful but often invisible impact on the success of global companies. What’s more, the very same national traits that accelerated growth in one stage of the corporate lifecycle may derail that growth at a different stage when an inevitable crisis hits.”² The emphasis of the European consultants, Kai Hammerich and Richard D. Lewis, is for global organizations to learn new traits early enough in their lifecycle to reduce losses due to cultural mishaps.

Some national cultures are not expansionist but are innately adaptable and cross-cultural because they have had to negotiate for their seat at the table—such as postwar Japan & Germany. Out of necessity they became diligent in observing other cultures in order to negotiate for their seat at the table. Along the way they became increasingly competent in communication and negotiation across cultures.

- **A National Culture Can Be a Curse.** An American born organization that seeks global success should take notice of a lesson from a major retail chain. The following excerpt came from an August 13, 2009 business article, [After Early Errors, Walmart Thinks Locally to Act Globally](#)³.

Walmart has often been scrutinized for exploiting cheap foreign labor to bring inexpensive products to their stores. The Walmart supercenter shopping ideal works well in American suburbs but implementing it internationally has proved disastrous. ...

Walmart proved to be culturally blind by peddling golf clubs and baseball gloves to Brazilians as if they were U.S. suburbanites. *Walmart pulled out of Germany and South Korea after heavy losses earlier this decade, in acknowledgment that its U.S. retail formula didn't work everywhere. ... The generic superstore is being forced to think like a local and adapt to its surroundings in order to be profitable in other countries.*

¹ Kai Hammerich and Richard D. Lewis, *Fish Can't See Water: Fish Can't See Water: How National Culture Can Make or Break Your Corporate Strategy*

² Kai Hammerich & Richard D. Lewis, *Fish Can't See Water* (West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 2013)

³ <http://internationalbusinessassignment.blogspot.com/2009/08/after-early-errors-wal-mart-thinks.html>

THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

The national framework varies nation to nation. For brevity, this paper focused on the U.S. and examples of its cultures with a focus on the dialogue between members of the dominant culture, citizens of European descent and the subculture of citizens of African descent.

DOMINANT CULTURES

A dominant culture is the most powerful, widespread, or influential within a social structure in which multiple cultures are present.

In the United States in the 21st century, for instance, upper- and middle-class Caucasians comprise the dominant culture. The vast number of white Americans are partial or full descendants of immigrants who arrived between 1820-1965. The first large immigration wave began around 1850, mostly from Northern Europe, due in part because larger steam-powered ocean-going ships replaced sailing ships, and the appeal of California's Gold Rush, job opportunities, the ability to live in freedom, to practice their religion freely, to escape poverty, rising taxes or oppression, and to make better lives for themselves and their children. The Great Famine in Ireland (1845-1852) is one case when a wave was the result of a tragedy.

By the early 20th century, the migration came mainly from Southern and Eastern Europe. Today the people of all European nations are considered Caucasian or "white" and comprise the dominant culture. American history books and films have long presented American's progress through minimizing the tragic treatment of natives, and celebrating its expansionist ideals.



SUBCULTURES

A subculture is a small segment of people from unique origins that operate within the framework of the dominant culture. Subcultures tend to be outside of the "norm" as told in main narratives of books and films, and general education tends to lack an integrated perspective of events involving dominant cultures and subcultures.

There are three distinguishable examples of a subculture. First, Native Americans, following the arrival of Europeans and the expansion of settlers. Second, African Americans, who began to be brought to the colonies as slaves around 1620. And third, Latin Americans, who became part of the U.S. as a result of the acquisition of southwestern territories or who migrated after 1965.

A poignant example of the disconnect between a dominant and subculture is the story of Africans who were brought to the U.S. as slaves, and even though slavery was allegedly terminated in 1876, there are legacy issues that signal a very different experience with education, employment opportunities, healthcare and the justice system over the last 150 years. For instance, in healthcare:

"African American history in the United States includes a protracted period of slavery, post-Emancipation "Jim Crow" discrimination and persecution in the South, and an extended period of socioeconomic disadvantages during ghettoization in northern cities. Healthcare during these periods was often unavailable to African Americans, or the quality and quantity of the care was deficient."⁴

There are similar divergent experiences in education. One evidence in the justice system, even at the outset, is that the first line of aid for many disputants, civic arbitration centers, have disproportionately few black mediators and arbitrators. An African-American Mediator, Cherise D. Hairston, illuminated a stark reality about African-Americans in the field of conflict resolution. In 1998 she wrote "African Americans in Mediation

⁴ Arnold R. Eiser, MD, FACP, and Glenn Ellis, *Cultural Competence and the African American Experience with Health Care: The Case for Specific Content in Cross- Cultural Education*.

Literature: A Neglected Population,”⁵ for which she had “reviewed 420 articles in *Mediation Quarterly* from 1983 through 1997. As a result of this content analysis, I was unable to locate articles by, for, or about people of African descent.”⁶ I (Steve Staten) contacted the author and she stated that there has been little progress over the last two decades. Her question still stings, “Can African-Americans be served effectively and appropriately by mediators who have limited academic access and actual multicultural (cross-racial and cross-cultural) interaction with this specific population in mediation?”⁷ This is one example where the courts are more advantageous for people from the dominant culture.

MICROCULTURES and COUNTERCULTURES

A **microculture** is a distinct culture that develops within a larger social structure. It can include ethnic groups, such as Asian-Americans, religious groups such as Evangelicals (which might also be considered a subculture), generational such as Millennials, and other groupings of education, careers, and tastes.

A **counterculture** is a group of people with shared values that go against one or more significant values of the dominant culture: suffragists (right to vote), suffragettes (breaking against gender norms), hippie movement of the 1960s, anti-Vietnam war activism, polygamists, the American civil rights movement, various environmentalist groups, the LGBTQ community, and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Some countercultures influence the larger culture, some exist as marginal movements, and others fade away. And sometimes the upward influence represents progress against the status quo, and other times it exemplifies the lesser parts of humanity.



The demarcation of dominant culture, subculture, microculture and counterculture are more nuanced and fluid than the four defined categories. These distinctions help leaders be more responsive and proactive. When there are major mood changes on issues in society that relate to values, justice and representation of a particular group it is likely that those conversations roll over into the workplace and church.

No cultural group is completely homogenous. There are individual differences within every cultural group. Behaviors cannot be predicted with certainty, as much as some would like to believe. However, becoming handy with a working knowledge of members of a cultural group’s various orientations of thought and behavior provides a meaningful place to start for understanding a group.

There is a way to manage the way we talk about cultural types without being offensive. A primary factor to keep in mind is the importance of distinguishing between a stereotype and a prototype. Stereotypes are an easy but lazy way of talking about perceptions through caricatures. Simpler minds prefer exaggerations, but stereotyping tends to be harmful.

Prototypes, on the other hand, are models of what is clearly visible in recurring patterns but may not be as pervasive as we think. A larger group may be comprised of many prototypes existing alongside one another. For instance, the dominant culture of white Americans is comprised of the following prototypes: culturally aware and sensitive members of society, right-leaning ideologues who have one or two black friends, an under-informed class unaware of their privilege, and racists. It is helpful to clarify categories rather than to use broad brushes.

⁵ C. D., Hairston, (1999), African Americans in Mediation Literature: A Neglected Population. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 16: 357–375.

⁶ *Re-Centering Culture and Knowledge* (Kindle Locations 2017-2018).

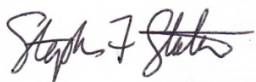
⁷ *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 2019-2020.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

For those who are interested in Cross-Cultural Fluency and becoming part of a tribe of bridge-builders, completing this [Cross-Cultural Fluency Survey](#) is the first step. It should only take a few minutes to answer less than 10 questions. By taking the survey you will:

- .. begin to gain access to resources related to Cross-Cultural Fluency in both Global and National settings
- .. be kept abreast of cultural-diversity-related news, workshops and book reviews
- .. be able to provide value for your church, charity or workplace on diversity-related subjects
- .. be informed on case studies and book releases
- .. be able to influence your organization's influencers
- .. be part of a noble effort to improve the way that we understand our fellow man, whether at work, church, our neighborhood, or in our travels

Once you have finished the survey you will be welcomed to the tribe. I look forward to hearing from you.



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APPENDIX: RECOMMENDED READING

This list of books and articles is not an endorsement for all of the views or even all of their tools of the authors. These resources are recommended for being conversant with global cultures and national frameworks.

Global Cultures

Erin Meyer's	<i>The Culture Map: Breaking Through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business</i>
Jayson Georges	<i>The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures</i>
Geert Hofstede	<i>Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values: Second Edition</i> <i>Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind, Third Edition</i>
Richard Lewis	<i>When Cultures Collide: Leading Across Cultures</i> <i>When Teams Collide: Managing the International Team Successfully</i>
Fons Trompenaars	<i>Riding the Waves of Culture</i> <i>Servant Leadership Across Cultures: Harnessing the Strength of the World's Most Powerful Leadership Philosophy</i>
Terri Morrison & Wayne Conaway	<i>Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands: The Bestselling Guide to Doing Business in More Than 60 Countries</i>
Kai Hammerich & Richard D. Lewis	<i>Fish Can't See Water: How National Culture Can Make or Break Your Corporate Strategy</i>
Michelle LeBaron & Venashri Pillay	<i>Conflict Across Cultures: A Unique Experience of Bridging Differences</i> <i>Bridging Cultural Conflicts: A New Approach for a Changing World</i>
Edward T Hall	<i>Beyond Culture</i>

National American Culture

Douglas A. Blackman	<i>Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II</i>
Michelle Alexander	<i>The New Jim Crow</i>
Michael Burns	<i>Crossing the Line: Culture, Race, and Kingdom</i>
Chris Hayes	<i>A Colony in a Nation</i>
Martin N. Davidson	<i>The End of Diversity As We Know It: Why Diversity Efforts Fail and How Leveraging Difference Can Succeed</i>
Mathew Desmond	<i>Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City</i>
Ta-Nehisi Coates	<i>Between The World and Me</i> <i>The Case for Reparations (Atlantic)</i> ⁸
Howard Zinn	<i>A People's History of the United States</i>
Michael Hector	<i>Native America: A Concise Guide To Native American History - Native Americans, Indian American, Slavery & Colonization</i>
Maria Shad Tlaa Williams (ed)	<i>The Alaska Native Reader: History, Culture, Politics</i>

⁸ <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>