

## Cultural Agility (Part 4)

### 8. Egalitarian VS Hierarchical (Power Distance)

Consensual VS Top Down decision-making.

Sweden, Netherlands and Japan are consensual in their approach whilst Nigeria, China, India and Russia are more top-down.

So there is the extreme of Nazis saying “We are just obeying orders.” Be patient when someone struggles to challenge authorities if that’s how they were raised. In all of this we should keep asking, “what would Jesus do?” as opposed to going by your cultural default. The question on our lips should be “How then shall we live?”

Power distance is the extent that the less powerful accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. How much respect or deference is shown to an authority figure e.g. myself joining a particular small group. If you are from a hierarchical background it’s easy to get offended when people are egalitarian toward you (millennials) or toward a common boss. E.g. Client I coached had a view about people accessing the boss.

E.g. growing up in Manyika Culture (greeting etc).

What are the implications on mentorship relationships, honesty, gossip, resentment etc? Do leaders become like the emperor with no clothes?

In China there is a benevolence that goes with it. In the Korean church it works well for church growth and Cell groups as people obey the pastor. (Contrast with my experience). A Danish MD went to Russia and gave the following feedback:

“They call me President, they defer to my opinions, they are reluctant to take initiative, they keep asking for my approval and they treat me like a king.” The challenge with this is what happens when the leader is not there. The mice play when the cats are away.

If you are in a nation that values hierarchy but you don’t then how will they see you? Weak leader, doesn’t know how to manage, is intimidated etc

When you go to China, Korea or Japan you need to think of who to shake hands with first as you walk into a room. A Mexican manager was working in Holland and was surprised when he asked his assistant to join him for lunch and got the response that he couldn’t because he was having lunch with the boss’s boss. This manager was surprised that he didn’t know about it.

In Scandinavia, Australia and Netherlands you use first names; think before copying in boss in email otherwise the person might think they are in trouble; go to the source instead of bothering the boss. In hierarchical environments where power distance is high you copy in the boss, you get permission to talk to their subordinates, you use their last name unless they give you permission to use their first name. This can lead to very full inboxes.

Power distance is low in countries like Denmark and Austria. All of this will affect the church culture in various nations. Egalitarian – you can disagree with boss in front of others, you can action things without go ahead, no need to match hierarchical levels when dealing with clients, you can speak to people several levels below or above, you can be seated and spoken to without too much adherence to rank or protocol. Organisational structure is flat and there is little distance between boss and subordinate. Communication often skips hierarchical lines. This is challenging for some people like the lady from technology company that moved to central bank. Where there is power distance it’s the opposite of this. It’s important for the boss to have all the answers to questions and solutions to problems. Its like this

in Spain and Italy but not in Sweden or Netherlands. Where there is power distance the best boss is seen as the one that leads from the front. Just remember that people can give you fancy titles but still not genuinely respect you.

### **Biblical Balance of Power Distance**

Look at the variety of scriptures below, what does it say to you about Power Distance in scripture?

*Titus 2:3-5* <sup>3</sup>Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. <sup>4</sup>Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, <sup>5</sup>to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

*1 Tim 4:12* Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

*Jer 1:6-8* <sup>6</sup>Ah, Lord GOD," I said, "I surely do not know how to speak, for I am only a child!" <sup>7</sup>But the LORD told me: "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' For to everyone I send you, you must go, and all that I command you, you must speak. <sup>8</sup>Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you," declares the LORD....

Your age does not qualify or disqualify you from ministry.

*Hebrews 13:17* Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Where there is hierarchy in the kingdom it is filled with relationship, tenderness and affection

*2 Cor 6:11-13* <sup>11</sup>We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. <sup>12</sup>We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. <sup>13</sup>As a fair exchange—I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also.

They had an emotional bond.

*John 13:23* One of His disciples, the one Jesus loved, was reclining close beside Jesus.

The same John that was physically close to Jesus now responds this way:

*Rev 1:12-18* <sup>12</sup>I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup>and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. <sup>14</sup>The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. <sup>15</sup>His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. <sup>16</sup>In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. <sup>17</sup>When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. <sup>18</sup>I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

*1 Tim 5:17* The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

Church affairs are not directed by everyone.

## 9. Confrontation VS Avoidance

In high confrontation cultures, Disagreement is seen as positive for the team. Confrontation is not seen as destroying the relationship.

Avoidant cultures see disagreement as negative for the team dynamic.

Remember that emotional expressiveness is not the same as readiness to confront e.g. Peru.

This is seen in our politics too.

High Confrontation – Israel, Greece and France

Avoidant – Philippines, Japan, Korea

Countries like Italy and India are emotionally expressive. India is quite avoidant of conflict whilst Italians more open to confront.

This influences Disagreeing VS Debate.

### Biblical Balance of Confrontation and Avoidance

*Gal 2:11-13* <sup>11</sup>But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. <sup>12</sup>When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile believers, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. <sup>13</sup>As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

This is calling out someone and talking about the elephant in the room. It's biblical and not just to do with personality. Paul felt compelled to challenge Peter as a principle. He was challenging the fear of man so could not do so whilst fearing man himself.

*Prov 15:18* A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.

*Prov 20:3* It is to one's honour to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel. (So we should also pick our battles)

*2 Tim 2:23-24* <sup>23</sup>Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. <sup>24</sup>And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.

*Romans 12:17-19* <sup>17</sup>Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Carefully consider what is right in the eyes of everybody. <sup>18</sup>If it is possible on your part, live at peace with everyone. <sup>19</sup>Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but leave room for God's wrath. For it is written: "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord."...

We actually do a lot as an act of revenge.

## 10. Masculine vs Feminine

Masculine cultures are very competitive and focus on achievement. The culture is assertive, egotistical and dominant (Hungary, Austria, US, Mexico, Japan and Italy). They value wealth and material success. Feminine cultures focus on caring and quality of life. Gender roles overlap and all are supposed to be modest and tender (Denmark, Netherlands, Slovenia). In general terms masculine cultures are about ego and feminine cultures are about relationships. This often affects marriage if you are a high achiever but married to someone who is content with where they are.

### Biblical Balance between masculine and feminine attributes

Contentment is crucial

*1 Tim 6:7-9* <sup>7</sup>For we brought nothing into the world, and neither can we carry anything out of it. <sup>8</sup>But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. <sup>9</sup>Those who want to be rich, however, fall into temptation and become ensnared by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction.

Pray for the gift of contentment.

Relationship is key

*John 13:35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*

However, Jesus wants us to perform great works

*John 14:12 Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.*

Imagine hearing this today.

*Mt 25:24-30 <sup>24</sup>He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, <sup>25</sup>so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.' <sup>26</sup>But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? <sup>27</sup>Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. <sup>28</sup>So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. <sup>29</sup>For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. <sup>30</sup>And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

So are you all success and no relationship OR all relationship and no goal attainment (success). Be faithful with your talents whilst your identity is in Christ. Do so relationally.