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Foreign Affairs: An Approach to Intercultural Understanding

James R. Chamberlain, MA
Hochschule Bonn-Rhein-Sieg

Icebreaker – Draw a House

Work with the person sitting next to you.

Share a single pen or pencil and, with both persons holding the pen at the same time, draw a house on a blank sheet of paper.

Turn the paper over and, without talking, draw a house together from a uniquely different culture.



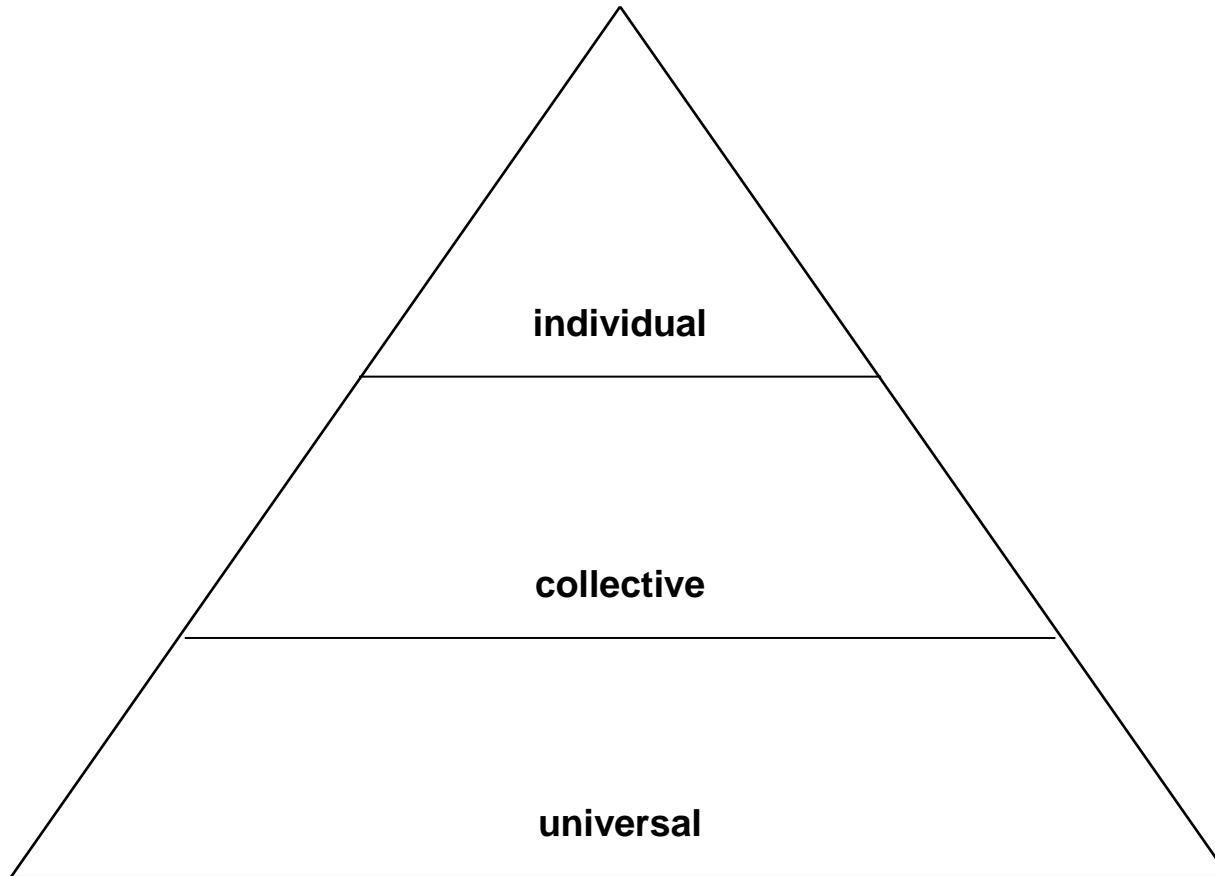
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Three Levels of Uniqueness in Human Mental Programming

Hofstede, 1980

Universalism/particularism

The universalist approach is roughly:
“What is good and right can be defined and always applies.” In particularist cultures far greater attention is given to the obligations of relationships and unique circumstances.

You are riding in a car driven by a close friend. He hits a pedestrian. You know he was going at least 35 mph in an area where the maximum allowed speed is 20 mph. There are no witnesses.

His lawyer says if you testify under oath that he was driving only 20 mph, it may save him from serious consequences.

What right has your friend to expect you to protect him?

- A. My friend has a definite right as a friend to expect me to testify to the lower speed.
- B. He has some right as a friend to expect me to testify to the lower speed.
- C. He has no right as a friend to expect me to testify to the lower speed.

What do you think you would do in view of the obligations of a sworn witness and the obligations to your friend?

D. Testify that he was going 20 mph.

E. Not testify that he was going 20 mph.

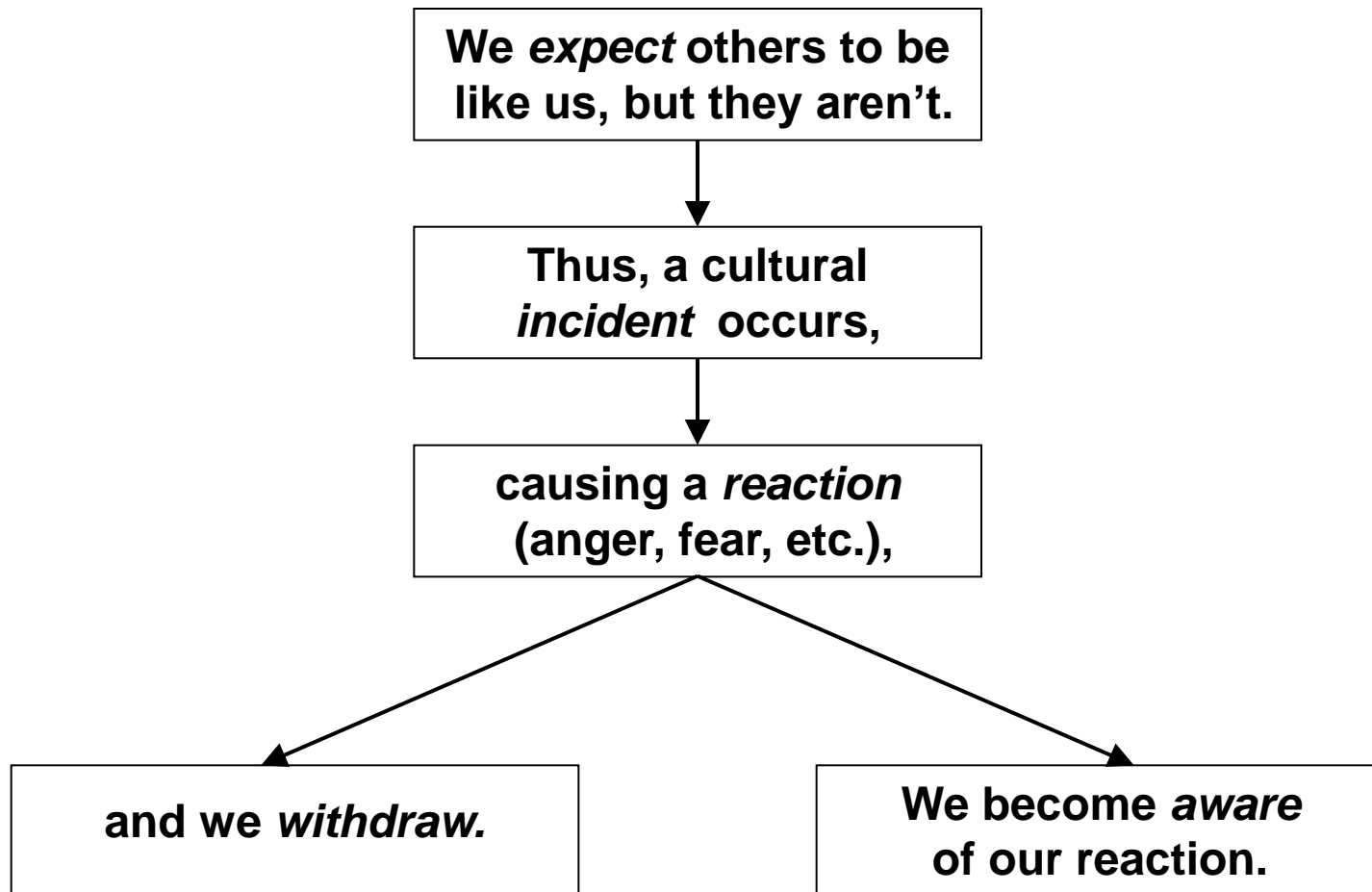
Masculinity stands for a society in which emotional gender roles are clearly distinct: men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success; women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life.

Femininity pertains to societies in which social gender roles overlap (i.e., both men and women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life).

Es hätte alles auch anders kommen können, es liegt in unserer Kultur keine metaphysische Zwangsläufigkeit.

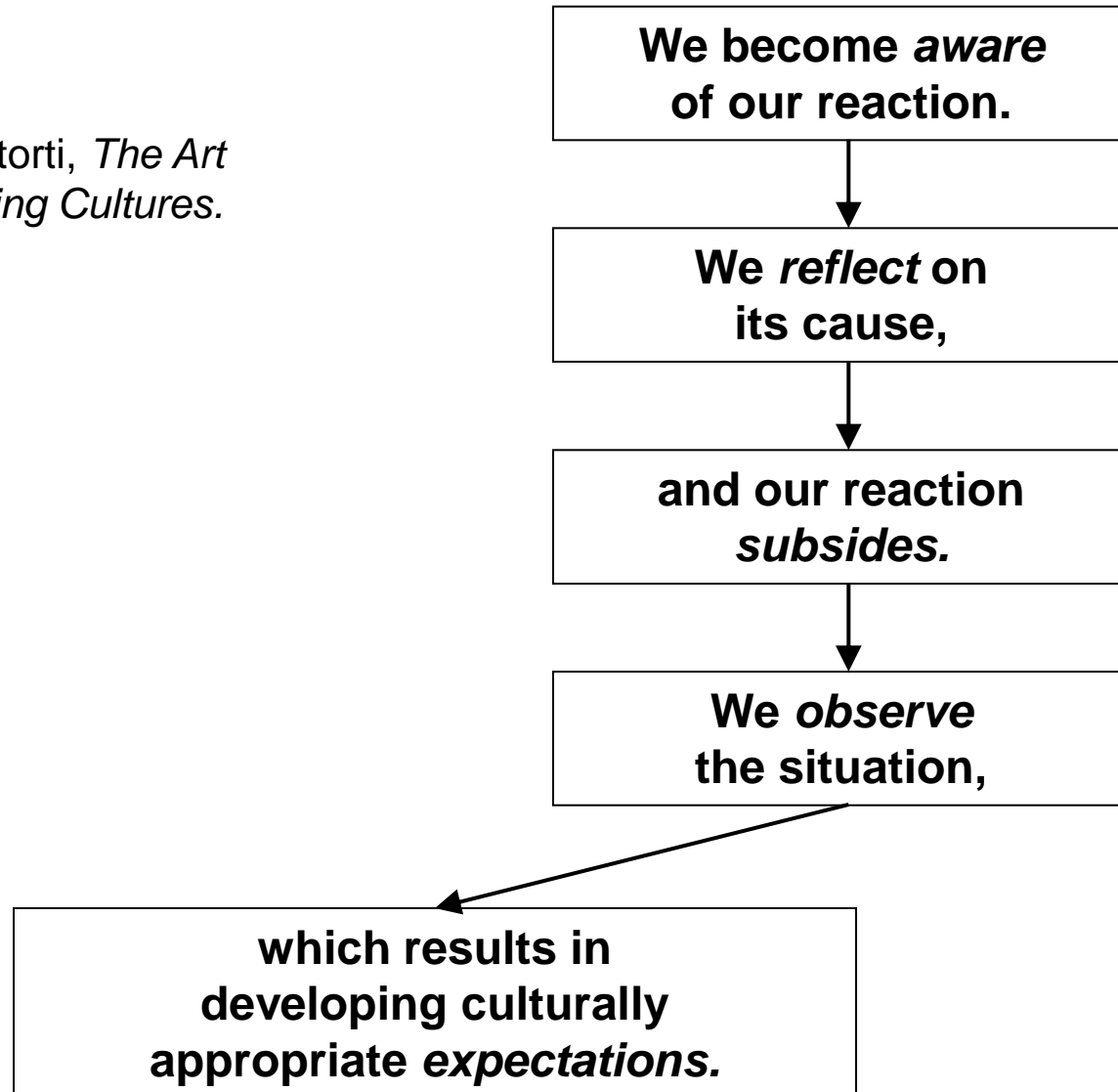
Everything could have happened differently, there is no metaphysical inevitability in one's culture.

- Peter Bieri



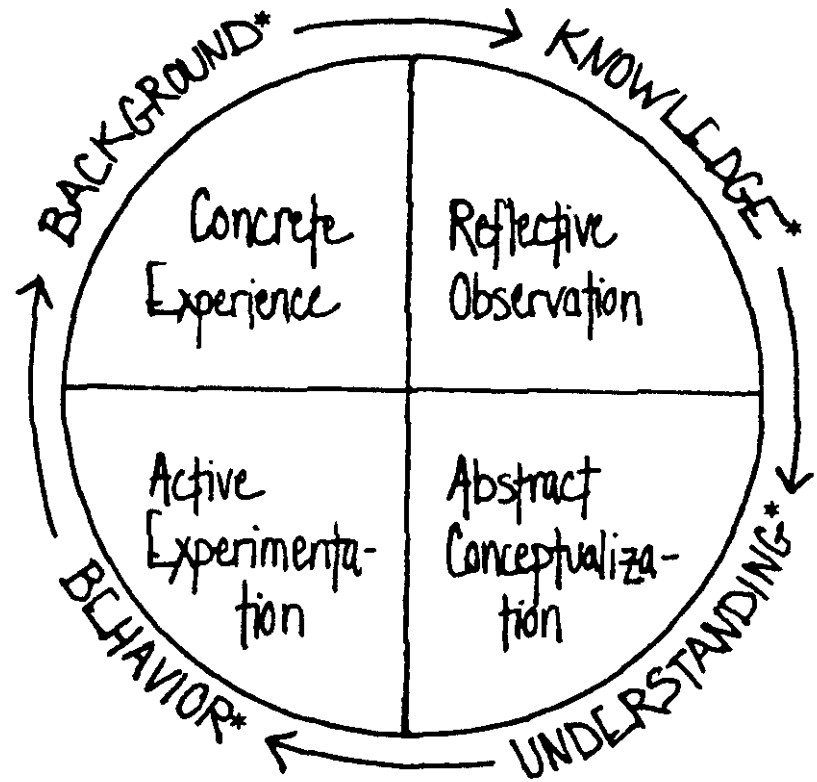


Source: Craig Storti, *The Art of Crossing Cultures*.





Kolb's Quadrants



Auch hier heisst gebildet sein:
Wissen um die Vielfalt, Respekt vor
dem Fremden, Zurücknahme von
anfänglicher Überheblichkeit.

*Education also means knowledge of
diversity, respect towards alterity,
retraction of one's initial pretensions.*

- Peter Bieri

Contingency

Irony

Solidarity

“Culture hides more than it reveals and, strangely enough, what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants. Years of study have convinced me that the real job is not to understand foreign culture but to understand our own.”

- Edward T. Hall
The Silent Language

“A civilized society is one whose members do not humiliate one another, while a decent society is one in which the institutions do not humiliate people.

- Avishai Margalit, 1996, p. 1.



A Very Short Bibliography

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Kontakt:

James Chamberlain
Hochschule Bonn-Rhein-Sieg
53754 Sankt Augustin

james.chamberlain@h-brs.de



Monochronic

- 1) do one thing at a time
- 2) concentrate on the job
- 3) take time commitments seriously
- 4) are low-context and need information
- 5) are committed to the job
- 6) adhere religiously to plans
- 7) are concerned about not disturbing others
- 8) show great respect for private property
- 9) emphasize promptness
- 10) are accustomed to short-term relationships

Polychronic

- 1) do many things at once
- 2) are subject to interruptions
- 3) consider time commitments an ideal to be achieved, if possible
- 4) are high-context and already have information
- 5) are committed to people
- 6) change plans often and easily
- 7) are more concerned with family and friends than with privacy
- 8) borrow and lend things often and easily
- 9) base promptness on relationship
- 10) tend to build lifetime relationships