

# Models for Understanding Cross-Cultural Communication

Greg Bond, 2020

## **Models:**

- Emic and etic?
- Icebergs and onions . . . .
- Dimensions: Lewis
- Dimensions: Hofstede
- Dimensions: Trompenaars
- Contexts: Hall

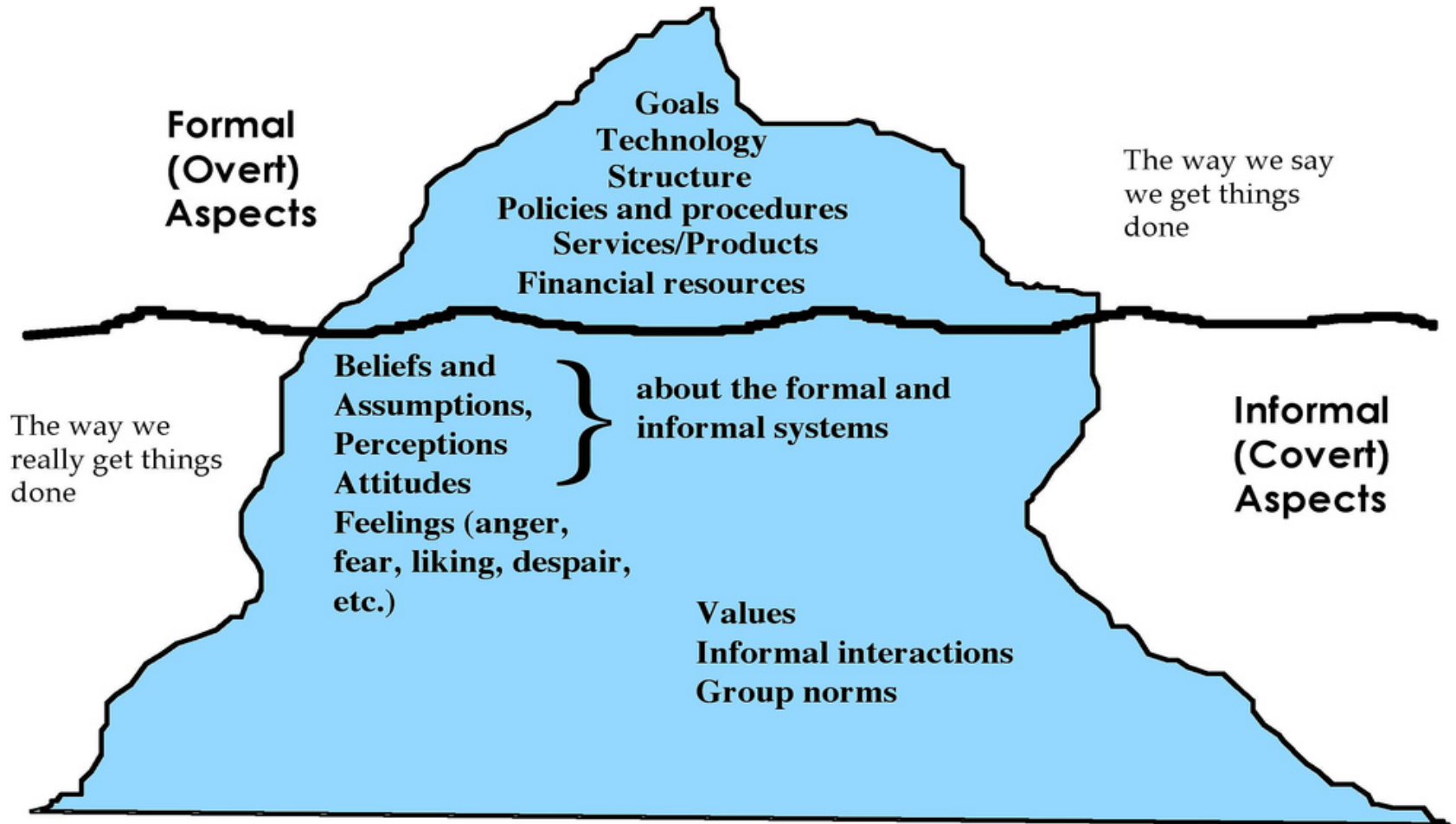
**What is crosscultural competence?**

**Is there a universal business ethic?**

# Emic and etic

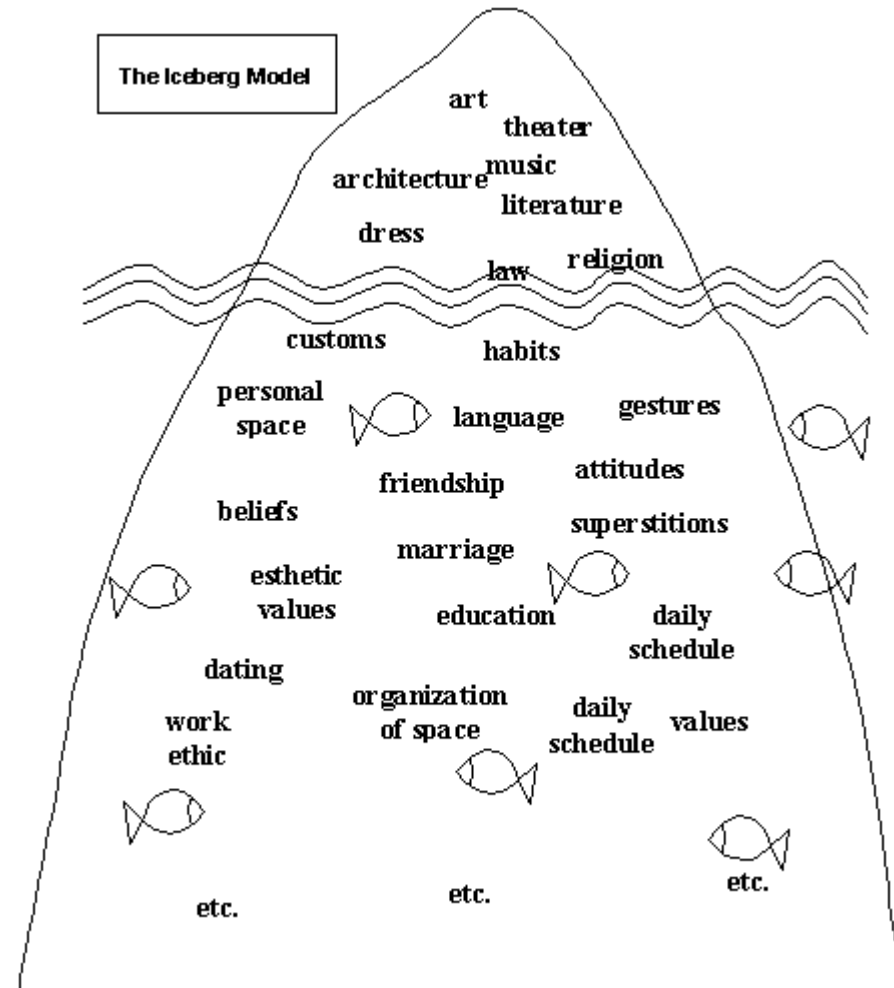
- Emic – from
- From the term in linguistics: phonemic
- Looking at culture in terms meaningful for an insider
- Attempt to understand from within
- Etic – from without
- From the term in linguistics: phonetic
- Looking at culture as an observer
- Attempt to be universal, culturally neutral

# Cultural Iceberg

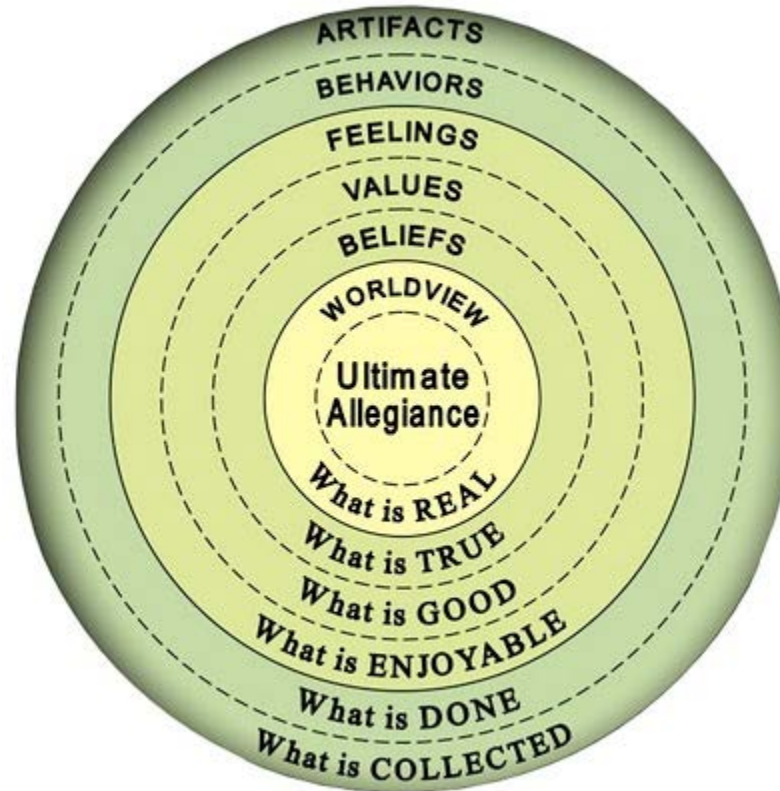


*Created by Stanley N. Herman. TRW Systems Group, 1970*

# Iceberg model



# Onion model



# Iceberg / Onion model

Things you can recognise easily

Things which take some time to recognise

Things which you recognise only when you  
know someone / a culture well

# Iceberg / onion model

People and organisations alike work with  
*mental models*  
underlying beliefs and assumptions about

*themselves*                      *other people*

*other organisations*

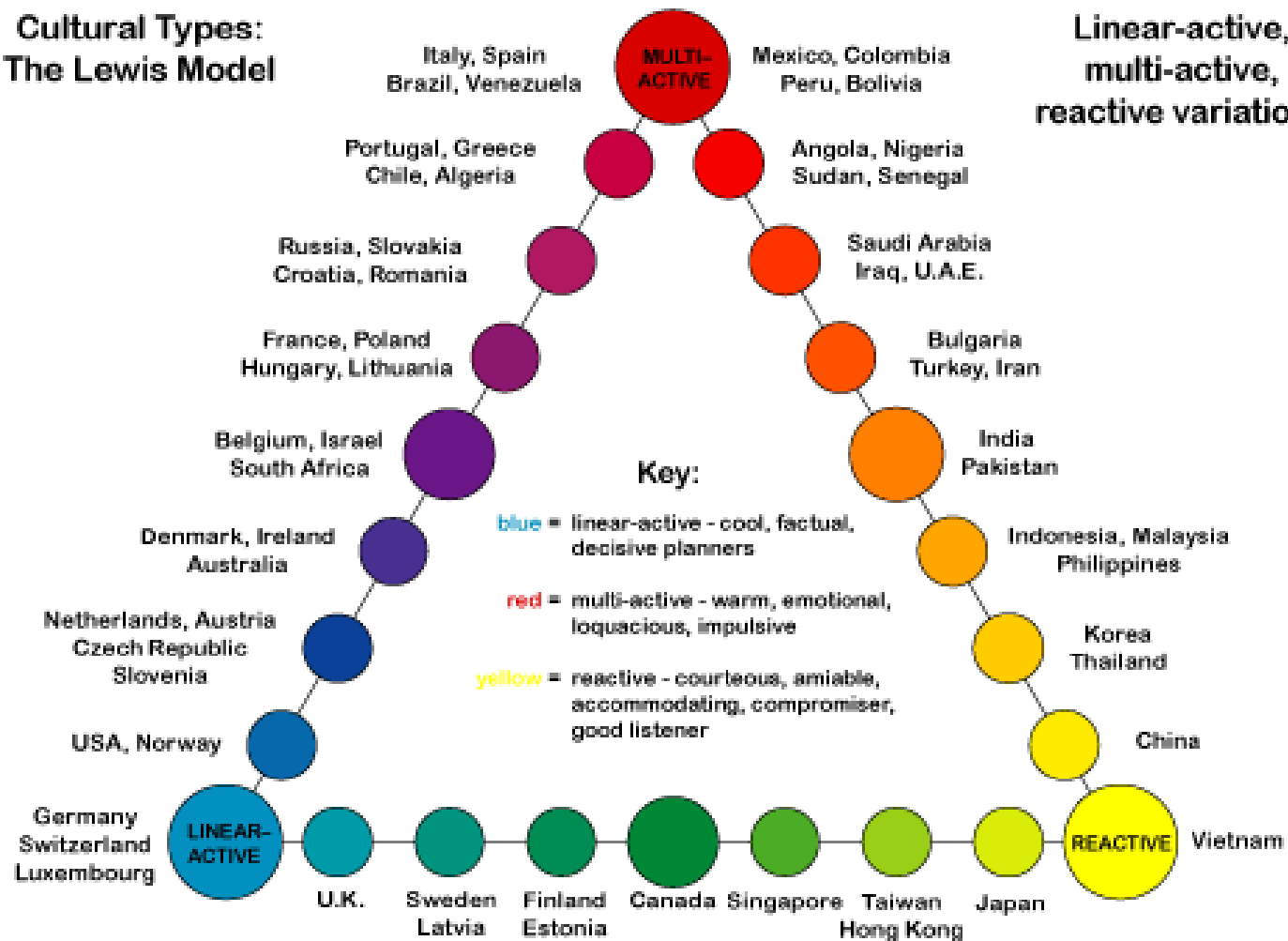
*ways things should be done*



# Lewis

## Cultural Types: The Lewis Model

Linear-active,  
multi-active,  
reactive variations



# Hofstede

Geert Hofstede, Culture's Consequences:  
Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions  
and Organizations Across Nations, 2001

6 dimensions / indexes to measure  
company cultures

# Hofstede

The 6 dimensions:

Power distance (PDI)

Individualism / Collectivism (IDV)

Masculine / Feminine (MAS)

Uncertainty avoidance (UAI)

Long-term orientation (LTO)

Indulgence (IND)

# Hofstede

Power distance index (PDI):

The acceptance of the unequal distribution of power – the degree to which:

- Employees are independent
- Structures are hierarchical
- Bosses are accessible
- People have rights or privileges
- Progress is by evolution or revolution

# Hofstede

Individualism / Collectivism (IDV):  
The degree to which people:

- Work in groups or alone
- Relate to their tasks or colleagues

# Hofstede

Masculinity / Femininity (MAS):

The degree to which people:

- Put work at the centre of their lives
- Value competition, power, the task
- Believe in consensus, cooperation, value relationships
- Expect managers to use intuition

# Hofstede

Masculinity / Femininity (MAS):

In other words: *tough / tender*

How does it relate to gender?

Societies with a high masculinity index have higher gender inequality, higher levels of separation of family and work life.

# Hofstede

Uncertainty avoidance index (UAI):  
The degree to which people can:

- Take risks
- Accept conflict and stress
- Work without rules



# Hofstede scores

Long-term orientation (LTO):

The degree to which people:

- Have a short- or long-term view of their work
- Accept convention
- Persevere with a job
- Spend or invest

# Hofstede scores

Indulgence (IND):

The degree to which people:

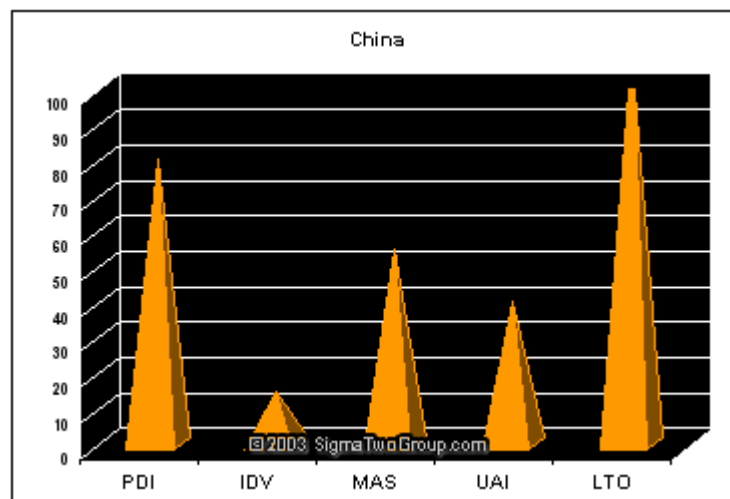
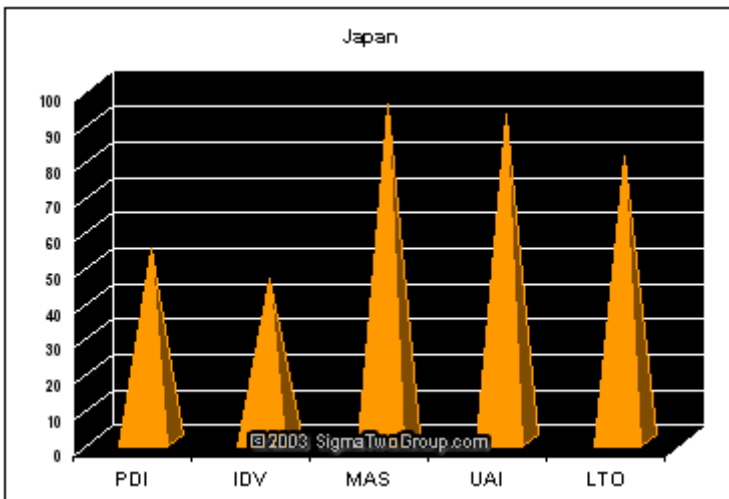
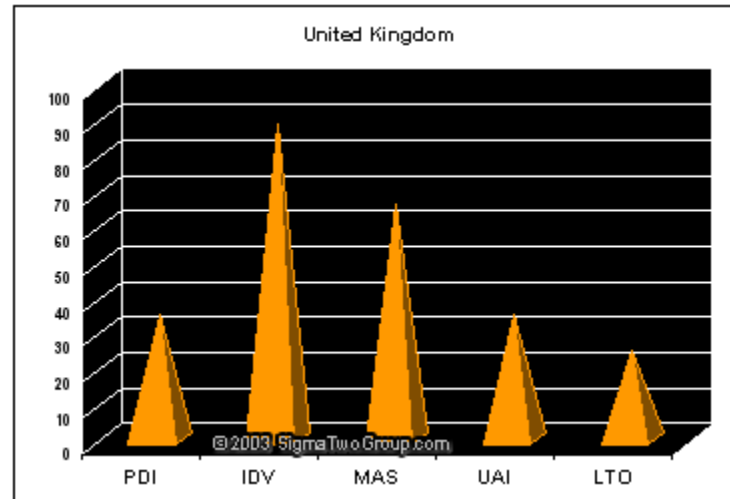
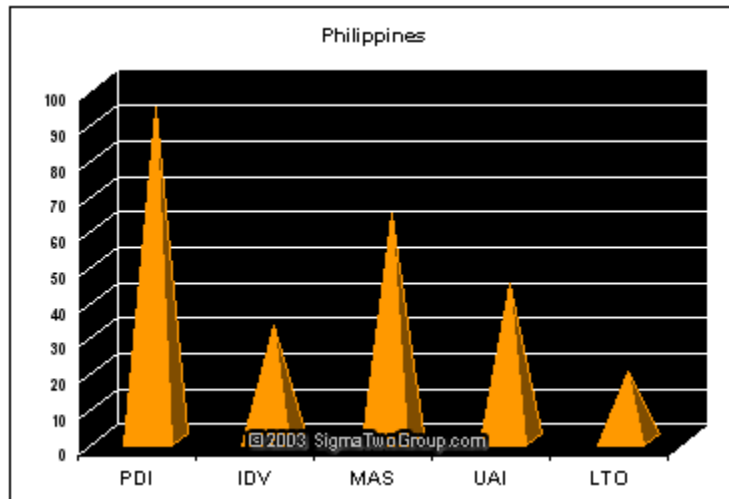
- Gratify needs and desires
- Fulfil wishes

OR:

- Exercise restraint (due to moral or other codes)

# Hofstede scores

[www.geert-hofstede.com/](http://www.geert-hofstede.com/)



# Hofstede scores

What do you think the scores might be in your country / your company?

Power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation

What does doing this exercise tell you?

# Trompenaars



Fons Trompenaars, *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business*, 1997

7 dimensions to describe corporate cultures

# Trompenaars

The 7 dimensions:

- Universalism / particularism
- Individualism / communitarianism
- Specific / diffuse
- Neutrality / affectivity
- Inner-directed / outer-directed
- Achieved status / ascribed status
- Sequential time / synchronic time

# Trompenaars

## **Universalism / Particularism**

Following rules *or* believing in individual cases and exceptions

## **Individualism / Communitarianism**

Personal qualities and originality *or* loyalty and duties to the group

# Trompenaars

## **Specific / Diffuse**

Sticking to facts and data relating to the case *or* using general feelings

## **Neutrality / Affectivity**

Controlling your emotions in a professional way *or* showing them and becoming involved



# Trompenaars

## **Inner-directed / Outer-directed**

Controlling and directing your environment *or* being influenced and by it and coordinating it

## **Achieved status / Ascribed status**

What you do is important and brings status *or* who you are and what your contacts are

# Trompenaars

## Sequential time / Synchronic time

Doing things one by one, step by step, *or*  
doing things all at the same time

<http://www.7d-culture.nl/>

# Trompenaars

The 7 dimensions again:

- Universalism / particularism
- Individualism / communitarianism
- Specific / diffuse
- Neutrality / affectivity
- Inner-directed / outer-directed
- Achieved status / ascribed status
- Sequential time / synchronic time

Can you think of experiences in your own career where you have come across problems associated with different understandings of these categories?

# Hall

Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language*,  
1997

*Understanding Cultural Differences*, 1990

Dimensions of space, time, high and low  
context cultures

# Hall

Knowledge as:

Formal (taught dos and don'ts...)

Informal (unaware, adopted ...)

Technical (taught: how to ...)

Understanding Cultural Differences, 1990

Dimensions of space, time, high and low  
context cultures

# Hall: The Silent Language

Space:

Proxemics – the study of the human use of space

Intimate distance

Personal distance

Social distance

Public distance

Example: The office door syndrome

# Hall: The Silent Language

Time:

*Monochronic*: linear, divisible time,  
schedules have priority over relationships

*Polychronic*: simultaneous events,  
interpersonal interaction has priority

# Hall: The Silent Language



High context cultures:

The context is “known”, therefore knowledge is covert: indirect communication, harmony, long-term focus, relationship focus, strong boundaries and structures

Examples: parties of friends, religious communities, families ...



# Hall: The Silent Language



Low context cultures:

The context is made more explicit, more overt: direct communication, loose networks, transferable knowledge, short term focus, task focus

Examples: a business team in the US, an international airport ...

# Mental models?

- Be aware that there is a lot under the surface
- Be sensitive to non-semantic messages
- Increase self-awareness of your own values and covert agenda
- Increase self-awareness of your cultural assumptions / mental models
- Be prepared to suspend (not cancel) your assumptions / mental models
- Work on sensing and perceiving where others are coming from / their mental models

# Crosscultural competence



Is there such a thing as cultural intelligence?

If so, what does it involve?

# Universal business ethic?



Are there certain standards we can / should expect in business in any cultural context?

Is everything relative?

# Literature



David Bohm, On Dialogue , London 1996

Gary P. Ferraro: The Cultural Dimension of International Business, Upper Saddle River 2006

Edward T. Hall: The Silent Language, New York 1997

Edward T. Hall: Understanding Cultural Differences, Yarmouth 1990

Geert Hofstede: Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations, Thousand Oaks 2001

Geert Hofstede and Gert Jan Hofstede: Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind, New York 2004

Nina Jacob: Intercultural Management, London 2003

Koen, Carla I, Comparative International Management, Maidenhead 2005

Richard D. Lewis, When Cultures Collide: Leading Across Cultures, Boston and London, 2006

Peter M. Senge: The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization, New York 1990

David C. Thomas: Readings and Cases in International Management: A Cross-Cultural Perspective, Thousand Oaks 2003

David C. Thomas and Kerr Inkson: Cultural Intelligence, People Skills for Global Business, San Francisco 2003

Alfons Trompenaars, Charles Hampden-Turner and Fons Trompenaars, Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business, New York 1997