

# Crosscultural Communication and Cultural Awareness

Dr. Greg Bond, June 2020

## Group work

1. Read each scenario out loud and then discuss these questions.

- 1. What is your immediate personal gut reaction. Do you feel any particular empathy or solidarity for one position? Can you understand the people? How would you react in this situation? How would you feel and what would you do?
- 2. Do you think something like this would happen in your culture / society / company? Would it be “normal” behaviour?
- 3. How would you explain the behaviour of the people in these stories? If the behaviour is culturally shaped, what are the underlying cultural values?

1. A man from A, who is around 50 and has two grown-up children, has taken a guest / lodger in his home, a young woman from B, the same age as his children. She has come to A as a refugee and is very grateful. The relationship is good, and one day the woman from B writes a thank-you letter to the man from A and his wife, which is very touching. The man from A wants to embrace the young woman from B, but he is uncertain and decides not to.

2. A group of academics from A was meeting for a Friday afternoon seminar. A paper was presented and then there was a heated discussion. A foreign guest professor was disturbed by the atmosphere and had the impression that the professors did not like each other at all. She was surprised that after the discussion had ended they left the room in a good mood and wished each other a nice weekend. She decided that she did not want to work with these people.

3. A woman from A is a successful freelance trainer, training mediation to lawyers, and has established a leading business in a small market in her country. She is called up one day by the country's chief justice, who she first met when she was a student of law, as he was a professor of law at the time. The chief justice asks her if she can provide a series of one-day trainings for young judges, who really need to know more about what mediation is and how it can work. She feels honoured, but there is no discussion about money, and the woman knows that she cannot ask the chief justice for money for this.

4. You come from society A and are working in society B. At business meetings you find it confusing that there is no set seating arrangement and the boss just sits in with the rest. Everyone is dressed in the same informal way. At business dinners it is the same – everyone just sits at the table wherever they like. The boss has no particular role at dinner, such as asking everyone to begin, holding a speech, etc.

5. In families children and young adults (who are still children) do what their parents wish or at least approve of. They are supported by their families, but the expectations are strong and shared by all that the parents have a strong say in what the children do until they themselves get married. If for example, the family comes from a social class where it is expected that the children go to university and get a degree – perhaps in law – then this is what the children will do. The parents will expect and support this.

6. A company from A is running a construction project in B. The project is behind schedule, and the two senior project managers from A are frustrated because they cannot speak directly to the workers due to the language barrier. The work is not done to the quality that the managers from A expect, and many tasks have to be repeated and corrected, as the workers from B are making too many mistakes. When the managers from A talk to their partner project managers from B, in English (which is not the native language of any of them), the partners from B agree that the schedule and quality are important, but in the next days nothing seems to change to the managers from A.