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Tuning In to the Right Wavelength: The importance of Culture for Effective Crisis

Negotiation

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Authors' Note

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### Abstract

Over the last decade the cultural diversity of those who perpetrate hostage incidents has increased dramatically. In this Chapter we examine key cultural differences in communication behavior and the implications of such differences to negotiation practice. We begin by illustrating the importance of culture to negotiation behavior and by introducing two distinctions that underpin modern understanding of how people from different cultures think and link this to fundamental differences in communication. Drawing on these distinctions we then present seven ‘lessons’ that are designed to highlight and prepare negotiators for common cross-cultural misunderstandings:

1. Building rapport and obligatory reciprocity
2. Group membership and individual rights
3. Role differences and authority
4. Honor and face issues
5. The involvement of third parties
6. The use of logic and rationality
7. Ultimatums

Our evaluation seeks to draw out lessons for those wishing to develop their understanding of cross-cultural communication dynamics, and we provide examples from negotiation transcripts and (police) interviews concerning interaction with law enforcement and cultural issues to illustrate key points.

A factor that is becoming increasingly prevalent for crisis negotiators is the cultural background of perpetrators. In both North America and Europe, law enforcement organizations have reported a growth in the cultural diversity of perpetrators, particularly in extortions and kidnap incidents (Giebels & Noelanders, 2004; Ostermann, 2002; Taylor & Donohue, 2006). This has inevitably meant that police negotiators and incident commanders face an even more complex interpersonal challenge when they engage in dialogue. Alongside the usual challenges, they must decipher the behavior of somebody whose cultural schema and way of responding to the actions of others is not the same as their own. They must repeatedly address the question: “is this behavior by the perpetrator something to raise our concerns, or is it something that is to be expected from their culturally-driven way of interacting?” In these conditions, police negotiators (and everyone else) can feel less confident about making appropriate inferences and judgments about a perpetrator’s behavior (Giebels & Taylor, 2009).

This chapter reviews what is known about cross-cultural interactions in an effort to deliver a better understanding of the kinds of dynamics to expect from such crises. It begins by outlining the importance and impact of culture to the crisis negotiation context. Although there is an indefinite number of different cultures to describe, we will focus on differences between Western and Non-western cultures. We discuss two primary cultural dimensions (collectivism and power distance) and one communication-related dimensions (high-context versus low context communication) and convert these into seven key areas that negotiators should consider when dealing with perpetrators from different cultural backgrounds. They concern both the direct communications, in terms of relationship as well as content, the context in which these negotiations occur (involvement of other parties) as well as

issues touching upon the underlying motivations of the perpetrators involved (face issues). Thus, each of these areas combine communicative and cognitive differences that provide a richer understanding of the differences that accompany a perpetrator's culture.

*What Exactly is Culture?*

Culture is often defined as the characteristic profile of a society with respect to its values, norms, and institutions (Lytle, Brett, Barsness, Tinsley, & Janssens, 1995). As such, culture provides a way to frame and interpret the world around us. It is an important determinant of people's attitudes, self-construal, and behavior, and hence their behavioral choices in conflict situations (cf. Pruitt & Kim, 2004). This is evident, for example, in some Arab communities in which women walk a couple of yards behind their men as a sign of their subordination, or in the Chinese culture when a gift is wrapped in red because the color red is associated with luck. Hofstede (2001) uses the metaphor of the onion when describing culture, likening the outer layer to the behaviors we see in the first instance, and the deeper layers to the more profound norms and values that underlie these actions. At the core, Hofstede suggests, are basic attitudes through which a certain cultural group looks at the world and interprets it. The social roles the females and males should play in society, or how one looks at luck, would be part of that underpinning core (Hofstede, 1980, 2001).

The layers of norms and expectations afforded by culture shape our behavior in diverse ways (Gudykunst, 1997; Tannen, 2006). Culture underpins the way we interact with authority figures or those of the opposite sex (Rosenquist & Megargee, 1970), differences in the expression of (and reaction to) emotions and thoughts (Scherer, Banse, & Wallbott, 2001), differences in what we understand by concepts

such as 'crime' and 'lying' (Mealy, Stephan & Urrutia, 2007; Ning & Crossman, 2007), differences in how we respond to others' questions and offers (Giebels & Taylor, 2009), and differences in the etiquette of interaction (e.g., turn-taking; Gumperz, 1982). Ordinarily, such culture-defined norms simplify the complex task of interaction by making it possible to anticipate aspects of the other person's behavior. In cross-cultural interactions, however, the norms become stumbling blocks that interfere with objective viewing of behavior and the search for cues toward the other person's perspective. The norms of police negotiator and perpetrator are different, and this leads them to interpret the same situation in different ways. This misattribution has been described by some authors as the "ultimate fundamental attribution error" (Pettigrew, 1979): the situations when we attempt to explain the behavior of individuals by the characteristic of how we expect people to act, rather than to the unique societal and cultural and contextual factors that drive their behavior.

*Why is Culture so Important: Can't we just get by?*

The impact of culture on police interactions is greater than might first be appreciated, for at least three interrelated reasons. First, one's cultural make-up is learned rather than innate, meaning that even second or third generation immigrants in a country may be raised according to another cultural value and belief system. Second, cultural norms and values are often reinforced under conditions of stress. Stress often makes people regress to originally learned cultural patterns and particularly stereotype threat produces inflexibility in thinking (Carr & Steele, 2009), even if they have been socialized to the dominant culture in later years. For example, in a situation with a Turkish immigrant café owner in the Netherlands who has been suspected of committing a crime, a community officer indicated the Turkish café

owner had spoke good Dutch on previous social occasions. When questioned about the offence the suspect had difficulty with the Dutch language and resorted to Turkish, which the investigating officers saw as a sign of being uncooperative. However, an equally plausible alternative explanation is that the Turkish café owner is having difficulty expressing himself in Dutch when being under the stress of being arrested by the police.

Third, even when people literally speak the same language, this does not necessarily mean that they are culturally alike. For example, Van Oudenhoven, Mechelse, and De Dreu (1998) have shown that even in bordering countries where people speak the same language (i.e. The Netherlands and Belgium), there may exist rather large differences in culturally determined preferences for conflict resolution strategies. As such, speaking the same language may create an “illusion of equality”, which further fuel misunderstandings as people may not anticipate cultural differences to be present.

The potential impacts of cross-cultural misunderstandings within crisis negotiations vary widely. As noted above, one possibility is that investigators become frustrated by, and suspicious of, the behavior of a perpetrator, when in fact the perpetrator’s behavior is the result of (stress-induced) cultural norms. A second is that police negotiators are unsure about how to interpret a perpetrator’s behavior, choose not to risk aggravation, and give them the benefit of the doubt. Both of these can have a significant impact within hostage crises specifically, and all law enforcement contexts more generally. However, the former arguably poses the greatest significance to crisis negotiations because it can lead commanders to judge the progress of negotiations more negatively than should be the case. This makes it

particularly important for police negotiators to feel confident enough to make judgments about cultural differences and their ongoing impact on an interaction.

In order to help police negotiators and others increase their awareness of cultural differences in behavior, the remainder of this Chapter outlines seven major factors that have been observed in both research and practice. It focuses on key differences observed between ‘Western societies,’ such as those from (Northern) Europe and the Anglo-Saxon world, and ‘Non-western societies,’ which include societies in Asia, Africa, the Middle-East and South America.

### *Individualism-Collectivism*

One of the most widely used frameworks for characterizing and examining cultural differences is the distinction between individualism and collectivism (Brewer & Chen, 2007; Cialdini et al., 1999; Fiske, 2002; Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995). The *individualism-collectivism* distinction, sometimes considered “the core dimension of cultural variability” (Cialdini et al., 1999), refers to the strength of the bonds between the individual and various kinds of group (e.g., family, company, neighborhood). In collectivistic societies, people are integrated into close-knit groups that occupy a central place in their lives and offer protection in exchange for loyalty. In individualistic societies, the bonds are looser and individuals are considered to be independent and autonomous, with protection coming largely from self-development and self-interest. Thus, in comparison with people from individualistic cultures, collectivistic societies lay more emphasis on social standards and duties, shared convictions, and co-operation with others (Wheeler, Reis, & Bond, 1989; see for relatively low and high scoring countries Table 1).

Table 1. Examples of countries scoring relatively high and low on the individualism-collectivism dimension (Hofstede, 2001)

<i>Individualism-collectivism:</i>	<i>High scoring countries</i>	<i>Low scoring countries</i>
	Columbia	Australia
	China	UK
	Pakistan	The Netherlands
	Venezuela	USA

So what do these differences in collectivism/individualism imply for crisis negotiations? In the following sections we discuss two issues: building rapport and obligatory reciprocity, and the importance of group membership and individual rights.

*Building rapport and obligatory reciprocity.* Communication scholars argue that dialogue serves two functions: it communicates substance in terms of individual views, concerns and positions (see the next section for more on that), and it seeks to manage relational dynamics, such as feelings of personal value and social belonging. This second, relational function of dialogue is central to cross-cultural interactions because of the different ways in which cultures value issues to do with relationships. While many individualistic cultures are accustomed to evaluating a person as an individual, collectivistic cultures focus on whether one belongs to the “in-group” or “out-group” (Gelfand & Cai, 2004), and often make this judgment quickly. They are typically less sympathetic to, and less willing to help, an out-group member, since they perceive him or her as ‘deviating’ from one’s own cultural ‘in-group’ norms.

Interestingly, however, recent work has identified a way in which cooperation can be forthcoming even when a collectivistic party perceives the negotiator as out-group (see e.g., Cai, 2001; Yang, 1992; see also, Gelfand & Cai, 2004). They show that people from collectivistic cultures tend to place others in one of three categories, not just two. These categories are: i) the in-group, such as close family and best friends; communication is direct and straightforward within the group; ii) the out-group, typically people from whom they have nothing to gain; communication is direct and sometimes even aggressive; and, iii) the middle-group, who can benefit them, such as colleagues, potential buyers. It is this category of relationships that is particularly characterized by indirect and careful communication.

A central theme in the middle layer is what is known as obligatory reciprocation. While reciprocation is a pervasive mechanism in all cultures, this is particularly true for interactions that can be placed in this middle layer of the collectivist relationship framework. This has been reflected in the explanation for certain behaviors, for example, a Chinese kidnapper explaining in his statement why he had helped the organizer mentioned obligations in the context of relationships as the reason for one's own involvement in an incident. The same kidnapper said with respect to the person who ordered him to commit the offence: "*He had given me food and a house. That is why I helped him*". Thus, this norm may be so dominant that it can overrule external standards, such as the law.

*Group membership and individual rights.* Another issue that may play a more prominent role in collectivistic cultures is the social context in which the incident and its precipitating issues are situated. For example, this becomes clear in the following conversation, taken from an extortion case in which a perpetrator of Moroccan origin telephones his victim:

*Extortionist: "Do you promise that it will be solved?"*

*Victim: "Yes."*

*Extortionist: "Are you sure?"*

*Victim: "Yes, it will be solved."*

*Extortionist: "Do you swear it on your children?"*

*Victim: "What do you say?"*

*Extortionist: "You have to swear on your children."*

*Victim: "Yes."*

*Extortionist: "Then swear!"*

*Victim: "I swear on my children ..."*

*Extortionist: "and on your wife ..."*

*Victim: "and on my wife ..."*

*Extortionist: "That?"*

*Victim: "I swear on my children and my wife that I'm coming with the money."*

*Extortionist: "And that nothing is wrong."*

*Victim: "Yes."*

*Extortionist: "Yes. Then you have to say it."*

*Victim: "I swear on my children and wife that nothing is wrong."*

*Extortionist: "OK."*

The extortionist apparently trusts the victim to comply with demands more when mentioning his socially important others and making the victim connect their lives to following up agreements. Furthermore, as the collective instead of the individual is central to society, issues such as self-determination and individual rights are arguably more highly valued in individualistic rather than collectivistic cultures (Barsness & Bhappu, 2004). This is illustrated by the statement of a kidnapper of Chinese origin who was interviewed by the police following the incident. He stated: *"It was no kidnapping, but a business disagreement. I have also told that to the child. It was no kidnapping as we did not beat the child and always asked what he wanted*

*to have. We gave him something to eat and to drink<sup>1</sup> and he was also allowed to watch television”.*

### *Power Distance*

A second dimension of cultural variation is *power distance*. Power distance refers to the extent to which the less powerful members of social groups within a country (e.g., in institutions, organizations) expect and accept that power is divided unequally across the group. In cultures where power distance is salient, hierarchy, privileges and status symbols are central to society. Research suggests that more collectivist societies usually are higher in power distance than individualistic societies (Hofstede, 2001). An explanation for this is that power distance enables the social focus on groups to function effectively, since there is an almost inevitable need for task division and level differentiation (see Table 2 for relatively low and high scoring countries).

Table 2. Examples of countries scoring relatively high and low on the power distance dimension (Hofstede, 2001)

<i>Power distance:</i>	<i>High scoring countries</i>	<i>Low scoring countries</i>
	Arab region	Denmark
	Philippines	Ireland
	Malaysia	Austria
	Venezuela	Israel

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<sup>1</sup> In many other cases with perpetrators from a high context culture the fact of eating or drinking together was quoted as a sign of a good relationship or to indicate that one takes good care of somebody.

So what do these differences in power distance imply for crisis negotiations?

In the following sections we discuss two inter-related issues: role dynamics and responses to authority, and honor and face issues.

*Role Differences and Authority.* The position or role of an individual—including their status but also how they act towards the other party—can dramatically shape the way in which an interaction unfolds. Although such role effects are relevant to the whole interaction (Donohue & Taylor, 2007), they tend to be shaped during the early stages of an interaction. This makes them critical to a cross-cultural hostage crisis where perpetrator and police negotiator are looking to the other side for indications of how to interpret culturally unfamiliar behavior. Negotiators should manage role not only because it influences the way in which an interaction unfolds, but also because it can be used strategically to influence the other party's behavior.

The one aspect of role differences that is likely to dominate cross-cultural interactions is authority. Cultures around the world have very different relationships with, and expectations of, authorities. For example, many East-Asian cultures (e.g., Chinese) value extensive hierarchies and positions, and are likely to be respectful to an investigator who presents with authority. While this may at first appear useful, it can often be detrimental to an interaction when the culturally-normative reaction to authority is to demonstrate deference through use of vague language, carefully qualified language, and even silence (Jenkins, 2000). As a negotiator pushes even harder for a definitive response, the consequence can be that the perpetrator tries even harder to demonstrate deference by making greater use of the submissive behaviors. The result is a negotiation that is not going to progress anywhere fast.

In contrast to East-Asian cultures, many from Middle-Eastern cultures will respect but mistrust authority figures (Barker, et al., 2008). This mistrust is a reaction

to either first-hand experience or second-hand accounts of police violence, mis-justice, and lack of the due process found in many Western societies. For example, a recent participant in a series of cross-cultural focus groups noted, “I have been at conflict...where torture or such things...I see police, I scared regardless of innocence or not, and here it is doubled because here I don’t know the law plus I scared of the police”. An individual who is already fearful of authorities is going to require a patient and prolong set of interactions to encourage trust. Her or her initial reaction can manifest as an antagonistic interpersonal style, which heightens tension and may inappropriately raise a commanders concerns about the effectiveness of ongoing negotiations.

Interestingly, authority can impact on areas of negotiator-perpetrator dynamics that might not be anticipated, but are important evidentially. For example, research suggests that people perceived as being in authority can influence what the perceiver remembers of an event. In particular, individuals are more likely to conform to a story presented to them by someone perceived as possessing a high-powered role (Skagerberg & Wright, 2008), and this effect is even more pronounced in stressful contexts (Whitson & Galinsky, 2008). This is perhaps why, in some cross-cultural interactions, investigators are confronted with agreements to everything that they mention. When an interaction becomes demanding, perhaps because of language difficulties, it is natural to use guiding and ‘closed’ statements to obtain the required answers and responses. However, negotiators must be wary that such forms of questioning can invoke a series of answers that relate what the interviewee *thinks* the negotiator wants to hear, rather than what is in fact true.

*Honor and face issues.* A corollary of role being important to collectivistic societies is that other people’s perceptions of self are important determinants of a

person's decision-making and behavior. In this way, many non-Western cultures distinguish themselves from Western cultures with regard to the importance of concepts such as shame, disgrace, loss of face, and honor (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). In these societies, the opinion of the outside world, in particular from one's own social network, is highly important. Conversely, in the more Western cultures evolving around direct communication, one's own identity is to a lesser extent determined by the groups to which one belongs, but more by one's own achievements, actions and needs.

A concern for the possibility of negative opinions formation is often known as a concern for 'loss of face' in the presence (visible or perceptible) audience. In crisis negotiations, loss of face is important for both police negotiators and perpetrators because of the confronting nature of the interaction and because there is almost always an audience (Rogan, 1999). A person's desire to avoid loss of face strongly increases as: i) her or she feels incompetent; ii) he or she sees the audience as competent and evaluating; and, iii) only he or she is aware of the true cost of avoiding a potential loss of face.

These cultural differences in needs led Hall to adjust Maslow's classical need hierarchy to non-western cultures (see Figure 1). Whereas basic physiological needs are basic needs for all human beings, the higher one gets in the hierarchy the more low- and high context cultures deviate. That is, whereas low-context cultures highest need reflect self-actualization, needs in high-context cultures are more centered on one's standing and reputation within the larger social context, thus reflecting needs such as having a good name and keeping honor.

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Insert Figure 1 here

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In our own research it has become apparent that perpetrators from non-Western cultures will often combine their financial motives for perpetrating a hostage crises with a second motive of repairing loss of face. For example, in one recent extortion incident within the Chinese community, the perpetrator had previously encountered the victim as he had tried to rob him some months earlier. This attempted robbery failed because it was (fortuitously) witnessed by a bystander who alerted the police. By means of extortion, the perpetrator now tried to get the money that he perceived was owed by the victim. The following conversation shows that money was no longer the sole motive for the extortion:

*Extortionist: "You should know what I mean."*

*Victim: "I have not offended you."*

*Extortionist: "Next time we meet, things won't be that easy anymore."*

*Victim: "I don't know what you mean by that."*

*Extortionist: "You ought to know what I mean."*

*Victim: "I have to give as much as there is."*

*Extortionist: "If you don't have it, you don't have it, if you do have it, you do have it. One word."*

*Victim: "What do you want me to do?"*

*Extortionist: "That is up to you. If you give me esteem, I shall also give you esteem ..."*

It seems that the extortionist indicates that because of the police involvement he has lost face in their community. It was now up to the victim, who the perpetrator regarded as responsible for the loss of face, to restore the situation.

Another example of the importance of considering face issues comes from a siege situation in which nothing seemed to stand in the way of a peaceful surrender,

yet the perpetrator does not want to come outside. The negotiation team considered the possibility that the perpetrator thought a public surrender to be humiliating. A possible escape from this deadlock consisted in offering a more honorable outcome of the incident by offering a way out by ambulance.

#### *High-Context versus Low-Context Communication*

Within the academic literature, the distinctions of individualism-collectivism and power distance that we describe above can be linked to two forms of communication. These forms, which originate from anthropologist's Edward Hall's work, are known as high context and low context communication (Hall, 1976; Ting-Toomey, 1985). According to Hall, people in low-context cultures are highly individualized and view themselves as being independent from others. As a result, communication tends to be more explicit; the content of a message is important, meaning that most (if not all) information is conveyed in explicit codes (Hall, 1976). In contrast, high-context cultures have strong social bonds, and individual feelings and opinions are suppressed to serve the community (Hall, 1976). Consequently, communication tends to be evasive and relationship-oriented (cf. Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998). This evasiveness is often reflected in the phrasing of the messages as well as the involvement of third parties.

*Involvement of Third Parties.* When dealing with hostage crises with a strong cross-cultural element, it can be tempting to involve a third-party who has better knowledge of the perpetrators' cultural group. One might involve a third-party as an 'interpreter' who helps the police understand the communication of the perpetrator, or one might involve a third-party as an intermediary. Interpreters might be particularly helpful in explaining the meaning of indirect messages. For example, a interpreter might label the fairly innocuous phrase of a Chinese kidnapper "*We're going to take*

*someone along*” as a fairly aggressive statement meaning “we are going to kill someone.” Similarly, interpreters can clarify statements, such as “*then we did “it” to your son*” as being a negatively charged statement meaning “then we shall kill him”.

Furthermore, in many negotiations involving perpetrators from non-western cultures, third parties often end up having intermediately roles where they have an important influence on the course of the negotiations. In Turkish and Moroccan cases, our experience suggests that the third party is often a (elder) family member of the victim or/and perpetrator, who met behind the scenes to try and find a solution for the situation. These mediation attempts can be considered to be a kind of parallel negotiations. In contrast, for kidnappings within a Chinese cultural context, we noticed that, for the most part, neutral intermediaries were called upon who had no direct family ties with the victim. In many cases, these individuals had already acted as a mediator within the Chinese community and they often managed to collect considerable sums of money in a short time span for doing so. In this context, it seems some kind of unspoken rule that they receive a certain percentage of the negotiated sum in case of a successful mediation.

On the one hand, the interference of these additional parties makes it for the police often more difficult to manage this kind of incidents. On the other hand, this sometimes also means that the parties involved are inclined to solve the incident themselves, without interference of the police. In a recent kidnapping in the centre of the Netherlands, it moreover turned out that the presence of the police made the case endure, and negotiations were deadlocked. Yet, at the moment the police decided to withdraw, the situation was mutually resolved rather quickly.

Finally, the distinction between low- and high context communication is also important because the effectiveness of negotiators is also the result of the negotiator’s

knowledge about how to present messages in a way that appeals to, and persuades the perpetrator. Recent research shows that the way in which we try to influence others, as well as how we ourselves are influenced, is strongly affected by whether the communication partner is accustomed to high- or low-context communication (see, for instance, Fu & Yukl, 2000; Langeloo & Giebels, 2003; Tinsley, 2001; Wosinska, Cialdini, Barrett, & Reykowski, 2001).

*Use of logic and rationality.* To those raised in a Western culture, the conventional method of finding out information or handling disagreements is to engage in discussion, persuasion, and, at times, argument (Beune, Giebels, & Taylor, in press). This rational persuasion approach places prime value on the use of task-related arguments and logic to convince the other party to comply with one's own proposals (Giebels, De Dreu, & Van de Vliert, 2003). This may involve identifying inconsistencies within the perpetrator's story, pointing out the absence of evidence needed to verify a particular fact, or debating which point of view is the most valid. Indeed, the dominant cultures of Western Europe and North America are thought by scholars to be driven by a quality maxim: one should state only that which is believed to be true with sufficient evidence (Grice, 1975). Because of this, persuasion, executed by presenting rational arguments and factual evidence, is a successful strategy in cultures where communication focuses on accurate messages and message content (e.g., North American, Western European)(Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001).

This is less true in other cultures. Cultures such as those associated with the Middle-East and Far-East solve problems and resolve conflicts in ways that are less explicit, where meaning is located in the social or physical context of the interaction rather than solely in its content. As might be expected, therefore, persuasion is less central to the interaction of such cultures, and individuals from these cultures often

fail to reciprocate efforts to engage in debate (Axelrod, 1984; Gouldner, 1960). Those who do not reciprocate can often appear avoidant to somebody who expects debate to be central to the interaction. Each interactant attempts to move forward in the way that he or she sees as appropriate, and the result is an interaction that ‘goes around in circles’.

Evidence supporting this assertion is found in a number of areas. For example, Ting-Toomey’s work on cross-cultural communication (e.g., Ting-Toomey, 1988) suggests that confronting the other party with rational arguments and factual evidence is more central to American than to Chinese conflict environments (see also, Fu & Yukl, 2000). Similarly, our recent analysis of 25 instrumental crisis negotiations (i.e., kidnapping and extortion cases) with high and low-context perpetrators found that, compared to high-context perpetrators, low-context perpetrators are more likely to use *Rational persuasion*, and be more likely to reciprocate persuasive arguments of the police negotiator (Giebels & Taylor, 2009). This relative willingness to engage in rational debate was particularly prevalent for low-context perpetrators during the second half of the negotiation, when the heightened anxieties and emotions of the early stages crisis has diminished and more normative interaction had begun to take shape.

*Ultimatums.* When an issue cannot be resolved (or an objective achieved), either because of procedural issues or because of an impasse, it is sometimes necessary to lay down an ultimatum. This ultimatum may suggest, for example, that it is not possible to move forward until a particular concession has been made (e.g., “there is little I can do until...”). Or, it may highlight that the perpetrator must make a choice for the interaction to continue (e.g., “I’m afraid the only two options open to you at this stage are...”). In either case, it involves a somewhat forceful behavior—

often referred to as intimidation behavior—that aims to provoke the interviewee into an action that they were reluctant to make (Deutsch & Krauss, 1962).

While investigators know that it is generally best to avoid using ultimatums (Walton, 2003), some recent research of police interviews suggests that people from different cultures vary in their response to such behaviors (Beune, Giebels & Taylor, in press). The research examined the reactions of two groups of individuals to ultimatums, namely, a group of individuals from cultures such as North America and Western Europe (considered low-context cultures) and a group of individuals from the Middle-East (considered high-context cultures). With the low-context suspects, the use of intimidation was found to be most effective when focused on personal issues. In contrast, with the high-context suspects, intimidation was more effective when focused on friends and/or family.

Equally important is the relative reaction to ultimatums that were not successful. Compared to the low-context group, those from high-context cultures rarely used ultimatums, but when those behaviors were used against them, they often reacted aggressively and sought to punish the investigator with counter-ultimatums. This raises the important issue of role and dominance within interaction, and suggestions that forceful behaviors such as intimidation may be a particularly poor way of dealing with difficult cross-cultural interactions.

An explanation for this finding is that intimidation refers to a confrontational and assertive way of handling conflict, which is consistent with low-context communication but considered less appropriate in high-context cultures (Fu & Yukl, 2000). Consequently, high-context negotiators not only use *Intimidation* to a lesser extent, but they are also more likely to “punish” police negotiators who use them with counter-intimidation, particularly because crisis negotiation centers on the issues of

“who is in charge” (Donohue & Roberto, 1993), and high-context negotiators may be more concerned with establishing dominance (Adair & Brett, 2004). This process may be reinforced by the confrontational nature of *Intimidation*, which draws attention to the need to preserve face, something that is considered more important within high-context rather than low-context cultures (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001).

### *In Conclusion*

In this chapter we focused on key differences observed in both research and practice between ‘Western societies,’ such as those from (Northern) Europe and the Anglo-Saxon world, and ‘Non-western societies,’ which include societies in Asia, Africa, the Middle-East and South America. While nationality is usually considered a good assessment of culture, one should keep in mind that the attribution of characteristics to a national culture may encourage stereotyping and prejudice. Our main purpose is to highlight key differences in behavior with the aim of priming readers to develop their own cultural sensitivities.

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Figure 1. Representation of Maslow's original hierarchy of needs and Hall's adjustment of needs for non-Western cultures

