

Global Competencies Americans May Never Possess

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In the chat, please post your
professional role and
Your location.

Session Engagement

Post questions in the Q&A

Also, two opportunities to pause and offer perspectives via chat

How can Americans
contribute most effectively
to Low- and Middle-
Income Countries?

Book Content

Based on 90 interviews:

- 45 individuals from Majority World
- 45 individuals from the U.S.

Two decades of publishing:

- international education
- cross-cultural power dynamics
- empowerment

Foreword by Richard Straub
Founder, the Global Peter Drucker Forum

STRONG *Together*

BUILDING SOCIAL ENTERPRISES
THAT TRULY TRANSFORM



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What Are Global Competencies?

Frequent themes:

- Understand our differences
- Develop positive cross-cultural relationships
- Become aware of global challenges
- Act in response to global challenges

Competence

The quality or state of having sufficient knowledge, judgment, skill, or strength

- Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Contributors to Assumptions of Sufficiency

We Generally Prefer to Work Alone

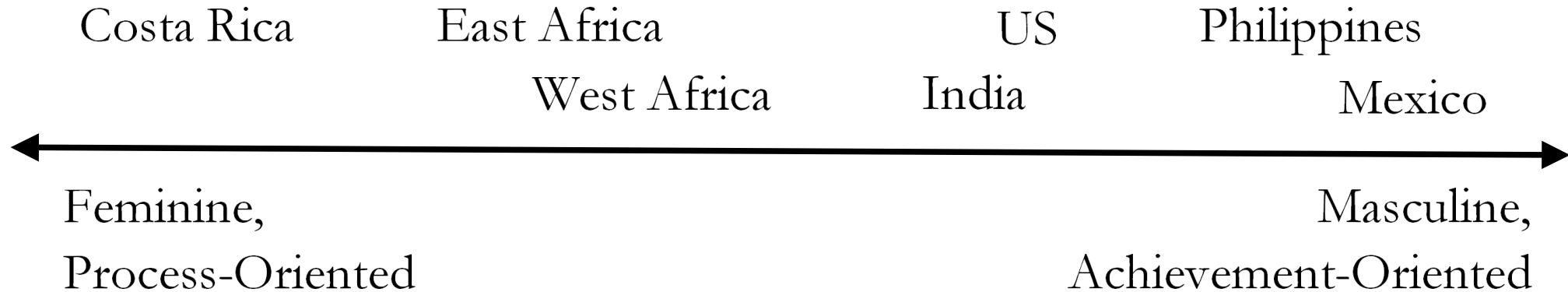
Individualism/Collectivism Continuum



Source: Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences*

We Live In an Achievement-Oriented Culture

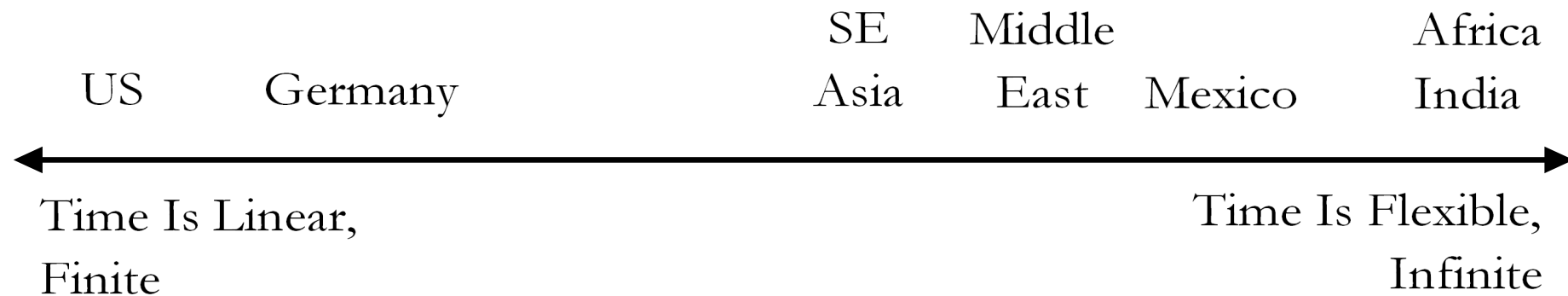
Masculine/Feminine Continuum



Source: Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences*

Americans Value Efficiency, Rapid Results

Time Orientation Continuum



Source: Edward T. Hall, Erin Meyer, Craig Storti

Americans Value Innovation

An area of great competence

We tend to value innovation over *restoration*

- Using local resources in more productive ways
- Restoring dignity as primary goal

Allows us to operate at a distance from those we seek to help

What else might contribute to an unhealthy sense of self-sufficiency or competence for Americans?

Think about this question for 30 seconds then post ideas in the chat.

Contributors within Higher Education

- International students come to the U.S.; rarely vice versa
- Expectation in the American classroom is often that international students will *receive*
- Universities often send faculty to teach students when studying abroad

Unintended Consequences of Assumed Competence

We “Take Action,” But Ideas Don’t Transfer

“We had a guy come for three weeks to do an internship. He was very smart, had built financial models for over five years in New York. What he said was right, but he missed the mark. It’s the issue of theory versus practice.”

- Edward, Social Entrepreneur

We Don't Truly “Understand Other Perspectives”

“You go into a community to solve a housing problem, but the people use thatched roofs. First you have to understand why thatch works for them. Perhaps it keeps the inside cool when it’s hot outside. They are probably migrant people, but [foreigners] want to build them permanent structures.

That superiority approach. ‘You are so behind, and you don’t know where the world is headed.’ But some people are quite happy with the lives they live.”

- Marigold Adu, Ghanaian Social Entrepreneur

We Assume Self-Sufficiency

“There are two kinds of expats living here. I am not a fan of one type – the type that comes in to work with a big MNC. They live on a hill with big SUVs. I don’t know how they get to know what they need to learn by not living on the ground. You need to have a love for the local people. Look at them as people, as human beings... They think they know everything, but they don’t know anything.”

- Joachim Ewechu, CEO of SHONA, an East African Business Development Services Company

We Disempower

“Capacity among nationals is already there. Building confidence and dignity, doing it with rather than for them and not by doing it to them, training so they can train others – that’s our role... Empower people.”

- Florence Muindi, M.D., M.P.H.,
CEO of Life in Abundance (Kenya)

Global Competence

Understanding Our Strengths, Differences,
and Our Limitations

What do you believe are often Americans' greatest strengths when working in the Majority World?

Think about this question for 30 seconds then post ideas in the chat.



American Strengths

1. Entrepreneurial Vision and Expertise

“In a lot of these [Majority World] countries, training for enterprise doesn’t happen in schools or in the universities. The system does not support business start-ups. Having your mother sell on the street is demeaning. There’s nothing dignified about entrepreneurship.”

- Klein Illeliji, Professor of Agricultural and Biological Engineering

American Strengths

2. Technological Skills

“Importation is the norm. People are not used to buying Benin products, so market development—how to help people start buying locally. Economically, how to add value to an agricultural product, how to have access to a market. Then there will be permanent movement up the value chain.”

– Wilfrid Marx Abdiji, Benin

American Strengths

3. Social Access

“Because I have white skin, I can have conversations and get meetings that they [my Haitian partners] could never get. Ideally, they oversee everything in Haiti, all the logistics, but when we went into a meeting with the Ministry of Tourism, they were always looking at me. The conversation was with me.”

- Doug Taylor, Social Enterprise Partner, Haiti

American Strengths

4. Ability to Access Financial Capital

“Help Africans write proposals. We don’t know how to access financing. Training is what we need, not more money.

I was at an awards ceremony—agricultural awards. Millions were being awarded. Seven of the eight awards went to white people. I was sitting at a table with a Kenyan and an Ethiopian. We just looked at each other. We don’t know how to access money that’s designed for us. We don’t have access, but we have ideas.”

- Daliso Chitundu, Zambian social entrepreneur

Majority World Strengths/American Limitations

1. Deep Understanding of Poverty

“I’ve worked among the poor all my life. We know that the best workers among the poor are those who come from a poor background.”

- Sri Lankan leader

Majority World Strengths/American Limitations

2. Social Capital

“Local people have social pull in their community that outsiders do not have. This is especially important in collectivist cultures where in-groups are very powerful. When you are dealing with local small businesses, you need locals. Locals understand markets, the local context. Some negotiations need a local person to deal with them. An expat can’t.”

- Joachim Owechu, Uganda

Majority World Strengths/American Limitations

3. Extensive Knowledge of Local Resources

“They know the area, they know about the culture, what the NGO needs to know. They know what’s expected, how to survive.”

- Stacey Eyman, American living in Costa Rica

Majority World Strengths/American Limitations

4. Long-Term Commitment

“It’s a personal thing. I will be here for sixty years. I want my child, my child’s child, my child’s child’s child to enjoy this facility I’m building.”

- Daliso Chitundu, Zambian Social Entrepreneur

Complementary Assets

American Assets

- Highly efficient use of time
- Exceptional optimism
- Social access both inside and outside the country
- Technological skills and expertise
- Ability to access financial capital
- Entrepreneurial expertise
- Access to powerful global markets

Majority World Assets

- Patience, slower pace
- Long-term commitment
- Social capital within the culture
- Extensive knowledge of local resources
- Understanding of what it means to live in poverty
- Tacit knowledge of the local culture and constraints that exist within it
- Understanding of how to empower vulnerable people

Value of Cultural Bridges

Cultural translator

- - Years spent living in the two cultures
- - Special sensitivity to cultural differences

“Expats understand the culture like nationals can’t. It’s like asking a fish to describe what water feels like. They know no other. Local people don’t know about local hotels because they’ve never needed one. In the same way, they don’t know what it’s like to be a foreigner trying to navigate governmental red tape. That’s where an expatriate can be so valuable.”

- Paul Nelson, retired CEO of the Crowell Trust

Goals of Global Competency

- Recognize vast cultural differences and your cultural norms
- Recognize the challenges facing our world

And...

- Recognize your strengths
- Recognize your limitations / others' strengths
- Submit yourself to interdependence

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<https://pipparannbooks.com/product/strong-together/>

Price reflects a 20% discount on all pre-orders

What are implications for programming and assessment?

Please post additional comments
and questions in the Q&A

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Complementary Assets

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Source: *Strong Together: Building Social Enterprises That Truly Transform*

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THAT TRULY TRANSFORM



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How can American college graduates contribute most effectively when working in low- and middle-income countries? What global competencies do our students often lack?

Based on interviews with 90 leaders in the international development space, *Strong Together* highlights Majority World perspectives on Americans' common strengths and weaknesses when working around the globe as well as tips for more effective engagement.

<https://pipparannbooks.com/product/strong-together/>

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