UNIVERSITAS NEGERI MEDAN

Culture Talks:

An Ethnographic Study on Language-Culture Connection

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A R I A T N A , S S , M A (T E S L)

Abstract

This paper is based on an ethnographic study which attempts to explore different personal cultural values and beliefs from a number of participants' point of view as a step in gaining cross-cultural understanding, communication and competence. The participants were university/school students and employees of different ethnic origin studying or working in Adelaide, South Australia. Using a questionnaire which is based on Furstenberg et al.'s model of cross-cultural learning, information about the participant's cultural views on family relations, power structure, social interaction and individual achievement was gathered manually and electronically. The results showed that although the participants come from various cultural backgrounds, there was a tendency that they provided similar answers rather different ones due to their academic and residential influences.

Key Words: Cross-Cultural Understanding, Communication, Competence

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Introduction

Drawing on the work of Furtstenberg and his colleagues (2001) in their web-based study of cross-cultural differences, the ethnographic study was intended to develop our self-reflexive skills (i.e. awareness and ability to understand the different cultural values and beliefs that people have) and consequently to enhance our cross-cultural learning and communication. For reporting purposes, this paper will be presented in three sections. First, it will give an overview of the research methodology and the participant's characteristics. In the second part of this paper, the participant's values and beliefs will be examined and compared to the scholarship on intercultural communication and will then be discussed in relation to the writer's personal cultural values and beliefs. The last section of this paper will be to suggest some tentative points concluded from the whole description and discussion.

Description of study and participants

Information about the participants' cultural values and beliefs was gathered through a questionnaire in the form of a sentence completion (see appendix 1) which highlights some basic cultural differences with respect to topics such as family relations, power structures, work, and so on. Participants submitted their answers either manually (by completing a hard copy) or electronically (by sending an email). While participation was voluntary, the confidentiality of any information provided by the participants was highly respected.

There were 12 participants (6 males and 6 females) in this study. They come from a variety of cultural backgrounds and age groups. The participants were aged between 17

and 57 year olds and their ethnic origin ranges from Asian, Middle-Eastern to European. The variety that these participants have had enabled the writer to explore how they differ from one another or what they have in common in terms of cultural values and beliefs about certain topics. For ethical reasons, the participant's names in this paper were kept confidential (using an alias) and used for internal analysis only

The following paragraphs will examine the answers given by the participants and compare them to Damen's (1987, p. 49) table of value orientations or Hofstede's (1998; as cited in Bowe & Martin, 2007, p. 82) framework of cultural dimensions (see appendix 2) and will further discuss them in relation to the writer's cultural values and beliefs. The writer was born and brought up in Medan, North Sumatera Province, Indonesia. While the writer is of Javanese and Minang ancestry, the way he perceives and does things is influenced by the Indonesian culture in general as well as the environments in which he lives.

Critical discussion/comparison on cross-cultural values and beliefs

The questionnaire that the writer had used to collect data from the participants consists of 12 questions. For the sake of reporting clarity, all the answers will be grouped by each question in a table form with separate explanations as follows:

1. A GOOD NEIGHBOUR IS SOMEONE WHO (IS)…………………	
Mtw (Australian)	Cares about your house safety, does not make much noise
Kfr (Chinese)	Friendly, respects you, does not disturb you
Akn (Japanese)	Does not bother you, friendly, obey the rules
Sty (Dutch)	Respects your privacy, helpful, friendly
Mhn (Bangladeshi)	Shows respect, provides assistance when required, does not interfere with private matters

Mca (German)	Friendly, not too noisy, helpful
Azz (Saudi)	Comes to visit, is friendly but not nosy, respects my privacy
Fhd (Saudi)	Respects me and family, pays you a visit, tells me what's happened to my house when I go out with my family
Kls (German)	Friendly but not nosy, respects my privacy, rings me at work if a water pipe burst at my house
Jqi (Irish)	Ready to help, friendly and welcoming, respects your privacy
Mra (Italian)	Will do you favours when you need them, will keep an eye on your house when you are away on holiday
Gge (Greek)	Respects your privacy, will help you, accepts your culture differences

Table 1 shows that most participants describe a good neighbour as being someone who (in order of trend):

1. respects privacy or does not disturb other neighbours.

2. is friendly

3. is willing to help.

While there might be cultural differences between individualist societies and collectivist societies (Hofstede, 1998, as cited in Bowe & Martin, p. 82) in the way they view relationship with other people, participants in any culture and age group seem to favour similar qualities for defining a good neighbour. In this case, Hofstede's classification of individualism and collectivism might be more useful to analyse employer-employee relationship in the workplace rather than relationships among neighbours in their neighbourhood.

In the writer's culture, the qualities of respectfulness, friendliness and helpfulness and are also valued for establishing a good neighbour relationship. In addition, a good neighbour is also described as someone who is willing to visit each other (*silaturahmi*) and

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participate in neighbourhood activities such as *siskamling* (neighbourhood night patrol) and *gotong royong* (neighbourhood clean-up day). Similarly, while the idea of visiting is also mentioned by two participants (Fhd and Azz), four participants (Mtw, Fhd, Kls and Mra) seem to expect a good neighbour to watch their house or inform them about what happens during their absence.

2. A TRUE FRIEND IS SOMEONE WHO (IS)…………………….……	
Mtw (Australian)	Helps you when you are not feeling happy
Kfr (Chinese)	Gives you the best help when you are in trouble
Akn (Japanese)	Takes care of you, always honest with you, understands you
Sty (Dutch)	Is there for you when you need him/her, does not judge you, honest
Mhn (Bangladeshi)	Can be trusted, will be there in good and bad times, will provide good advice
Mca (German)	You can trust, you can rely on, will do anything for you
Azz (Saudi)	Trusts me and I trust him, respects me, helps me when I am in trouble
Fhd (Saudi)	Tells me what's good and bad, does not laugh at me, helps me in bad circumstances
Kls (German)	I can rely on, equally supportive in good and bad times, I still feel close to if we haven't seen each other for a long time
Jqi (Irish)	You can trust and rely on, cares about you, you can laugh and cry with
Mra (Italian)	Does not judge your action, listens and is always prepared to help
Gge (Greek)	Remains a friend during any good or bad times, provides assistance whenever needed

In order of appearance, the concept of true friendship in table 2 is defined by most participants as someone who (in order of frequency):

1. is always prepared to help, especially in bad times.

2. is honest or can be trusted.

While the way people choose their true friends is subject to personal preferences rather than cultural preferences, it seems that the qualities of a true friend as being reliable during difficult times and being trustworthy are shared by any given culture. In this case, Damen's (1987) view of human relationship in terms of North American and Contrast American cultures might not be relevant to analyse the concept of friendship (p. 49).

In the writer's cultural context, a true friend is also associated with someone who is there when you need him/her. Although everybody has friends, people in the writer's culture believe that true friends are other 'family members' whom most of us rely on for advice, comfort and help. A true friend will come forward to help without any request and be with us in need without expecting anything in return. This view indicates that the saying '*a friend in need is a friend indeed*' works across cultures as a universally accepted view of true friendship.

3. A GOOD PARENT IS SOMEONE WHO (IS)…………………………	
Mtw (Australian)	Cares about your interest, loves you no matter what happens in your life, understands how you feel and tries to help emotionally
Kfr (Chinese)	Loves you very much, Friendly with his/her children, guides the children to the right path
Akn (Japanese)	Loves you so much, can be a good model for the children, teaches you moral values
Sty (Dutch)	Shows you his/her love, Supportive, provides a safe environment for the children
Mhn (Bangladeshi)	A guide as well as a friend, encourages family discussions and respects opinions
Mca (German)	Loves their children, takes good care of the children, spends quality time with

	the children
Azz (Saudi)	Loves and looks after me, teaches me positive things, treats me fairly
Fhd (Saudi)	teaches good things in life, responsible and cares about the children
Kls (German)	prepared to listen, allows children the right amount of freedom, establish open relationship with children
Jqi (Irish)	Models good values, has time to play/be with their children
Mra (Italian)	Loving, forgiving, listens
Gge (Greek)	Loves his/her children unconditionally, teaches his/her children the difference between good and bad

In table 3, the criteria that a good parent should have are described by most participants as follows (in order of trend):

1. loving and caring

2. teaches and models good things

The concept of a good parent might be related to what Hofstede (1998; as cited in Bowe & Martin, p. 82) calls 'power distance societies', especially in terms of what subordinates (children) expect from their bosses (parents). While the degree to which children accept parents as having power differs across cultures (e.g. in terms of freedom to choose things and express opinions), most participants believe that ideal parents are those who love their children and teach them good values in life.

Similarly, the idea of modelling good behaviour and character to children is also valued by most Indonesian people. However, it is important to note that there is a cultural distinction between a mother's role and a father's role in the writer's society in terms of good parenting. In this regard, a good mother is often described as a housewife who can successfully manage her domestic commitments such as as taking care of children, shopping, cooking, doing the laundry, etc. On the other hand, the quality of a good father is

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often attributed to his financial responsibilities as a family head such as earning a living, sending children to school, etc.

4. A GOOD CITIZEN IS SOMEONE WHO (IS)…………………………	
Mtw (Australian)	Is not racist or sexist in any form, understands about the country he is living in
Kfr (Chinese)	Helps develop his country, gives his country a good name, obeys the rules
Akn (Japanese)	Lives in peace and harmony, avoids fighting
Sty (Dutch)	Respects and obeys the law, offers help if he/she sees someone who needs it
Mhn (Bangladeshi)	Pays tax regularly, not involved in illegal activities, fights for the country when required
Mca (German)	Does not break the law, helps other people in need, respects other people
Azz (Saudi)	Loves his/her country, serves his/her country, obeys the rules
Fhd (Saudi)	Not selfish, respects others, respects the law
Kls (German)	Obeys the law, prepared to serve the country, values democration
Jqi (Irish)	Proud of his/her country, supports local business/industry, contributes to community life
Mra (Italian)	Respects the law, prepared to help others, looks after the community he/she lives in
Gge (Greek)	Respects the law, contributes through community involvement

The trend in Table 4 shows that most participants describe a good citizen as someone who obeys the law of his/her country. This belief might be compared to what Hofstede (1998, as cited in Bowe & Martin, p. 82) says about the notion of 'uncertainty avoidance societies (UAI)' which relates to how members of a culture behave towards the rules in their country. Despite Hofstede's view that weak UAI are tolerant of rules and strong AUI are intolerant of rules, most participants agree that being obedient to rules

should be the character of a good citizen. As far as the writer's culture is concerned, Australia differs from Indonesia to the degree to which rules are enforced. Let us take traffic regulations for example. In contrast to Australia where parking and speeding are highly regulated, Indonesians tend to be more tolerant of these two regulations.

5. A GOOD STUDENT IS SOMEONE WHO (IS)……………………………	
Mtw (Australian)	Studies diligently, asks questions when he/she does not understand, communicates with fellow classmates and teachers
Kfr (Chinese)	Studies hard, respects teachers, has interest in his/her study
Akn (Japanese)	Concentrates on his/her study, thinks critically, respects teachers and other students
Sty (Dutch)	Diligent, wants to learn, collaborative
Mhn (Bangladeshi)	Completes all assignments, does not cheat, respects teacher and appreciative
Mca (German)	Gets good grades, helps other students, hands in assignment on time
Azz (Saudi)	Wants to learn, wants to develop his/her skills, respects teachers
Fhd (Saudi)	Listens to teachers, studies his lessons
Kls (German)	Focuses on his/her studies, interacts with fellow students and staff members, prepared to use knowledge in the community
Jqi (Irish)	Completes all required work in set time, shares ideas with others, works collaboratively
Mra (Italian)	Takes initiative, keen to learn, shares knowledge with other students
Gge (Greek)	Applies him/herself to their studies, not afraid to ask questions when not clear, works well with other students

Regarding the criteria of a good student in table 5, studying hard or focusing on study appears to be the most dominant answer given by the participants in any given culture. While participants from European culture suggest that a good student is also

someone who can share ideas and work collaboratively with others, Asian and Middle-Eastern participants put an emphasis on respecting teachers as another important quality of a good student. These differences might derive from how learning and teaching processes are perceived by members of a culture in terms of 'power distance' relationship (Hofstede, 1998, as cited in Bowe & Martin, p. 82).

In small power distance societies like Australia, for example, student-centred activities such as discussion and collaboration are highly encouraged. Whereas in large power distance societies such as the writer's country (Indonesia), teacher is often considered as an authority figure who is the centre of a class and therefore must be respected.

6. A GOOD POLICEMAN/WOMAN IS SOMEONE WHO (IS)…………………………	
Mtw (Australian)	Helps people when in trouble, cares about the safety of others, enforces the laws and rules of our society
Kfr (Chinese)	does justice to people, does not always look strict, protect people
Akn (Japanese)	Behaves reasonably, arrests criminals, has a sense of justice
Sty (Dutch)	Upholds the law, does not resort to violence, respectful of the cultures of others
Mhn (Bangladeshi)	Does not take bribery, puts the law in action, smiling and friendly
Mca (German)	Abides by the law, not corrupt, approachable by all members of the public
Azz (Saudi)	Ready to do fight criminals, treats people politely and nicely
Fhd (Saudi)	Does not use his/her position to do bad things, applies the law, full of smile
Kls (German)	Not corrupt, fit and courageous, obeys and upholds the law
Jqi (Irish)	Trustworthy, approachable, fair
Mra (Italian)	Firm and just, listens and helps

Gge (Greek)	Has integrity, enforces the law, approachable

As can be seen form table 6, a good police officer is dominantly associated with a person who enforces the law for the safety and comfort of others and therefore should not be corrupt. While Hosfstede (1998; as cited in Bowe & Martin, p. 82) suggests that small power distance societies differ from large distance societies in the way they perceive power hierarchy, many participants seem to expect a policeman/woman to be approachable or treat people in a way that is not frightening. This expectation also applies to the writer's culture where a police officer is often seen as an authority figure that rarely smiles, always speaks but never listens, and stops your car only to give you a traffic ticket.

7. A WELL-BEHAVED CHILD IS SOMEONE WHO (IS)…………………………	
Mtw (Australian)	Does not complain to parents, does not speak rudely, does not curse
Kfr (Chinese)	Respects the elders, does not repeat the same mistakes, motivated to learn
Akn (Japanese)	Helps parents with housework, patient, says 'thank you' or 'please' when needed
Sty (Dutch)	Listens to elders/parents, does not throw tantrums to get what he/she wants
Mhn (Bangladeshi)	Shows respect to his/her parents, Does not fight, does not bully other children
Mca (German)	Does what he/she is told, has good manners, respects other people
Azz (Saudi)	Obeys parents, well-mannered
Fhd (Saudi)	Listens to his/her parents and old people
Kls (German)	Prepared to listen, cares for others, shows respect towards parents and adults
Jqi (Irish)	Treats parents with respect, makes responsible choices, cares about others
Mra (Italian)	Listens to his/her parents, can adjust to any situation
Gge (Greek)	Respects parents/adults, keen to learn new things, mixes well with other people

The most preferred answer found in table 7 is parent-related. In other words, all the participants seem to agree that a child should respect his/her parents and behave in a way that pleases them. In addition, the ability to treat other adults/people in a good manner is also favoured by members of any given culture. From the descriptions, it may be concluded that people have similar expectations regarding how a child should behave regardless of whether they live in small power distance societies or large power distance societies (Hofstede, 1998; as cited in Bowe & Martin, p. 82). In relation to the writer's culture, a well-behaved child is similarly described as somebody who listens to parents, respect others and knows how to balance his/her time.

8. A RUDE PERSON IS SOMEONE WHO (IS)…………………………	
Mtw (Australian)	Curses in public, argues with everyone and hurt their feelings
Kfr (Chinese)	Not friendly, does not consider other people's feelings, selfish
Akn (Japanese)	Never says 'thank you', does something that hurts people's feelings
Sty (Dutch)	Cares only for him/herself, does not respect other people
Mhn (Bangladeshi)	Use bad words, does not show respect to others
Mca (German)	Does not respect others, impolite, obnoxious
Azz (Saudi)	Does not respect people, has negative thinking and attitude towards others
Fhd (Saudi)	Thinks that he/she is always right, does not respect others
Kls (German)	Does not care about other people's feelings, makes inappropriate comments, swears in the presence of others
Jqi (Irish)	Disrespectful, uncaring, selfish
Mra (Italian)	Selfish, disrespectful, does not consider anybody else's feelings
Gge (Greek)	Is not respectful or tolerant of other people, interrupts regularly

In table 8, most participants have much in common regarding their perception of who a rude person is. The act of showing no respect towards other people or hurting their feelings seems to be unfavourable in any culture. This belief supports what Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) describe as 'value orientations' meaning that while different cultural groups have different value orientations, certain social behavioural values are shared by members in any culture group (as cited in Damen, 1987, p. 49).

In the Indonesian culture where power distance relationship is noticeable, special emphasis has been put on the use of language especially in terms of politeness when talking to older people or people with higher positions. An example can be found in the use of the word 'you' in a conversation. While it is polite to use the word *you* to people of the same age, it is rude to use it to your parents, lecturers or police officers. For example, instead of saying "<u>Father</u>, are <u>you</u> going to work today?", Indonesians will say "<u>Father</u>, is <u>father</u> going to work today?".

9. A GOOD JOB IS A JOB WHICH (IS)……………………………	
Mtw (Australian)	You enjoy turning up to, has a good salary to support a family
Kfr (Chinese)	Enjoyable, has good payment
Akn (Japanese)	Which you can enjoy, where you can brush up your skills, where there are lovely colleagues and bosses
Sty (Dutch)	You enjoy, you can get something out of, where there are nice co-workers
Mhn (Bangladeshi)	Where the environment is healthy, where the colleagues are supportive and understanding, enjoyable
Mca (German)	You enjoy, has a good income, has friendly work colleagues
Azz (Saudi)	Has good staff members, has a good salary, suits one's ability
Fhd (Saudi)	Related to your study, has a good salary, offers a supportive environment

Kls (German)	Guarantees an income to support your family, gives opportunities to further develop my skills, gives satisfaction and enjoyment
Jqi (Irish)	Where you are valued by your boss, where training is offered regularly, where there are great colleagues to work with
Mra (Italian)	Pays well, rewarding and enjoyable, challenging
Gge (Greek)	You can do well, you can do with enthusiasm, you can do with dedication

With regard to the question in Table 9 of what a good job is, the participants give various answers. In order of frequency, their answers can be classified as follows:

1. enjoyable

2. well-paid

3. where there are good staff members to work with

In comparison to Hofstede's (1998; as cited in Bowe & Martin, p. 83) classification of masculine and feminine societies which denotes a distinction between career and life quality, the answers given by the majority of the participants indicate that job satisfaction in any culture is not only determined by a financial reward; it also involves human interaction and communication in the workplace. These beliefs are also shared by the society in which the writer lives. While good salary is regarded as an important component of a good job, supportive and harmonious relationships among workers are equally important. In fact, the best worker is often associated with someone who knows everybody in the workplace and has time to pay an informal visit to their house outside working hours.

10. A FUN PARTY IS A PARTY WHERE……………………………	
Mtw (Australian)	People chat together, there are party snacks, there are enjoyable games
Kfr (Chinese)	There are nice and friendly people, you feel excited, there is a fresh atmosphere
Akn (Japanese)	There are good friends to talk to, there is good food, I feel comfortable
Sty (Dutch)	your friends are around, there is good music, there is a fun atmosphere
Mhn (Bangladeshi)	There are good friends to talk to, there is good food, there is good entertainment
Mca (German)	Many of your friends are there, there is good food, there is good music
Azz (Saudi)	There is funny talk among friends, you do not do forbidden things
Fhd (Saudi)	You feel good with your friends, there are no alcohol and drugs
Kls (German)	You meet nice people to talk to, you can enjoy good food and a glass of wine/beer
Jqi (Irish)	People are happy and friendly, there are good food and music
Mra (Italian)	Everyone gets up to dance, everybody feels comfortable, everybody enjoys food and music
Gge (Greek)	People enjoys themselves, there is a lot good food and music

The trends showed in table 10 in relation to a fun party include the presence of friends or friendly people and the availability of food and music. Although these beliefs indicate that certain social preferences might be shared by members of any culture (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; as cited in Damen, 1987, p. 49), the word 'fun party' itself might carry different cultural representations at the level of implementation. As can be seen from table 10, there is a striking difference between Saudi and German cultures in terms of alcoholic drinks. While drinking might be a common thing in Germany's fun parties, it is totally forbidden in Saudi context. In regard to the writer's culture, the term

'fun party' is hardly attached unless to two main events: birthday and wedding. In these occasions, the hosts usually invite friends, neighbours, and acquaintances to come and provide them with local food and music. As with Saudi culture, alcoholic drinks are not served and consumed during a wedding party due to religious reasons.

11. MY GREATEST FEARS ARE………………………….	
Mtw (Australian)	Failure, depression, death
Kfr (Chinese)	Losing family and friends, losing love from others, disease and death
Akn (Japanese)	Disease, isolation, loss of close people
Sty (Dutch)	Not accomplishing anything worthwhile, losing loved ones, not having the courage to follow my dreams
Mhn (Bangladeshi)	Height, darkness, failure
Mca (German)	Dying, losing someone I love, not having a job
Azz (Saudi)	To have problems with others, dying as a sinful man
Fhd (Saudi)	Doing something forbidden by God
Kls (German)	Death of a family member, war, environmental catastrophes
Jqi (Irish)	Losing the people who are closest to me
Mra (Italian)	Procrastination, delaying the payment of bills, speeding fines
Gge (Greek)	Pollution, intolerance and war, snakes

In table 11, the participants define the concept of fear in a number of similar and different ways. While the most common answer is death or loss of loved people, the other answers show various trends ranging from individual weaknesses to environmental problems. In general, all the answers seem to address what From Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) describe as five universal human problems which include man's relationship to the environment, human nature, time, activity, and human interaction (as

cited in Damen, 1987, p. 49). Since a matter of death is natural as well as universal, it is also of great concern to my society. In the writer's culture, death is generally considered as another journey after life that will lead mankind to two eternal destinations: paradise or hell. In order to go to paradise, someone must meet a number of religious criteria ranging from obedience to God to relationships toward His creatures. A fear of dying might result from the question of whether or not someone has met those criteria before he/she dies.

12. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN MY LIFE HAVE BEEN…………………	
Mtw (Australian)	My birth, meeting my girlfriend, swimming at an international event
Kfr (Chinese)	Coming to this world, still living in this world, being a student in a foreign country
Akn (Japanese)	Meeting a great English teacher when I was in junior high school, meeting my boyfriend and still going out with him, meeting everyone who supported me in my life
Sty (Dutch)	Creating friendships that still last even though we are now apart, moving away from home for university
Mhn (Bangladeshi)	My marriage, my father's illness which brought our family closer, my present job in Australia
Mca (German)	The birth of my son, playing on stage as a musician, being part of a university
Azz (Saudi)	The death of my beloved father, studying in Australia, my marriage
Fhd (Saudi)	Loving my parents and family, loving my wife, loving my kids
Kls (German)	Marrying my wife, the birth of our four children, moving from Germany to Australia
Jqi (Irish)	My marriage and having two children, working in remote locations, buying our own home
Mra (Italian)	Being a teacher, my marriage at the age of 27, having my daughters

Gge (Greek)	Migrating to Australia as a young child, getting married, becoming a father of two wonderful children

The most dominant answers found in table 12 indicate a trend towards personal achievement in educational and professional fields. The other events that many participants describe as being important in their life include birth and marriage. While most participants of any given culture seem to agree that individual achievement is an essential quality in life that someone should have, the difference might lie in whether individual achievement is perceived as an action orientation or a being orientation (Damen. 1987, p. 49). In North American societies, a university student's individual achievement might be associated with his/her ability to think critically, write an academic essay or work collaboratively with other students. In contrast, non-American societies might consider a state of 'being' a university students itself as an individual achievement.

In this regard, Indonesians tend to be more being-oriented than action-oriented. A person's ability to win an overseas scholarship or become a public university student in Indonesia, for example, is simply considered as a remarkable individual achievement which someone can be proud of.

Conclusion

From the descriptions and discussions above, it could be concluded that some of the specific topics reported here in relation to the participant's cultural values and beliefs such as:

- family relations
- power structures
- social interactions
- individual achievements

seem to support or contradict the views existing in the scholarly literature on cross-cultural communication such as:

- Damen's value orientations (environment, human nature, time, activity, and human interaction)
- Hofstede's cultural dimensions (power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, and masculinity/femininity).

In other words, while Damen's and Hofstede's models are useful in understanding different cultural concepts within cultures, they might not be relevant to address or explain all the cultural topics presented in the questionnaire.

On the other hand, despite the various cultural backgrounds and age groups of the participants; they tend to give similar answers rather different ones. These trends, in my assumptions, could be explained in two possible ways:

- While most of the participants were not born in Australia; they all live in Adelaide, South Australia, either temporarily or permanently. As such, Australian culture might have influenced the way they perceive things to some extent.
- Since all the participants are students or workers in the field of education, their beliefs toward certain things might stem from their experience in school or university environments. In this case, they are likely to share common 'academic' cultures.

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APPENDIX 1

Questionnaire

Using Furstenberg, Levet, English, & Maillet's (2001) questionnaire[1], this study attempts to explore different personal cultural values and beliefs from a number of participants' point of view as a step in gaining cultural understanding and competence. For this purpose, the participant's data will be kept confidential and be used for internal analysis only.

- Name :

- Age :

- Gender :

- Ethnic origin :

- Citizenship :

- Language(s) spoken :

- Occupation :

Please finish the following sentences based on your personal cultural values and beliefs. You may write two or three answers for each sentence if you wish.

1. A good neighbour is someone who…………………………… :

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    -

    -

2. A true friend is someone who ………………………………… :

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[1] http://llt.msu.edu/vol5num1/furstenberg/default.html

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3. A good parent is someone who…………………………… :

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-

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4. A good citizen is someone who…………………………… :

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-

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5. A good student is someone who…………………………… :

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-

-

6. A good policeman/woman is someone who………………… … :

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-

-

7. A well-behaved child is someone who……………………… :

-

-

8. A rude person is someone who…………………………… :

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-

9. A good job is a job which……………………………………….. :

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-

-

10. A fun party is a party where………………………………….. :

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-

-

11. My greatest fears are…………………………………………. :

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-

-

12. The most significant events of my life have been……………….. :

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Thank you very much for your participation!

Damen's Table of Value Orientations (1987)

NORTH AMERICAN (USA)	CONTRAST AMERICAN
Personal control of the environment	Nature dominating man
Change inevitable and desirable	Unchanging; traditional
Equality of opportunity	Class structure dominant; hierarchical
Individualism	Interdependence but individuality
Future orientation	Present or past orientation
Action orientation	Being orientation
Directness and openness	Suggestive; consensus-seeking;group orientation
Practicality; pragmatic; rational	Feeling orientation; philosophical
Problem-solving orientation	Inactive; enduring; seeking help from others
Cause-and-effect logic	Knowing
Informality	Formality
Competition	Group progress
Do-it-yourself approach to life	Intermediaries

Hofstede's Table of Cultural Dimensions (1998)

SMALL POWER DISTANCE SOCIETIES (PDI)	LARGE POWER DISTANCE SOCIETIES (PDI)
• Hierarchy means an inequality of roles established for convenience	• Hierarchy means existential inequality
• Subordinates expect to be consulted	• Subordinates expect to be told what to do
• Ideal bos is resourceful and democratic	• Ideal boss is benevolent and autocratic
COLLECTIVIST SOCIETIES	**INDIVIDUALIST SOCIETIES**
• Values standard differ for in-group and out-group	• Same value standards apply to all
• Other people seen as members of their group	• Other people seen as potential resources
• Relationship prevails over task	• Task prevails over relationship
• Moral model of employer-employee relationship	• Calculative model of employer-employee relationship
FEMININE SOCIETIES	**MASCULINE SOCIETIES**
• Assertiveness ridiculed	• Assertiveness appreciated
• Understate yourself	• Oversell yourself
• Stress on life quality	• Stress on careers
• Intuition	• Decisiveness
WEAK UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE SOCIETIES (UAI)	**STRONG UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE SOCIETIES (UAI)**
• Dislike of rules – written or unwritten	• Emotional need for rules – written or unwritten
• Less formalisation and standardisation	• More formalisation and standardisation
• Tolerance of deviant persons and ideas	• Intolerance of deviant persons and ideas